



**PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**REPORT OF DEBATES**

**Thursday 19 September 2024**

**REVISED EDITION**



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# UNCORRECTED PROOF

**Thursday 19 September 2024**

The Speaker, **Ms O'Byrne**, took the Chair at 10.00 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People, and read Prayers.

## **STATEMENT BY SPEAKER**

**International Day of Sign Languages**

**National Week of Deaf People**

**Presence of Auslan Interpreter in the Chamber**

**The SPEAKER** - In accordance with the resolution of the House yesterday, we have invited our Auslan interpreter, Allie, to sign from the Floor of the House and to recognise International Day of Sign Languages and the National Week of Deaf People. I now call on the statements in relation to this day.

## **STATEMENT BY PREMIER**

**International Translation Day**

[10.02 a.m.]

**Mr ROCKLIFF** (Braddon - Premier) - Hello and welcome, Allie. Honourable Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to say a few words today. A first for the Tasmanian House of Assembly. I am pleased to rise in support of International Translation Day, which is not for a few weeks yet, on 30 September. It is a day set aside to recognise the invaluable work of translators and interpreters who bridge gaps between cultures, languages and communities. Their contributions foster understanding, cooperation and unity in an increasingly interconnected world.

In Tasmania, the use of interpreters helps many people with limited English language proficiency in all facets of life, including help to navigate our legal systems, assistance with health care, and engaging and participating in a wide range of day-to-day activities. We have also experienced firsthand the critical role of language professionals, especially throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and I take this moment to express our deepest gratitude to the Auslan interpreters who stood alongside our government and public health officials and all Tasmanians, providing essential real-time communication to Tasmania's deaf and hard of hearing community.

These individuals ensure that lifesaving health updates, restrictions and measures were accessible to all, reinforcing our commitment to inclusivity. Particularly I would like to thank the Expressions Australia Auslan team - Stephen, who is well known, Allie, Joyce, Kylie, Tanya and Kathy. Their dedication, professionalism and tireless service to the Tasmanian public and our government helped safeguard public health and ensured that no-one in Tasmania was left behind in such a challenging time. It is because of their efforts and the work of all translators that we can communicate clearly and inclusively.

On behalf of the Tasmanian government, and indeed the parliament, I extend heartfelt thanks to interpreters and all language professionals who continue to play a vital role in our community. Your work not only connects but helps build a more inclusive Tasmania. Thank you.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

## STATEMENT BY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

### International Translation Day

[10.05 a.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin - Leader of the Opposition) - Welcome to Allie to the Chamber today. Honourable Speaker, Auslan was first recognised by the Australian Government as an official community language in 1987 under the Hawke-Keating government. Approximately 20,000 Australians use Auslan to communicate every day. The importance of ensuring Australians have equal access to important information was recognised during the pandemic, as the Premier spoke about, when I am sure we all remember those Auslan interpreters forming a really important and critical part of our daily lives and daily updates.

Parliaments are home to some of the most significant debates and speeches in our society and we should be doing everything we can to ensure that everyone in our community can participate equally in our democracy.

Two years ago, the New South Wales parliament resolved to ensure important proceedings of parliament are interpreted live into Auslan, including the Governor's Address to mark the opening of parliament, at Question Time to mark the National Week of Deaf People and debates of significance to the deaf community. I understand the Queensland parliament and the Victorian parliament and quite possibly others have also taken steps to enhance access to proceedings for members of that community. I think we should be doing the same, Speaker, which is why today's initiative is so warmly welcomed and we really thank you and the Premier for bringing this today.

It is not equality if it is a one-off, however, and it is not if it is tokenism. We need to make sure that this parliament is accessible all the time and I would really like to see the parliament consider the parliamentary broadcast to include closed captions as part of our daily broadcast of parliamentary proceedings.

Happy International Translation Day for the next few weeks. Thank you so much to Allie for being with us today. We appreciate it and we hope that this marks an important step towards this parliament and this place being more accessible for everyone.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

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## STATEMENT BY LEADER OF THE GREENS

### International Day of Sign Languages

[10.06 a.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Honourable Speaker, on behalf of the Greens, I acknowledge the International Day of Sign Languages next week. First, I acknowledge the lived experience of deaf people, those who live in a world of sound - and, if we are honest, an ableist world - and Tasdeaf, who provide critical interpretation services and education programs.

I can only imagine how different it is for those in the deaf community. I suspect, like other members, I will spend a great deal of time not knowing exactly what to say today. We exist in a loud, rowdy and rambunctious environment as parliamentarians, despite the Speaker's best efforts.

Today is an historic moment in Tasmania's parliamentary history and the Greens are honoured to be part of it. Parliaments are too often the last place to move into the modern world. I am really happy I get the opportunity to speak after both the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition. It means I have had the pleasure of watching Allie Dale interpret our words for the deaf community in their language. Too often it is only in times of crisis that leaders think to invite Auslan interpreters into our lives.

Many Tasmanians remember the daily updates during the peak of the COVID pandemic, where Auslan interpreter Stephen Nicholson became somewhat of a celebrity, but it should not be in times of emergency and crisis when we think about communicating with the deaf community; language and connection are every day.

Some of my staff told me this morning that Taylor Swift had an Auslan interpreter at her concerts. While I am not really a Swiftie myself, that is something that parliamentarians should think about. While in parliament, we have invited Allie on to the floor today, and they will not be referred to, as we would say, a 'stranger in the House'. No-one should be a stranger to democracy.

As Greens, we are extremely proud of Tasmania's *Anti-Discrimination Act* and will do everything within our power to not only defend those laws but to strengthen them. Today, our House of parliament will hopefully debate the government's Disability Inclusion and Safeguarding Bill, another step forward, but we acknowledge it is a path we must continuously move along.

Last, in preparing for today, I also spent a lot of time thinking about the concept of hearing versus listening. While members of this parliament do not have the lived experience of not hearing, we all have the capacity to listen, learn and act. It is, in fact, our obligation. Thank you for this opportunity to speak today.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

**The SPEAKER** - The statement has now concluded. We did invite Allie to stay, but she is very busy and does not want to hang out for Question Time so we will now allow our interpreter, Allie Dale, to leave the Chamber. Allie, thank you. Goodbye.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

**The SPEAKER** - As Allie leaves, if anybody wants to know and you want to do a post for social media, what you can say and sign is 'happy NWDP' the National Week of Deaf People, which starts on Monday.

## RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

**The SPEAKER** - I acknowledge in the gallery the year 7 and 8 students from the Australian Christian College, Launceston, who have been here for a little while and sitting very patiently. Thank you so much for joining us.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE

**Member for Franklin - Mr Street**

[10.10 a.m.]

**Mr ROCKLIFF** (Braddon - Premier) - Honourable Speaker, I inform the House that minister Street is absent from the Chamber today due to illness. As such, I will be taking questions in his absence for the ministerial portfolios of Local Government, Sport and Events; and Minister Ferguson will be taking questions on the portfolio of Finance.

## QUESTIONS

**TasPorts - Executive Bonuses**

**Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.11 a.m.]

Can you confirm executives and senior managers at TasPorts have been offered a bonus payment if the upgrades at berth 1 are completed on time, and another if works are completed ahead of schedule?

## ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question. We are still working through the details of berth 1 and/or berth 3 in terms of Mr Moloney's investigation into this matter. He is consulting, along with Peter Gemell, with a range of key stakeholders with regard to these matters. As I have said, in the not too distant future I will be meeting with Mr Moloney, Mr Gemell and others and will outline a very clear way forward.

## Supplementary Question

**Mr WINTER** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Mr WINTER** - Yes. The Premier did not even attempt to answer the question, which was: Can you confirm executives and senior managers at TasPorts have been offered a bonus payment if upgrades at berth 1 are completed on time and another if works are completed ahead of schedule?

**The SPEAKER** - I will call the Premier, if he is able to answer that.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I have answered the question because we are moving forward with the investigation. As I said, I will be thoroughly taking into consideration the detailed investigation from -

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr WINTER** - Point of order, Speaker, Standing Order 45. There is only a short amount of time. It is a very simple question about bonuses for TasPorts employees. Could you ask the Premier to either answer the question or take it on notice if he does not know?

**The SPEAKER** - If the Premier is answering it by saying that it has not been determined, that is one answer. That might not be what you want, but it does qualify as an answer. I will ask the Premier to address it in the last 20 seconds.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I am happy to update the House when a decision on the way forward is made and then the detail, including matters that the member seeks to ask and seeks answers for, so -

**The SPEAKER** - The Premier's time for answering the question has expired. I note that that is a question taken 'on notice' with an undefined time period. Thank you.

### **TasPorts - Executive Bonuses**

**Mr WINTER question to PREMIER and MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.13 a.m.]

You are spending at least \$50 million on a temporary upgrade to berth 1 at Devonport because you failed to ensure the permanent port infrastructure at berth 3 would be ready in time for the arrival of our new *Spirits*. Can you explain why TasPort's executives, who are already very well paid by taxpayers, are being offered massive bonuses when they are already part of the biggest infrastructure stuff up in Tasmanian history?

How has this been allowed to happen, and how has the management of this project seemingly got even worse since you took over from minister Michael Ferguson?

### **ANSWER**

Here we go again, honourable Speaker. I can assure Tasmanians that these ships will be delivered. The infrastructure will be delivered with or without Labor's support.

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We are working through these matters. Mr Moloney and Mr Gemell have inserted themselves into this project. We will be taking very considered and thoughtful advice, and I will be updating the community in the not-too-distant future with respect to the way forward.

### Supplementary Question

**Mr WINTER** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary.

**Mr WINTER** - Can the Premier answer the question as to how it has been allowed that TasPorts' employees, who caused this problem at berth 3, are to be given bonuses for completing a project which is a patch job at berth 1?

**The SPEAKER** - It does arise out of the original question, so as far as the Premier can answer.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I can only refer to my previous answers in terms of the investigations being undertaken.

**Mr Winter** - You have not said the word 'bonus' yet.

### Macquarie Point Stadium - Cost Overruns

#### Ms BURNET question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.16 a.m.]

From the day the Macquarie Point stadium was announced, it seemed the only people who believed it could be built for \$715 million were state Liberal politicians. You repeatedly said you would be managing the project within an inch of its life to make sure it was delivered on budget but now, years before the first sod has been turned, we have already seen a massive \$115 million in cost blowouts.

What is even worse is the dud deal you signed with the AFL, making Tasmanian taxpayers responsible for every cent of cost overrun. It is no wonder your own Treasury department identified this as a major expenditure risk.

Even if you somehow secure some private money for this project, nobody is going to sign a blank cheque for all the inevitable future cost blowouts. Will you finally admit this project is a massive own goal that will cost Tasmanians dearly?

#### ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for your question. I look forward to many goals being kicked by the Tassie Devils in the new stadium.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I am looking forward to the Tassie Devils taking the field at Bellerive Oval and at York Park in 2028. I look forward to our young kids going to those games and fulfilling their aspirations. New heroes - homegrown heroes - that kids will want to emulate and aspire to be.

To the member's question: \$375 million is what the Tasmanian government will be investing into this infrastructure, and we will be doing it once. We invest some \$375 million every 42 days in Health, as an example and comparison.

The submission that was released yesterday - a 260-page summary report supported by nearly 4000 pages of expert advice and reports - is now available for the Tasmanian Planning Commission to assess the project and for the community to see the work that has been done. This is and will be a great project. This is a project that not only will secure our own AFL and AFLW teams that we have been fighting for decades but will also secure the employment of many thousands of Tasmanian people, not only in relation to the southern-based infrastructure but also the urban renewal of Macquarie Point. Finally, we have a vision for Macquarie Point that we can pursue and invest in and create further economic opportunity.

It is not unlike Devonport and the urban renewal project there, which some members of the community fought hard against. Thankfully, with the combination of local, state and federal government of all colours working in partnership, Devonport has been transformed, and will continue to be. That is because we are investing further in sporting stadium infrastructure in Devonport, like we are in Penguin and Dial Range - some \$25 million of investment; like we are at York Park - some \$130 million of investment both federal and state governments.

We are proud of this project. I am proud of the fact that we have given the submission to the Tasmanian Planning Commission and indeed the project of state significance process. This process and pathway was selected by the parliament, which led to the creation of extensive project assessment guidelines informed by consultation.

### Supplementary Question

**Ms BURNET** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary.

**Ms BURNET** - Thank you. I do not think the Premier answered that fully enough when, according to the financial impact report, the general government sector would be required to pay millions of dollars in interest and event attraction funding for Mac Point.

**The SPEAKER** - I am sorry, I am really not sure how I can rule that in as a question, but you have your comment on the record. I will call the Member for Franklin, unless there was a point of order.

**TasNetworks - Worker Pay Parity with Mainland**

**Mr O'BYRNE question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr DUIGAN**

[10.20 a.m.]

TasNetworks employees have been in negotiations for a new agreement but have failed to come to a resolution. TasNetworks field workers are quite reasonably seeking pay parity with their interstate counterparts, but, while these workers were still reconnecting power to homes and businesses after recent unprecedented storms, the CEO sought to circumvent negotiations and seek a ballot for their enterprise agreement on the back of a \$6000 cash incentive for all employees, a cash incentive no one asked for.

This cash incentive is designed to deliberately swamp any legitimate view of the group of workers who are most impacted by pay equity. I understand this payment will amount to approximately \$5.5 million on top of the wage increases that are being offered. Why are you standing by and allowing taxpayers' money to be thrown away so recklessly? When will you, the minister with ultimate responsibility, step in and resolve this mess?

**ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question and obvious interest in this. At the outset of my answer, let me extend my thanks and deep gratitude on behalf of myself and, I suspect, all of us here for the work that the TasNetworks crews have been doing over the past few weeks as Tasmania grapples with what has been a really, really significant weather event. There was substantial damage to 20 per cent of our distribution electricity network in the state and I am very pleased to report that almost all - I will not say everybody is back on, but we are down to single digits - of Tasmanians back with their power reconnected to their homes, which we know is so important.

The TasNetworks Enterprise Agreements (EA) negotiations, which have been going on for some period of time, I am advised, average salaries in terms of the question about pay parity already compare very well to other - certainly other Tasmanian - wages and TasNetworks advises me that the business pays better than several interstate equivalents. I know there is an outlier. Queensland is an outlier in terms of where their pay is set but as advised to me, Tasmania is in the middle of the pack, and the government wants to see TasNetworks and bargaining representatives working hard to reach an enterprise agreement that supports and rewards its people while keeping Tasmanian power prices as low as they can possibly be.

I would very much say that its workforce and wage negotiations is an operational matter for TasNetworks. The government expects genuine engagement with staff and all involved within the realm of the WorkSafe parameters under which this negotiation would be happening. It is worth noting that I have written to the federal minister in charge of the WorkSafe act to express my concern about some of the actions that have happened during this action and made those views very clear.

TasNetworks has put a revised offer on the table and I, as I think all of us do, would like to see these negotiations brought to a close as soon as possible. I recognise that there will not be a time to call a vote that will be the preference of everybody but TasNetworks has decided to call the vote. I believe that vote will happen towards the end of this month and that gives -

## UNCORRECTED PROOF

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

### Supplementary Question

**Mr O'BYRNE** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear a supplementary.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - Does the minister actually support what amounts to a cash bribe to get an agreement across the line that does not resolve the issue that is being raised with TasNetworks? Over \$5 million.

**Mr DUIGAN** - What I would say is that I expect TasNetworks and its management and its employees to come together to negotiate a deal that suits everyone.

### TasPorts - Executive Bonuses

#### Ms DOW question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

TasPorts are a big part of the reason why you are now spending more than \$50 million on a patch-up job at berth 1. They failed to work with TT-Line to deliver the permanent wharf upgrades that now mean you have new ships arriving with nowhere for them to berth.

All up, the project is five years late, \$500 million over budget and costing our tourism operators half a billion dollars a year. Should TasPort's executives not be held accountable for this fiasco and not be offered bonuses or has your minority government completely lost the plot?

#### ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, this has been a challenging project. We will get the job done despite those opposite who continue to whinge and who continue to talk Tasmania down. So-called 'new Labor' is 'old Labor'. Nothing has changed when it comes to talking Tasmania down. Nothing has changed when it comes to not presenting an alternative budget to the parliament; rejecting the will of the people; stolen policies from the Greens when it comes to wrecking democracy; and substituting an MP's job with an unelected committee.

**Members** interjecting.

**Ms DOW** - Point of order, Speaker, Standing Order 45, relevance. Nothing has changed on that side, with the Premier not answering questions. I draw his attention to the content of the question, which is a very important matter.

**The SPEAKER** - There are two minutes to go, Premier. You have addressed challenging projects, talking Tasmania down, alternate budgets and stolen policies. Could you now address the accountability of TasPorts?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Too lazy to do the work, outsourcing your responsibilities to an unelected committee and a chatbot produced your 10-point plan. As minister Abetz says, the

'tin-pot plan', quite clearly. Indeed, borrowed from AI, which produced the 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future when it comes to the development.

**The SPEAKER** - I have asked you, Premier, since it is International Talk Like a Pirate Day, to follow my ruling and answer the question please as entertaining as your contribution was.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you very much and thanks for agreeing it is entertaining. Mr Winter, can I say, at the very least, I expect all GBEs and state-owned companies to have the team Tasmania approach. I expect our companies not to work in isolation, not to work within silos, but to work together, and we are here because of very challenging circumstances notwithstanding the disruption of the pandemic and steel prices and the initial delay in terms of the builder.

We will get the job done though and we will not listen to relentless negativity by those opposite, who are too lazy to engage with their own constituents when it comes to matters of the base job in this place, of going around their communities and seeking and listening to people's points of view.

I keep my ears very close to the ground when it comes to this project and other infrastructure projects across the state.

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

#### **Supplementary Question**

**Ms DOW** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Ms DOW** - Does the Premier think that it is acceptable that TasPorts executives who have played their role in the state's biggest infrastructure fiasco are going to be paid bonuses?

**The SPEAKER** - It does go to the original question about accountability of the TasPorts board and we have, in addition to the previous matters, only addressed team Tasmania, working in silos, working together, challenging circumstances, negativity, laziness and election committee processes. I draw the Premier to the question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We are focusing on solutions, honourable Speaker.

**Dr Broad** - Giving bonuses, is that your solution?

**The SPEAKER** - Member for Braddon, Dr Broad, thank you.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We have intervened in these matters, Dr Broad, in case you are slow on the uptake. I am advised by the Chair that the TasPorts board is considering whether to provide management with additional remuneration this year. The government has not yet received a request. I am advised by the chair of TasPorts, and this has just come to me, that I will receive a formal request shortly. I want to be clear that I will not be approving any request should it be received, from us, because we have to get the job done.

**Dr Broad** - How is it that we know more about this than you do?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - As I said before, we have intervened. Mr Moloney and Mr Gemell are working through this project, engaging with stakeholders -

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

**Macquarie Point Stadium - Project Confidence and Cost**

**Mr BAYLEY question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.32 a.m.]

In August 2022 you unequivocally confirmed a stadium would not be part of Tasmania's bid for our AFL teams, but in May 2023 you signed Tasmanians up for a stadium and every single dollar of cost overruns. A month later you committed to manage the Macquarie Point project to ensure it did not cost any more than \$715 million. Yesterday's application to the Planning Commission shows costs have already escalated to \$830 million before construction contracts have even been negotiated. The summary report and your Budget show the additional costs will be paid for by borrowings, ultimately a cost to the taxpayer.

From the get-go, so many commitments you have made on this stadium have been proven false. With your track record, how can anyone in the community, the Planning Commission or this parliament trust commitments you make on the stadium, and do you agree that borrowings do represent a cost to the to the government and the taxpayer?

**ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question and will repeat my answer that I have given a number of times since February this year. We are investing \$375 million in this project and not one red cent more.

**Dr Woodruff** - That was not the question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Well, it pretty much was, I have to say - \$375 million.

**Dr Woodruff** - You are not being honest about it.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I know you are very happy with your *Mercury* article because you produced an alternative budget, and well done to you -

**Dr Woodruff** - Thank you.

**The SPEAKER** - The Leader of the Greens will cease her interjections and the Premier will cease speaking directly to the Leader of the Greens and inciting them.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Through you, honourable Speaker, Dr Woodruff must be very pleased. Mr Winter could have had the same result had he produced an alternative budget himself and did not choose to copycat his way through his 40-minute contribution.

Notwithstanding that, I accept that you do not like the stadium and I suspect you probably never will until it is built.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Point of order, Speaker, This is not about the Greens' position on the stadium, it is a direct question to the Premier about his position in relation to borrowings and whether he accepts that borrowings do represent a cost to the taxpayer and the public.

**The SPEAKER** - Premier, that is the original question. If you could address that, that will help a lot.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Honourable Speaker and member, I repeat my answer. You talk figures above \$375 million. In fact, you talk figures way above the figures you have outlined in your question as well. We will invest \$375 million into this project and not one red cent more. There will be investors who will invest in this project and the Macquarie Point precinct, and it will be an example of intergenerational infrastructure that will grow our economy, which is important to ensure that we fund the services you spoke of in your budget reply and contained in your alternative budget as well.

Your budget misses a couple of key facts when it comes to investment in health and housing and other important community infrastructure, which we do need to invest in, but there is no way you are going fund it, essentially. We need to continue to grow the economy through intergenerational infrastructure, enabling infrastructure to employ Tasmanians and ensure we get the revenue into government so we can invest in those essential services that you quite rightly care about, as do we.

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

#### **Supplementary Question**

**Mr BAYLEY** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary from the Deputy Leader of the Greens.

**Mr BAYLEY** - The Premier's own Budget says that the Macquarie Point Development Corporation will borrow the blowout to pay for the stadium. That is more than one red cent more. Do you accept that this is an additional cost to be paid for by the public?

**The SPEAKER** - I will call the Premier to the question because it was the original question that was asked. The Premier addressed the first part but not the second about the borrowings.

**Mr Bayley** - And can he correct the record on this?

**The SPEAKER** - The Deputy Leader of the Greens will not be instructing me from his seat. If he wishes to raise a question about correcting the record there are appropriate forms of the House to do so. I will call the Premier to the question and hopefully we can move through with getting answers.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you. I draw the member's attention to my previous answer, which I believe is pretty clear with regard to the investment we are putting in, Mr Bayley. We

are investing in it once. It is an investment into our economy and the Tasmanian people. You might not like it but I like it and I think it is a worthy investment in partnership with the private sector, creating jobs, creating opportunity and creating aspiration for thousands of young Tasmanian boys and girls who live day by day wanting to be in an elite competition such as the AFL and AFLW. They will have the opportunity to do so right in their own backyard in Tasmania.

**Macquarie Point Stadium - Quantity Surveyor's Report**

**Ms JOHNSTON question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF, on BEHALF of MINISTER for SPORT and EVENTS, Mr STREET**

[10.37 a.m.]

My question is to the Premier in the absence of the Minister for Sport and Events. Yesterday, the stadium's planning application was submitted. My constituents are deeply concerned about the social, environmental and economic impact of this stadium. They have been poring over the documents but cannot find one crucial piece of information: the quantity surveyor's report done by WT Partnerships. This report would detail the cost estimates and the cost risks associated with the development. It is referred to and relied upon by KPMG in their cost-benefit analysis. The quantity surveyor's report should be in the submissions, but if it is there it is hidden. Is the WT Partnerships quantity surveyor's report publicly available? If so, where can it be found and, if not, will you release it publicly?

**ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question. My advice is that it was not part of the requirements for the submission. More broadly to your constituents, Ms Johnston, while I respect your views that you bring to this place, my view is that you really need to get out a little more amongst your electorate and talk to the people, and the young people in particular, out there in the northern suburbs and elsewhere who love footy, who love opportunity and who want a pathway and to be part of something very special. To deny young people that opportunity is not in the best interests of the Clark electorate or indeed any electorate around Tasmania.

As I go out and listen, people want investment into health, education, housing and cost of living, which is contained well and truly in our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, but they also want a future for their young people and especially in the Clark electorate where I have spoken with a number of young people who are excited about the AFL and AFLW opportunity.

**Supplementary Question**

**Ms JOHNSTON** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Ms JOHNSTON** - Could the Premier answer the last question - as it is not released publicly, will you release it publicly?

**The SPEAKER** - I will draw the Premier to the last part of the original question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I will take advice on that and I am happy to provide you with an answer but here we have a comprehensive submission for everyone to -

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - I am going to scuttle the interjections right now before the Premier responds.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - absorb and critique in an open and transparent way. Incidentally, can I commend Anne Beach and the Macquarie Point Development Corporation for their extensive, thorough and frankly outstanding work.

### **Northern Heart Centre - Federal Funding**

**Ms HADDAD question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.41 a.m.]

Your website still lists the northern heart centre as a \$120-million election commitment, but your Budget does not contain a single cent of funding to actually build it. In fact, it says that there will not be any unless the federal government agrees to pay half first.

That was not the promise that you made to Tasmanians and you know it. Can you confirm that the first time that you actually requested federal funding was on state Budget day just last week? Did you hold off on requesting federal support for six months so that your heartless, broken promise would not be exposed before now?

**Mr Winter** - Come clean.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - What?

**The SPEAKER** - I beg your pardon, Premier?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Sorry, honourable Speaker. Thank you for the question. I appreciate it. We will get the heart centre built with \$120 million of investment. Over the next number of months, we will be working on the design. On 14 February this year, I wrote to the Prime Minister seeking federal support for a number of projects around Tasmania, highlighting the heart centre.

### **Supplementary Question**

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr Winter** - Table it.

**The SPEAKER** - Members on my right will allow me to hear.

**Ms HADDAD** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - Members on my right and the Leader of the Opposition will allow the member for Clark to be heard in silence on her supplementary question.

**Ms HADDAD** - Will the Premier table that correspondence and admit that by making an election commitment that \$120 million of state funds would be committed to the heart centre, he misled Tasmanians during the election and he has misled parliament since.

**The SPEAKER** - I call the Premier to the question. It is a very serious matter if there has been a misleading of the House.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - As I have said, we wrote to the Prime Minister on 14 February about a range of areas as you would expect. What have you done? What have you lot done about advocacy for Tasmania? Why would we not seek a federal contribution for the LGH Master Plan, including a Heart Centre?

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Members on both sides will allow the Premier to come to the actual question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We will deliver this heart centre with \$120 million of investment. We will seek support from the federal government. Why would we not seek support?

**The SPEAKER** - I draw the Premier to the question. Members will remain silent.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We will work through a plan for the heart centre over the next number of months.

**The SPEAKER** - The Premier's time for addressing that question has expired.

### **Waste Management - Resource Recovery Strategy**

**Mrs BESWICK question to MINISTER for PARKS and ENVIRONMENT, Mr DUIGAN**

[10.44 a.m.]

Waste management is an important part of improving resource management and looking after our planet. Tasmania is a long way behind the mainland and other areas of the world when it comes to developing circular economy systems.

The State of the Environment report shows that despite the introduction of data collection from waste collection points, there are still large amounts of crucial information missing which could be used to find the low-hanging fruit and reduce waste to landfill.

What is the strategy to improve this so we can strive for resource recovery, and while we are talking about waste, do we have a start date for Recycle Rewards?

## ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question and her longstanding experience in the waste space, which is a very exciting area of my portfolio responsibilities. Tasmania is on the cusp of important and historic reform in the waste space - it is happening now, but also in the coming months and years ahead.

The State of the Environment report, tabled recently, leans into the waste area and things that we should do. I note that we are working our way through that, but I think it is important to point to some of the areas that are already underway in the state and what we are doing to further bolster our circular economy. We know that recovering resources from waste creates business opportunities and jobs, as well as being a benefit for our environment. It is a win-win-win.

We have delivered historic legislative reform in this area and made significant investments into the sector. We are helping to grow the circular economy in Tasmania with more than \$20 million of Tasmanian government funding being invested into plastics, into organics and into tyre recycling, as you would well know. We have released Tasmania's first Waste And Resource Recovery Strategy, which positions Tasmania as a place where nothing is wasted. That strategy helps to set our path for the coming years.

I will talk about some of the things that we are doing. We are working with those regional waste groups to make sure that we have a strategic planning pathway that is aligned, and to make sure we are supporting remote councils with levy rebates. We are also supporting an important grants program. This includes providing levy monies to help leverage federal funding, including \$3.5 million for our infrastructure grants, which are rolling out very shortly. That is work being done by the Tasmanian Waste and Resource Recovery Board, and I am looking forward to having more to say in that space in coming days.

We have invested \$9 million to improve organics reuse in Tasmania. You would be very familiar with Dulverton, which will see, amongst other improvements, 100,000 tonnes of organics processed into certified compost. That goes a significant distance to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions in the state.

In terms of container rewards, Recycle Rewards -

**The SPEAKER** - The minister's time has expired.

## Supplementary Question

**Mrs BESWICK** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Mrs BESWICK** - Obviously, we did not get to Recycle Rewards or data management at all.

**The SPEAKER** - I will call the minister to the original question.

**Mr DUIGAN** - As I say, there are a number of things happening as our waste and recovery space matures in the state. We will have more to say about how we go about collecting data, and I think that is a space that we need to lean into.

On Recycle Rewards, I know I have stood at this podium and said 'imminently'. I will say it again. It has been a very complex procurement, but we are close.

### **Nurses - Working Conditions**

**Mr JENNER question to MINISTER for HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mr BARNETT**

[10.49 a.m.]

I spoke to a nurse last week about the current state of our health system. All wards are severely understaffed. The emergency department is constantly overflowing and is predicted to have over three times as many presentations as it is equipped to deal with. The nurse I spoke to only graduated three years ago and yet is often left as the most experienced nurse on the ward. She told me that unless there are significant changes in the health system, she is going to, 'Quit nursing and move to the bush'.

She is not alone in this sentiment. Would you agree that more funds need to be directed to improve these departments that are already stretched to breaking point? Do you agree that there needs to be significant changes in the way our health system is operating and that these changes need to be implemented immediately if we want to keep our nurses in the health system?

### **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question and special interest in health. We have talked privately and publicly about the importance of health and that is why as a government we do invest record funding into health. It has just increased under the Budget delivered by our Treasurer last week from \$12.1 billion to \$12.9 billion over the forward Estimates. The Premier referenced the record funding on a daily basis that is now not \$8.3 million a day, it is \$8.8 million a day.

We do see it as a priority, and there is nothing more important than delivering the healthcare that Tasmanians need faster. We have delivered 2500 thousand extra jobs over the last 10 years in terms of injecting that into our workforce, 1390 extra nurses for example over that 10-year period and more than 300 extra hospital beds over that period.

There is a lot more to do and that is why we have given absolutely nation-leading policy initiatives at the election, which we are now rolling out. We are on this recruitment blitz. You have referenced the nurse. you have spoken to, and I say thank you to that particular nurse. I say thank you to our awesome healthcare workers. They are doing a fantastic job, and I am pleased to advise the House, in terms of the update on that recruitment blitz, it is 900 extra since April of this year. That is a 200-net increase over that period of time.

This is the frontline workers: doctors, nurses, paramedics, allied health professionals. We are go, go, go when it comes to the health system and building a better health system. We know it is required to deliver the healthcare that Tasmanians need and deserve, and we will not relent.

I am so pleased to be working with the stakeholders and with the unions. I have had roundtables with them in the last several months and have another roundtable tomorrow. I am looking forward to it. I am meeting with the unions, I am meeting with the stakeholders and I am meeting with the consumer groups from the health sector. We will continue to work with them. From time to time there is disagreement, but we are on the same page.

This is team Tasmania that the Premier referenced earlier today - team Tasmania getting the job done to ensure that Tasmanians get their healthcare that they need and that they deserve.

### Supplementary Questions

**Mr JENNER** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Mr JENNER** - I hear what you have just said and although that is great, I ask why we are not implementing the improvements that the ED department so desperately need. Why has it been put on the back burner?

**The SPEAKER** - I will call the minister for Health to address that.

**Mr BARNETT** - I am very pleased to answer that supplementary question. I am not sure which emergency department you are referring to, but, certainly with respect to the LGH, we are near doubling the size. There is \$39.5 million in our Budget over the next four years for near doubling the size and the total commitment of \$54 million in our commitment back at the election. We are going to deliver that. The Premier has made it clear we are getting on with the job, we are delivering and we will deliver that.

At the Royal, I am already pleased to see the progress in terms of an expansion of the ED at the Royal Hobart Hospital. We are working with the unions. We are working with the department. In terms of the next stage for the upgrade to the emergency department at the Royal Hobart Hospital, I was just there some weeks ago, met with the doctors and met with the nurses. They are very pleased with our \$88 million commitment in this Budget and going forward for the extra 44 doctors and for the extra 25 nurses in the ED. We have delivered on that commitment already.

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

**Launceston General Hospital - Pathology Staff**

**Mrs PENTLAND question to MINISTER for HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mr BARNETT**

[10.53 a.m.]

Pathology workers at the Launceston General Hospital have now walked off the job twice in three months, citing unsustainable workloads and severe understaffing. Can you explain why the government has not yet met with the pathology staff to address their concerns, despite the clear impact this is having on patient care and the broader healthcare system?

**ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for her question and her interest in health. I know it is long standing in terms of your interest in health and I look forward to further ongoing engagement with the member, who referenced the pathologist strike action at the Launceston General Hospital. We really value the pathologists. We appreciate all our awesome healthcare workers, but, in terms of the pathology work, we really do appreciate their work in supporting the Tasmanians who need it.

I am aware of those concerns and aware of that strike action taken by those pathology workers. I want to make it very clear that there is a misreport in the media today. My department met with the union on 28 August and a letter was sent to them yesterday by my acting secretary. It is very important that my department does communicate and work with Health and Community Services Union (HACSU). In this case it is HACSU.

I can confirm that the Budget provides funding to assist in matching demand to diagnostic spaces and the department is currently working to confirm what is needed at the LGH with local managers and staff in coming days.

We are committed to commencing recruitment work as soon as possible and have already undertaken preparatory work to expedite this process. Engagement with the union will continue as we work towards a positive resolution.

With respect to HACSU, I have had two roundtables with them in the last two months and I will be having another roundtable tomorrow. I look forward to catching up with Robbie Moore and HACSU, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF), the Australian Medical Association (AMA) and Health Consumers Tasmania. I acknowledge the independent member for Franklin for referencing that and pulling that motion forward. I meet with them regularly, and I am looking forward to that roundtable tomorrow and look forward to getting an update.

We say thank you to our healthcare workers. We are delivering on that, as I say, an extra 900 since April - a 200 net increase. We are on the go, but I do appreciate that. I hope that there will be a mutual agreement with respect to the department and those pathologists represented by HACSU and I hope that is resolved as soon as possible.

## Liberal Party Priorities

### Dr WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.58 a.m.]

Your Budget and the state of the environment response yesterday shows just how far the Liberals are prepared to bend to the will of large corporations. Struggling Tasmanians and our deteriorating environment are losing out big time. You refuse to make the big end of town pay their fair share and have prioritised a billion-dollar stadium instead of building homes and hospitals. On top of this, you tried to push through a bill to do the bidding of multinational ACEN, pre-empting a Supreme Court decision on the Robbins Island wind farm approval and subverting the rule of law.

You pretended the Validation (State Coastal Policy) Bill was urgent and tried to bulldoze it through in Budget week yesterday. It suffered a significant setback in the other place last night thanks to Greens and independents raising concerns. It seems there is nothing you will not do to sell out Tasmania's interest to the whims of multinational corporations. How do you justify your dishonesty and failed priorities to them?

**Mr ABETZ** - Point of order, Speaker. The assertion 'your dishonesty' directed to the Premier is a clear reflection that needs to be withdrawn.

**The SPEAKER** - If the Premier feels that he has been misrepresented, the Premier can ask for that to be withdrawn and the Premier can ask for that to be the case. The personal reflection is a personal reflection. The Premier can make that call. Otherwise, there is an opportunity for the Premier to seek the call at the end of Question Time to explain why he has not been misleading. If the member had said that he had lied, that would be different, but it is actually a personal issue.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It is a personal reflection and I have a pretty thick skin after a couple of decades in this place, but we do need to respect each other and engage in respectful discussion, robust debate nonetheless.

It would be in the interest of the parliament if Dr Woodruff did withdraw that.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I withdraw that. Can I change the final part of the question, then, to: how do you justify pretending the urgency of that bill and your failed priorities to Tasmanians?

**The SPEAKER** - The question would have stood without the reclarification because the word was withdrawn, so I will take that. Premier, I will call you to this but I need you to be conscious of not reflecting on a vote of a bill that has passed this House and may very well be coming back to this House at some stage, so if you can answer without reference to that it would be appreciated.

### ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, this is the House of Assembly and I am mindful of how the Legislative Council does its business. My understanding is that the leader made a decision to withdraw discussion on the bill for various reasons due to some engagement, as you would

expect, with her colleagues in the Legislative Council. It seemed to me a pragmatic, sensible and measured way forward.

I am interested in some of your commentary about multinationals and demonising investment in Tasmania. I can point to investment in renewable energy, investment in mining and investment in aquaculture. I was very interested in the accounting error in the Greens' alternative budget. I think you have done a great job in terms of at least producing an alternative budget, but there is an accounting error where you are taxing an industry that you will close down, so there would be no industry, effectively, to tax. I am not sure how that works. I would have another look at how you produce your alternative budget. It seems a little inconsistent to me - some would say kooky - that you would want an industry shut down sending thousands of people to the dole queue but at the same time taxing an industry that no longer exists under your regime.

We welcome investment in Tasmania, whether they be local investors, national investors or international investors, because when people invest in Tasmania they employ Tasmanians, they invest in capital and that supports Tasmanian businesses, small, medium and large, and our economy.

#### **Northern Heart Centre - Budget 2024-25 Allocation**

#### **Ms HADDAD question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[11.03 a.m.]

You have restated your commitment of \$120 million of state funding to the northern heart centre on numerous occasions in this place since the election. In June, you said:

The \$120 million northern heart centre at the LGH is a great example of our investment into infrastructure.

In July, you said:

I am very excited about the \$120 million northern heart centre, which is a fantastic initiative we spoke of and committed to at the last election.

You committed state funds, yet there is no funding in your state Budget handed down last week. You have confirmed today that you wrote to the federal government on 14 February asking for their support, meaning you misled Tasmanians when you made your now broken election promise to fund this yourself, and you have misled parliament since. Will you admit this is a massive broken election promise and will you table the correspondence that you sent on 14 February?

#### **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Heaven forbid if you lot become the Tasmanian government. Seriously, you would expect the state government not to seek contributions from the federal government? I mean, really. You come up here with your big 'gotcha' moment with whatever you said in terms of writing a couple of days ago or whatever it might have been. We wrote on Valentines Day, 14 February, this year, not only

about the Launceston General Hospital and health but also the National School Reform agreement, the Greater South East Irrigation Scheme -

**Mr Willie** - Does it name the heart centre in that letter?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Does it? Gosh.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - I ask members on my left to cease interjecting. This is a very significant allegation that is being made if the Premier has behaved in a way that is less than above board. I want the Premier to be able to answer it without interjections.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I wrote to the Prime Minister, dated 14 February 2024, and spoke of the hospital inpatient admissions per year to the LGH and the increase in projection. I talk about the long-term plan for health care in Tasmania 2040 includes a strong focus on providing more care in the community and the like. I go on to say:

I am now urgently seeking funding support from the Commonwealth Government to deliver critical elements of the master plan, which will provide increased capacity to respond to the growing demand for health services in the north and north-west of our state. The funding sought from the Commonwealth will deliver a significant expansion and improvements to patient flow within the LGH emergency department, expand and enhance capacity for delivery of coronary care services through the new northern heart centre and upgrade day procedure facilities, one of the cornerstone projects.

We have committed to the heart centre. We are at the planning and design stage and look forward once again to getting the job done.

### **Supplementary Question**

**Ms HADDAD** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Ms HADDAD** - Thank you to the Premier for reading from that correspondence. The question was: will he table that correspondence and acknowledge that there is not one cent of state funding in the state Budget to a commitment that he committed state funding to?

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Members on my right will stop helping me. If they wish the member to withdraw an allegation, they can do so as a more substantive motion. I will call the Premier to the original question, which was whether he would table the document and confirm state funding commitments.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - The member for Clark is also not being helpful.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - One of the reasons we mentioned the south-east irrigation scheme is because it requires a federal contribution, and it is a great example of partnership between industry, hardworking farmers, the state government and the federal government when it comes to irrigation infrastructure.

**Ms Haddad** - Are you going to table that document?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I am not going to make a habit of tabling correspondence to the Prime Minister. I have quoted from the letter to the Prime Minister. I respect the Prime Minister. We are often engaging on how we can both improve the lives of the Tasmanian people, including only a couple of days ago, in fact, on other matters. I will continue to engage with the Prime Minister who I have a very good and constructive relationship with, as I would have with the honourable Peter Dutton should he be elected as Prime Minister as well.

### **Renewable Energy Projects**

**Ms FINLAY question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[11.08 a.m.]

Your government has shattered our reputation as a place to invest in renewable energy. There is not enough power to sustain, let alone grow our economy. The situation with Robbins Island wind farm development is a total mess because of the inaction of your government over the past seven years. The stalling of your proposed coastal policy changes last night is just the latest stuff-up and is diabolical for the project. What are you going to do to give investors confidence that anything can happen in Tasmania under your minority government, and specifically, what are you going to do to finally get Robbins Island approved?

### **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for Bass for the question, ironic as it is, given the member speaks of investment and renewable energy but wants to gut the Hydro at the same time, and the now famous media conference announcing Tas Power Co, famous because they were nowhere to be seen and nor was the policy within about 24 hours. The Leader of the Opposition can at least have a wry smile on his face because he knows that is exactly the case. There was no mention of Tas Power Co in his budget reply speech either; no mention of the cost of living.

I have been to Robbins Island with minister Nick Duigan, which was enlightening with regard to the knowledge gained. As I have said in this place, I went to Robbins Island first in about the end of 2001 - it may have been 2002 - to speak of the vision there by the Hammond brothers for Robbins Island -

**Ms Finlay** - This is a serious issue.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, it is.

**The SPEAKER** - Member for Bass.

**Mr Winter** - It was 22 years ago.

**The SPEAKER** - Leader of the Opposition and member for Bass, please.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It is a serious issue. That is right. It was quite some time ago, and you were in government for most of that time.

We will get on with the job when it comes to renewable energy development. I know yesterday, Ms Finlay, you scrubbed out the last paragraph of your question that referenced the new Coordinator-General policy because of your embarrassment that those opposite were copying the 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future.

**Ms Finlay** - If you wanted to expand the services of the Coordinator-General, you could have done that when you opened up the act recently.

**The SPEAKER** - Member for Bass, please.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I thought your policy was going to fix this.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Obviously, you have realised that we have the same policy and we will also get the job done.

#### **Supplementary Question**

**Ms FINLAY** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Ms FINLAY** - My question was: what are you going to do to give confidence to investors that anything can happen in Tasmania under your Liberal minority government? Specifically, what are you going to do to finally get Robbins Island approved?

**Members** - Hear, hear.

**The SPEAKER** - The Premier has answered and I quote, 'Get on with the job'. The Premier can either add to that answer or he can leave it as it is.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The member may be aware of an act in the Commonwealth called the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (EPBC) which -

**Ms Finlay** - What are you going to do that you have control of?

**The SPEAKER** - Member for Bass, please.

**Dr Broad** - You are going to sit back and do nothing.

**The SPEAKER** - Dr Broad, member for Braddon.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The EPBC Act is a real staller when it comes to development in Tasmania. We want to see action at the Commonwealth level in terms of smoother pathways such as renewable energy development in Tasmania.

**Ms Finlay** - The question is: what are you going to do?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I will tell you what we are doing. It was very evident when I went to Tarraleah just the other day and saw the enormous investment that Hydro Tasmania is investing. I also got an understanding -

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

### **Salmon Hatcheries - Water Monitoring**

**Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for BUSINESS, INDUSTRY and RESOURCES, Mr ABETZ**

[11.13 a.m.]

Jeff Baker is a fly fisher who has been visiting Tasmania for 30 years. The *Tasmanian Inquirer* reports that what he has discovered about the South Esk River has shocked him. The river appears to him to be biologically dead with few fish, no insect life and highly acidic water.

Further investigation shows the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) had access to alarming water quality results downstream from the Millybrook salmon farm but did nothing with them. The pathetically weak conditions in Millybrook's environmental licence have no limits on smolt production, no monitoring requirements and no reporting on water quality impacts required. Recommendation 45 of the Legislative Council's Finfish Inquiry proposes tightening licence requirements on all flow-through hatcheries in Tasmania.

Will you require water monitoring above and below all salmon hatchery operations to track their impact on rivers, and will you tighten Millybrook's licence conditions and make information publicly available?

### **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, as I understand the situation, these licensing matters are largely to do with the EPA and the minister for the Environment. We have indicated very clearly that in relation to flow-through hatcheries, we want to see them recycle as they are doing down in the Huon, but we will not be forcing that issue. We will allow that to continue organically as the sector continues to develop and come to grips with some of the issues. The specific details in relation to the South Esk and water monitoring is not something that I have a brief on, but I will see if the minister for the Environment is willing to provide further information.

### **Supplementary Question**

**Dr WOODRUFF** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - A supplementary on the fact that the minister would speak to the other minister about providing that information: Will you ask the question and get the information about whether water monitoring will be undertaken on all rivers in Tasmania, above and below where there are salmon hatcheries?

**The SPEAKER** - I think the minister probably went close to the answer, but I will call the minister.

**Mr ABETZ** - I can find that out for the member.

**The SPEAKER** - I note both matters were taken on notice.

### **Police Rostering System - Budget Allocation**

**Ms BUTLER question to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mr ELLIS**

You have wrecked the Budget and run out of money to properly fund our police service. Can you confirm that the \$35 million of cuts the government is demanding from the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management will mean the newly trialled police rostering system designed to assist police with fatigue and wellbeing cannot be rolled out across our hardworking, already stretched police service? Why should police pay for your budget mismanagement with their wellbeing?

#### **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, let us make it very clear, our plan for Tasmania's future as part of our 2030 Strong Plan includes more police on the beat in Tasmania: 60 more officers who will be out there serving their communities, including a dedicated strike force that will be targeting recidivist offenders.

I noted in the Greens alternative budget they wanted to defund the police. They are your potential future partners in government. Our commitment is to grow Tasmania Police. We are currently at a record level in Tasmania with 1496 police, and we are continuing to invest. That is in stark contrast to when Labor was in government with the Greens and defunded the police again, sacking 108 police officers -

**Ms BUTLER** - Point of order, Speaker, Standing Order 45, relevance. If the minister would return to the question which was about the funding of the police roster system.

**The SPEAKER** - Whilst this is not an opportunity to restate the question, there was very little latitude from the member in asking the question and I am afraid that means there is very little latitude for you in answering it. I also want to applaud the Leader of the Greens for not taking the bait on that last commentary. That is noted and appreciated.

**Mr ELLIS** - I was asked about funding for Tasmania Police and I think the contrast could not be clearer. We are funding to increase Tasmania Police; when you were in government you sacked 108 police officers. I can tell you that you cannot deliver sustainable rosters for Tasmania Police if you sack one in 10 police officers in this state.

What we are looking to do is grow Tasmania Police. We have grown it by 32 per cent -

**The SPEAKER** - Minister Ellis, when I ask you to come to a question, it is disrespectful not to follow my drawing you to the question. I ask you to do so.

**Mr ELLIS** - Speaker, I respect your ruling. We are continuing to invest, and what that means is that we will continue to work through with our hardworking and dedicated police officers regarding -

**Ms BUTLER** - Point of order, Speaker, back to Standing Order 45, relevance. The question to the minister was about the police rostering system, if he could answer that.

**The SPEAKER** - The appropriate one might be to say that the minister is ignoring my ruling, which I would absolutely uphold. Minister, I draw you to the question. Relevance has already been taken.

**Mr ELLIS** - That was exactly what I was about to say. In relation to rostering, we are delivering more police; we will be working with our dedicated police officers. There have been a number of trial rosters that the commissioner has been working through with our dedicated police officers, particularly in our busy 24/7 stations, and that he will continue to work through.

I am not going to go through those negotiations here on the floor of parliament, but I know that our commissioner and our dedicated police force are keen to ensure -

**The SPEAKER** - The minister's time for answering the question has expired. Minister, I point out that if I have to call you three to four times during an answer, I will sit you down next time.

### **Crown Land - Affordable Housing Opportunities**

**Mr GARLAND question to MINISTER for HOUSING and PLANNING, Mr ELLIS**

[11.20 a.m.]

We have an abundance of Crown land, degraded land, within and around Tasmanian communities. Given the housing crisis we are now facing and the current financial barriers for low income earners, would it not be prudent to offer leasehold arrangements on suitable land parcels for Tasmanians to, in the first instance, put down a slab on which to build a shed to occupy while saving and ultimately building a dwelling in which to eventually live and raise a family? This will give some Tasmanians a sense of hope for the future, put a roof over their heads in an affordable way and also contribute to solving the housing crisis which we now face. I might add, this is the pathway a whole generation of Tasmanians went down in the past. Will you make available suitable land to offer an affordable pathway for Tasmanians to home ownership?

### **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon for his question and note his interest in affordable housing. We could not agree more. There are some big opportunities when it comes to unlocking Crown land in Tasmania so that we can deliver more affordable

housing lands in Tasmania. There is a range of different developments and this place recently passed through it, a Housing Land Supply Order for Techno Park in Kings Meadows in Launceston, which was Crown land that was disused and will now unlock 108 homes for Tasmanians.

We think that there are big opportunities around the state. There are currently housing land supply orders imminently pending for Penguin and Brighton and we note that wherever those opportunities present themselves we really want to be on the front foot. That is through our housing land supply order process and that has a pipeline of about 800 homes coming through. We really want to back in that process, because if Crown land is idle, we want to be unlocking that to unlock the dream of affordable home ownership for more Tasmanians. As part of our MyHome program, about 1200 Tasmanians have now been able to get into a home of their own with as little as a 2 per cent deposit. That is a huge increase after we expanded the scheme from where it was previously.

I take the member's question. We certainly agree that unlocking Crown land for affordable housing is a great opportunity. We would be looking more in terms of a long-term arrangement in terms of being actually able to own that land for those homeowners rather than some of the ad hoc arrangements that we have seen in the past, but always happy to work with the member about specific opportunities that he thinks might exist in this place, noting that there are some wonderful shack communities in our state that have been built in a similar way. We are looking for that long-term certainty and security for Tasmanian families through that housing land supply process, but we have always got a mind to how we can activate some of that disused Crown land.

**Time expired.**

## **CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS**

### **Ravenswood - Housing Tasmania Wildor Crescent Subdivision**

**Ms FINLAY question to MINISTER for HOUSING and PLANNING, Mr ELLIS**

[11.23 a.m.]

Michael from Launceston would like an update on the Housing Tasmania Wildor Crescent subdivision in Ravenswood. After calling for tenders, at great individual cost to each tenderer, has Homes Tasmania now told tenderers that it will not be happening? If so, can they please explain why?

**The SPEAKER** - I note that Constituent Questions can be given from your chair. It is probably quicker and easier.

### **Kings Meadows - Proposed Heavy Vehicle Rest Area**

**Mrs PENTLAND question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, Mr ROCKLIFF**

The proposed Kings Meadow heavy vehicle rest area has raised significant concerns among the Mount Pleasant Estate residents, particularly regarding noise, light pollution and

safety impacts on their community. Given that the project is, in its current design, appearing to lack adequate justification and alternative locations such as that the nearby Youngtown industrial area may be better served for both residents and for the truck drivers. Will the government reconsider the current location of the rest area to minimise disruption to the local community and ensure the amenity and safety of residents in the protected area?

### **Renal Facilities in Launceston - Funding**

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

A number of constituents in Bass have written to me with concerns about inpatient and outpatient renal facilities in Launceston. Despite federal funding announced in 2019 for redevelopment of the Kings Meadows Community Health Centre and satellite renal unit, the project has seen little progress.

We have heard from several constituents that the renal service is overwhelmed. There is a lack of sightlines to patients on dialysis, overcrowded facilities with non-compliant and insufficient storage space and one constituent told us of patients having reduced haemodialysis treatments in the Launceston General Hospital acute renal unit due to overflow from the Kings Meadow Satellite Renal Unit resulting in insufficient dialysis spaces for the number of people requiring treatment.

My constituents would like to know what has happened to the federal funding promised in 2019 and when will additional state funding be allocated to ensure the Kings Meadow Satellite Renal Unit is properly redeveloped?

### **Events in the North**

**Mr WOOD question to MINISTER for SPORT and EVENTS, Mr STREET**

Constituents in my electorate of Bass have spoken to me about the cancellation of Mona Foma and what it means for summer events calendar in the north of the state. It prompted me to think about the event sector more broadly and what information I can provide to my constituents about support to growing events, particularly in the north.

### **Moriarty - Power Reconnection**

**Dr BROAD question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr DUIGAN**

My constituent in Moriarty, Erin, has been without power for 19 days. Her family of four has been unable to access any of the announced support payments and is still waiting on paperwork from TasNetworks to confirm her eligibility. She has also now been told that her power will take another seven days to connect. That will be nearly a month without power, which is causing much distress.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF

I have this morning forwarded her contact details to your office and to the premier. Can you please do whatever you can to ensure her family's power is reconnected as soon as possible?

### **Small Businesses - Budget 2024-25 Support**

**Mr BEHRAKIS question to MINISTER for SMALL BUSINESS and CONSUMER AFFAIRS, Mr FERGUSON**

On National Family Business Day, many small business owners in my community have asked me how the 2024-25 budget is continuing to help small businesses, particularly given the higher interest rates that they are currently paying, which is affecting them.

### **PETITION**

#### **Service Centre for Swansea**

[11.27 a.m.]

**Ms HOWLETT** (Lyons - Minister for Racing) - Honourable Speaker, I have the honour to be the bearer of a petition signed by approximately 368 petitioners praying that the House establishes a part-time service centre at Swansea. The petition conforms with the relevant standing orders and rules of the House.

**Petition received.**

### **QUESTION ON NOTICE**

The following response to a question on notice was tabled:

#### **No. 13 - Proposed Renewable Energy Zone - North-West Tasmania**

Mr Garland to Minister for Energy and Renewables, Mr Duigan.

See Appendix 1 on page (106)

### **TASMANIAN CIVIL AND ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL ADDITIONAL JURISDICTIONS BILL 2024 (No. 46)**

#### **First Reading**

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

# UNCORRECTED PROOF

## SITTING DATES

[11.31 a.m.]

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

That the House at its rising does adjourn till Tuesday 15 October next at 10.00 a.m.

**Motion agreed to.**

## SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

### **Disability Rights Inclusion and Safeguarding Bill 2024 (No. 29) - Second Reading**

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

That so much of Standing Orders be suspended as would prevent the second reading of the Disability Rights Inclusion and Safeguarding Bill 2024 (Bill No. 29) being moved on this day sitting.

**Motion agreed to.**

## CONDOLENCE MOTION

### **Honourable Francis Roger Groom, Former Member for Braddon**

[11.31 a.m.]

**Mr ROCKLIFF** (Braddon - Premier)(by leave) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That this House expresses its deep sadness at the death on 25 August 2024 of the Honourable Francis Roger Groom, a former Minister of the Crown from 1982 to 1996, and a Member for the Division of Braddon from 1976 to 1997, and places on record its appreciation of his service to this State, and further, that this House respectfully tenders to his family its sincere sympathy in their bereavement.

Mr Groom sadly passed away on Sunday 25 August at the age of 87, just over a week after losing his dear wife, Gay. Roger and Gay are survived by their children, Kristin, Matthew, Michael and Rob, and we acknowledge and welcome Kristin and Rob here with us today to this place, the Tasmanian House of Assembly, where their dad worked, representing Tasmanians for over two decades. Our thoughts are with you all at this very sad time.

I did not have the opportunity to work alongside Roger, but our paths did cross. I was Young Liberals president in the early 1990s, you might recall, and Roger at that time had already served the electorate of Braddon as a Liberal member since 1976. Indeed, he went on to serve until his resignation in 1997, a period for over two decades. By the time I met Roger in the early 1990s, Roger had held senior ministries in both the Robin Gray and Ray Groom governments and he was a very experienced member of parliament.

I especially remember Roger from those times because of his kindness to me as a rookie Young Liberal and Young Liberal president and for the support and encouragement that he gave me. Perhaps it was because we were fellow north-west coasters, or that Roger had also begun his political career as president of the Young Libs himself from 1957 to 1962. Regardless of the motivation, kindness sticks with you, and Roger's kindness and personal assistance to me did just that.

Prior to entering politics, Roger was always destined to be a member of parliament and most likely a Liberal. A businessman, Roger worked as manager of Tas Truck and Tractor Pty Ltd in Burnie. He was always keen on politics, managing the Liberal state campaign for Braddon in 1964 before having a tilt himself, and he was consistent in speaking out in support of the business community, the economy and jobs for Tasmanians.

In his first speech in this place, Roger spoke about businesses being in such a bad state they were almost an endangered species. This was in a time of high interest rates, poor economic trends and Tasmania had a government that was out of touch with the Tasmania's business world.

The 1976 election had just been fought. Eric Reece had retired the year before and Bill Neilson had led Labor to victory, albeit with a narrow majority of one seat, and Max Bingham led the Liberals, winning 17 seats.

That was the climate in which Roger was propelled into politics. He was part of an emergent Liberal Party who went on to form government in 1982, remained in government until 1989 and came back to government a few short years later in 1992. 1982 was the first time there was a majority Liberal government in Tasmania.

Roger personified what it is to be a passionate member of parliament who understood how wealth was created and who benefits from a strong economy: the people in regional communities. In an op-ed in *The Advocate* on the eve of the 1979 election, Roger talked about the importance of our resource industries - mining, fishing, agriculture, downstream processing, exports - and said the campaign was about the wise and sensible economic management of Tasmania, the creation of employment opportunities and the return of business confidence.

In 1982, Roger was immediately placed into Robin Gray's Cabinet as Minister for Mines and Minister for Transport and went on to become Minister for Police in 1983; Minister for Health in 1986; Minister for Community Welfare in 1986; and Minister for Community and Health Services in 1992. These were senior important portfolios and he performed them well for two decades and worked in a measured and considered way. His work ethic was extraordinary. He was both hard working, respected, innovative and reformist.

On resigning from politics in 1997, Roger said there were no low points in politics, only highs. He said apart from his wife, the greatest thing that happened to him in his life was being appointed a minister in 1982. I am sure Kristin and Rob are also high points of Roger's life as well, might I say.

He named up the high points of his career: the introduction of Bass Strait ferry the *Abel Tasman*; encouraging transport giant Brambles to enter into shipping across Bass Strait;

and encouraging the start of the salmon industry in Tasmania: fantastic achievements at that time that still are with us and enduring today.

Roger bowed out of politics alongside former Labor premier Michael Field, taking a collective 40 years of experience from the parliament with them, to get more involved with the Burnie Lions Club where he was president and member for 34 years. He received the Lions International President's Award for Outstanding Service in 1984, one of only six people to receive the award at the time, and Rob tells me that he was one of the first, if not the first inaugural district governor for Lions and in that that year, he visited every Lions Club in Tasmania - all 52, so one a week. Quite an accomplishment, especially during a busy life as an MP.

Former premier Ray Groom said of Roger's handling of the complex Health portfolio that Roger had the ability, the knowledge and the determination to handle that very effectively. He seemed to keep Health out of the headlines, which is amazing indeed. If issues arose, he would deal with them pretty quickly, competently and quietly, so they were not in the headlines the next week, which is a tough assignment. 'He was a good bloke', former premier Ray Groom said, and I echo those sentiments. He was a good bloke, and for those who knew and worked with Roger, they too echo those same sentiments.

He loved Tasmania, especially the outdoors, including bushwalking, and I am informed by Rob that he walked the Overland Track at a very young age. He was also, in his younger days, a champion swimmer, rower and basketballer.

Of all his accomplishments, he was still a dad of four children. Rob remembers a busy dad who used to get spoken to on a number of occasions when they went out for family dinners and those dinners were interrupted. I am sure many of us could reflect on that and the importance of engaging with our constituents at any time of the day. Rob remembers phone calls at all hours of the day and night, pre mobile phone.

He was in parliament for some 21 years. Obviously Roger took his ministerial responsibilities very seriously, but most importantly, he gave two decades of service, that base job of an MP, engaging and being open to speaking and, most importantly, listening to your constituents 24 hours a day, which clearly kept him in the job for a very long time. He was a busy dad but most importantly, a loving dad.

Their special holiday places included Cradle Mountain and Nelson Bay on the west coast, and later in life, at Gay's grandfather's shack at Greens Beach, where Roger once again was an active member of the community, including Landcare.

Roger was a sturdy, sensible and Liberal to a tee. He was hardworking, he got on with the job, he did it very well and he will be very sadly missed by all those who loved and knew him. Kristin and Rob, who are in the Chamber with us today, must and should be enormously proud of the accomplishments and achievements of their dear dad, Roger, and of course Gay, who was alongside him for those 21 years. What a partnership they were for the people of Braddon and the entire Tasmanian community. Vale Roger Groom.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

[11.42 a.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin - Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, on behalf of the Labor Party, I extend our condolences to the family and friends of the Honourable Francis Roger Groom. We express our condolences to the Liberal Party members in this House and the wider party for their loss. We know the impact of losing respected, valued and loved members of our party and understand the profound impact that Roger had on the lives and careers of so many on the other side of the Chamber.

I did not meet Roger but I spent time looking back on his career and was very impressed. His was a career that made Tasmania a better place with a set of achievements that not many of us will be able to leave this place matching. All of us will be judged by our achievements for Tasmania as we leave and not many of us will be able to attribute the sorts of achievements to our own careers that Roger Groom could.

His family and friends must be incredibly proud of his achievements and the legacy he leaves for this state, and while I am sure Roger and I would not have agreed on everything, it is clear that he was a dedicated member and his commitment to serving Tasmanian people was very strong.

Roger entered parliament as a Liberal member for Braddon on 11 December 1976. His career in this House, which spanned a remarkable two decades plus, was distinguished by his service in a wide range of ministerial roles. In the two portfolios that I noted in my research were two remarkable achievements. When the state was cut off from the mainland in June 1984, the federal government funded a new ferry service, but it was up to the state and it was up to Rogers as the Transport minister to reconnect Tasmania to the mainland via sea.

Roger took the task in his stride and the new service, known as TT-Line, was owned by the people of Tasmania and managed by a board that reported directly to the Tasmanian state government. He delivered to the people of Tasmania the *Abel Tasman*, the first of a series of proudly state-owned ships dedicated to Tasmania's critical connection to the mainland. It is still a loved service today that has been an incredibly positive investment for our state and Roger has rightly been given much of the credit for that acquisition.

One of my first memories as a young fellow was travelling on the *Abel Tasman* with my family, ready for the trip of a lifetime travelling around the country with a caravan on the back, something so many Tasmanian families have done and consider a great privilege, and that goes back to the legacy of Roger Groom.

Legacies are not about what you do for yourself but what you do for the next generation and Roger Groom's legacy to the Tasmania economy is no stronger than through his championing for the opportunity of Atlantic salmon farming in this state. While Minister for Sea Fisheries, Roger was fundamental to the establishment of Tasmania's salmon industry. In fact, Frances Bender, one of the other founders of the industry, told me this morning, Roger was the most proactive to support the initial legislation that got the industry started. He issued the first licences and established SALTAS with government equity so that he could ensure that the government could help drive the direction of the industry with private sector capital to maximise local benefits for Tasmania and Tasmanian workers.

The backbone of the industry was enshrined in strong legislation that led to the success of the industry over the next four decades. What an incredible legacy he has left. In his pitch

to the naysayers in 1984, Roger predicted that his salmon project would be worth \$16 million to the Tasmanian economy and employ as many as 400 people.

Today, the project is worth well over \$1 billion and employs more than 5000 people from Dover, Nubeena and Triabunna to Cressy, Devonport and Strahan. It is not often that politicians undersell the potential of their own initiatives, but in this case Roger did and that is only to his credit. There are families in Tasmania today who are able to live, work and thrive in regional Tasmania due to Roger Groom's vision for this state. That is an incredible legacy and achievement.

Roger's legacy is deeply entwined with his family life, and the recent loss of his beloved wife, Gay, just two weeks before Roger's passing, is a profound sorrow, I am sure, to his children and his wider family. To those in political life, but particularly in the Liberal Party, we share our condolences with you at this time. In reflecting on Roger's life - a man who rose to the challenges in front of him, a man committed to serving his community and a man of great legacy - on behalf of the Labor Party, I commend Roger Groom's life, his service, his contributions to Tasmania and his enduring influence to all those around him. He will not be forgotten. Vale, Roger Groom.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

[11.47 a.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Honourable Speaker, on behalf of the Greens, I extend my condolences to the family and friends of Roger Groom, known as Roger, who died at the age of 87. What a fantastic age and what a fantastic life he lived. This must be such a hard time for his family - and I acknowledge Rob and Kristin who are with us today - because Roger's wife, Gay, died just weeks before him. They were married for 63 years. How lucky they were to have such a long time together.

Roger Groom was born in 1936, and he was interested in politics from a young age. He served as the president of the Liberal Party, as the Premier said, at the age of 21. He was working as a machinery salesman for much of his time before he was elected in 1976 to the House of Assembly for the Liberals. In the Long Room, if members want to take a look afterwards, you can see a picture of Roger taken during that time, sporting a fabulous moustache - so fitting of the era. We say there should be more of them here today.

Roger Groom passionately served his community of Braddon for over 20 years until his retirement in 1997. He did great important work for Tasmanians as a senior minister of the Robin Gray and Ray Groom governments between 1982 and 1989. That included his time as Minister for Health, Mines, Police and Emergency Services, Transport, Fisheries, Community Welfare and Health Services. What a lot of portfolios he took on and what a lot of Tasmanians lives he touched in the work he did.

Ray Groom has been complimentary of the work of his old colleague, recording that the Minister for Health was determined and hardworking and a person who dealt with issues quickly and competently. I want to just appreciate what the Premier said in his personal stories of Roger's life. We also, as the Greens, recognise his integral role in introducing the Bass Strait ferry, the *Abel Tasman*, to Tasmania. What a critical contribution this has made to our connection with the mainland. In 1994, he also introduced a domestic violence policy. It

focused on protecting and supporting victim/survivors and increasing the awareness of the consequences of domestic violence on women and children.

After his retirement from politics in 1997, Roger Groom continued to be a very active member of the community. He was a proud and dedicated member of Lions Tasmania, and he was involved with Lions Tasmania for more than 60 years, contributing particularly to the Burnie Club and serving as the Burnie District's first district governor in 1980. Even after retirement, he showed this incredible dedication to the Lions Club, and I understand he used to travel 130 kilometres regularly to attend meetings and he would not think anything of it.

I suspect that the Greens may not have agreed on all of the projects that his government prosecuted during his parliamentary period, such as seeking to establish the Franklin Dam or the direction that the salmon industry - which he started in the early days - has grown in the time since then but no one can disagree that Roger Groom was a hardworking government minister and a passionate advocate for and an active member of the community that he served. He was also a man who loved Tasmania's wild places. He was a regular walker in the bush and a member of Landcare Tasmania.

On behalf of the Greens, I extend my condolences to his family and friends, and especially to Kristin and Mick, Matt and Rob, to his children and grandchildren, who I understand called him Bodge, and to his brother and best mate, Dick.

I am sure Roger will be hugely missed. The incredible memories of love and generosity that he leaves with his family and friends, and the pride that he ought to have given them, will continue down, I expect, through generations for the contributions he has made to the people of Braddon and the state of Tasmania. Vale, Roger Groom.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

[11.52 a.m.]

**Mr ELLIS** (Braddon - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Honourable Speaker, I rise today to add my sincere condolences to the family and loved ones of Francis Roger Groom and his beautiful wife, Gay. Roger was a husband, a father, a machinery salesman, a member for Braddon and a minister in the Liberal Robin Gray and Ray Groom governments.

I never had the opportunity to meet Roger or Gay, but I was honoured to be able to attend the funeral. I feel in some ways I have walked a journey in the same boots as Roger. He is a predecessor of mine as a member for Braddon, as a Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management and as a Minister for Mines, and importantly as well, he brought facial hair to the heart of our democracy in Tasmania. It was wonderful to see a moustache and a beard at different times in his career. I probably cannot quite do it as well as Roger.

He left a remarkable legacy, as other members in this place have already noted. He was a Minister for Health for a significant period of time; he was responsible for the Bass Strait Ferry - the *Abel Tasman* - with a model replica proudly adorning the coffin the day of his funeral; he encouraged the salmon industry in Tasmania; negotiated with Brambles for a daily service out of the Burnie Port; and was a man so ahead of his time when it came to the introduction of the domestic violence policy.

His championed that, as well as victim/survivors in our state. We still have some way to go with that response, but we can look back on his legacy with great gratitude for that visionary work that puts the most vulnerable people in Tasmania at the forefront of our minds. Indeed, I know the family are so proud of and grateful for his legacy and have noted that if ever anyone needs advice about running the health system or buying new ships, they are always happy to pass on some advice.

Importantly, he also won the parliamentary wood-chopping competition, which I think is an outstanding feat and perhaps something that we might need to bring back. It is no doubt central to his legacy. He was a great lover of the forest industry and the act was proudly adorning his coffin. Indeed, the Britton family, who many would know in this place from beautiful Circular Head, were well in attendance at the funeral. Ross Britton, one of the elder statesmen of the forest industry, spoke so movingly about his connection with Roger as a local member and a friend and someone who would spend great amounts of time in that beautiful part of our state, holidaying with family and friends and really connecting with the local community, of which you could really tell in all of Roger's great works, was one of the areas that he was most proud - to be a member for Braddon and represent the people who he sold forestry equipment to and big trucks and excavators as a private citizen, as someone that he represented in parliament and then someone that he would serve in his time afterwards in Lyons. Indeed, it has been said before in country music that the greatest contributions are the ones that we leave behind, and I think in Roger's case that is absolutely true. He has left behind a beautiful family and so many family members spoke so movingly on the day and afterwards, catching up about their memories of their beloved 'Bodgy' and his contribution to them as a brother, a father, a grandfather and a great grandfather and his care for all of them and the extraordinary family in which he has been pivotal in raising.

We have spoken about his contribution through Lyons and clearly the mark that he has left on so many of the colleagues that he served with at the time. It was wonderful to catch up with so many members of those - Ray Groom and the Robin Gray government and the ex-premiers who were in attendance - there honouring the passing of this great man.

He was indeed honourable for life and enjoyed that title in his long retirement at beautiful Greens Beach content, I imagine, with a life of love and service. So, rest in peace the honourable Francis Roger Groom.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

[11.57 a.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Attorney-General) - Honourable Speaker, I am very pleased and proud to pay a tribute to Roger Groom and pass on my condolences to the family; Robert and Kristin and others. Just to indicate, I first got to know Roger when I returned from the US in 1988 to join Robin Gray's government as a very young adviser at the time in 1988 to 1989. I enjoyed working with Roger and his office and got to know him as a man of strong character, a man of vision. He was, as the Premier has indicated, very kind and generous. I got to meet Gay and visited the family at the back of Burnie and they were always very kind and welcoming to me as a young adviser in the Robin Gray government at the time.

That left an indelible impression on me at the time and then, subsequent to 1989, they were back in government again in 1992 through to 97 when Roger concluded his time in the parliament after 21 years. We certainly had much contact during that time through to 1997. An

incredible list of portfolios in terms of health, which I can relate to very specifically and, of course, transport, police, welfare services, mines. He was a strong advocate for the north-west coast and Braddon. He always was, and what stands out, as has been mentioned already in terms transport, the *Abel Tasman*, which has been mentioned, and he was pivotal in getting that started in Tasmania.

Likewise, he started the salmon industry and, again, I concur with the remarks that have been shared. It is visionary stuff. Look where we are now and this started so long ago under the leadership of Roger Groom.

Likewise, Roger was responsible, in 1994, for one of our first family violence policy initiatives, and I commend him for that. He did have a heart for his community, he had a heart for the vulnerable, and he led that policy initiative and released that on behalf of the government at the time led by Ray Groom. I particularly acknowledge Robin Gray. I acknowledge Ray Groom and I know they are so pleased and proud of his commitment to those governments at that time: a 21-year commitment in parliament and 63 years commitment with Gay, who sadly passed away just two weeks before Roger. I pass on my condolences and best wishes to the family. To reflect on the legacy of the honourable Roger Groom is a great honour and I pay tribute to him today.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

[12.00 p.m.]

**The SPEAKER** - There being no further speakers, I will add a few words. I also did meet Roger a few times during my very early political days and my work with Laurel House for a short period when he was responsible for some significant changes about family violence.

Anyone who has ever been Health minister forms a bit of a special club: anyone who has endured the process of being Health minister for a long time. It does always mean that those people who have been in that role have a bit of a shared understanding of how life has been.

I cannot imagine how difficult August must have been for the Groom family to lose two people so very much loved, so very close together. I appreciate that you have been able to join us in the House today, Kristin and Robert.

I ask members to signify their support for the motion by standing in silence.

**Motion agreed, *nemine contradicente*.**

**Mr ROCKLIFF** (Braddon - Premier) - Honourable Speaker, I further move -

That a copy of the foregoing resolution be forwarded to the family of the late Mr Groom.

**Motion agreed to.**

# UNCORRECTED PROOF

## MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

### Macquarie Point Stadium

[12.02 p.m.]

**Ms JOHNSTON** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: Macquarie Point Stadium

It is my pleasure to rise today in the Matter of Public Importance and concern regarding the Macquarie Point stadium. Yesterday, in my Budget reply speech, I noted that once upon a time, health and housing were the first things that people talked to me about when I was out and about in my community. Now, it is the opposition to the stadium at Macquarie Point. Whilst everyone seems to be in support of an AFL team, by far their biggest concern is the dodgy deal that we have signed with the AFL that has us on the hook to pay for a brand new stadium.

They are concerned that funding a stadium to appease AFL will take priority over investment in health and housing. The concerns are clearly borne out and valid when you consider the priorities in this Budget. The origin of the stadium project seems to be a brain fart the government had when they worked their way onto the drawing board in negotiations, and before even the cabinet knew about it, we were signed up to deliver it.

The details were so light on at this stage that we had effectively signed a blank cheque for a stadium which is little more than a back-of-the-envelope drawing. That is why the documents released yesterday are so critically important. Finally, there is some meat on the bones of this proposal, something to scrutinize and what was released yesterday was an absolute doozy. I do not have time in this debate to forensically go through all the issues, but there are two absolute pearlers that immediately stand out.

The first is the cost blowout already occurring. The soil has not even been scratched and we are told that it is going to cost us another \$60 million. Hidden in the detail, there is another \$55.2 million in fit-out costs too, bringing the total cost to \$830.2 million, edging close at this very early stage to \$1 billion as predicted. This government must really take Tasmanians for fools if they think we believe that this government will pay no more than \$375 million.

We are contractually on the hook for all overruns. That is a fact. This government could not deliver a project on budget if its life depended on it. They have a strong record of major project cost blowouts: the TT-Line, Bridgewater bridge, Southern Outlet, the list is long. The federal government money is for the precinct urban renewal, not the stadium. It is not exempt from our GST carve-up.

Concerningly, for the stadium to function, it requires a lot of supporting and complementary infrastructure that has not been included in the cost, but for which we will all have to pay. The relocation of the waste treatment plant is one example, and significantly, the transport infrastructure and plan is another. Whilst I am on the transport plan, this is another example of how absurd this project is. We are told to get the crowds to stadium - and, if time permits, I will talk about the absurd assumptions that have been made about the crowd numbers - this government is relying on nothing short of a miracle. Somehow, even though we have a public transport crisis with no end in sight, we are going to have to find 140 buses and their drivers and the mechanics to keep them maintained to cart thousands of attendees to the

stadium from across Greater Hobart. We are going to rely on a rapid bus system that does not even exist and is unfunded, which stuffs up the urban renewable opportunities for the northern suburbs, and for members' information, the rapid bus transport is described in the business case as 'the backbone' of their transport plan.

We are going to run an education campaign to encourage patrons from the eastern shore to use the Bowen Bridge because the Tasman Bridge cannot handle the capacity demand. There will only be 300 car parks on site for members and officials. Everyone else will be expected to walk, cycle or park in our existing CBD car parks. I mean, give me strength. Has no-one seen the car parking chaos when there is an event on at the Grand Chancellor or at the Federation Concert Hall and it is a Saturday night? Our car parks are full for miles, but we are told it is okay because they will ensure that there are no scheduling clashes. Are we really expected to believe that the AFL will be flexible with their fixtures because the TSO has a concert planned for that night? I do not think so, and neither do Tasmanians.

This stadium is based on nothing but a hope and a prayer. It is asking us all to cross our fingers and hope for the very best scenario, but when it goes pear-shaped, and it will, it will be generations of Tasmanians who will have to pay. This is an absurd proposal and it is writ large in the submission that was submitted yesterday. I pray that common sense will prevail and this stadium is rejected.

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### Recognition of Visitors

**The SPEAKER** - Before calling the next speaker, I forgot to acknowledge that sitting in the Speaker's Reserve today are two students from Launceston College and Saint Patricks College who are the winners of the 2024 Parliamentary Debating Shield. It is lovely to have them both here.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

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[12.07 p.m.]

**Ms OGILVIE** (Clark - Minister for the Arts) - Honourable Speaker, the Tasmanian government is ensuring that Tasmanians have access to infrastructure that they need and deserve. There is no doubt that the Macquarie Point multipurpose stadium is game-changing infrastructure for our state and, importantly, for my electorate of Clark. A multipurpose stadium at Macquarie Point will grow our economy and create local jobs. It will provide a world-class venue for the arts and deliver the AFL team Tasmania has been wanting for decades.

It is without doubt that this transformational project will be more than just a stadium. It is our opportunity to build something iconic that will be uniquely Tasmanian and offer a world-class experience. It will create jobs for Tasmanians both during and after construction and this means roofs over heads and food on the table for many. During construction, it is expected to contribute \$269 million to the Tasmanian economy over five years and once operational, about \$30 million is expected to be added to the Tasmanian economy each year. It will support over 200 jobs on an ongoing basis.

We have reached an exciting milestone with the application for our multipurpose stadium at Macquarie Point submitted and now being assessed by the Tasmanian Planning Commission as a project of state significance. The submission comprises a 260-page summary report

supported by nearly 4000 pages of expert advice and reports. These are all now available for both the Tasmanian Planning Commission to assess the project and for our community to see the work that has been done. It is important to note that this is more than just a planning assessment. The integrated assessment and detailed project guidelines consider land use planning, environment and cultural heritage, transport and movement, and economic and social impacts and benefits.

This project will broaden the cultural offering available in Tasmania. It will provide a large-scale venue for events and concerts and other entertainment events that would otherwise not be available. This project is about the opportunities it will create and the ongoing stimulation and contribution to Tasmania's offerings, opportunities, economy and jobs, as well as to our vibrant arts and culture and heritage scene which we all know and love so much.

Not only is a fantastic venue settled into what is already a world-class arts precinct with neighbours like the amazing Hedberg Centre, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery and our beautiful Federation Concert Hall, but as a striking piece of architecture sitting alongside the wonderful buildings of Hunter Street. This precinct will become a hive of activity for cultural events and create a space for public art. The Project of State Significance (POSS) submission for the project makes clear that there are significant opportunities to incorporate public art within the stadium development and precinct more broadly and I am really excited for that, particularly as Arts minister.

We get all of this with the government's contribution remaining capped at \$375 million and not a cent more, and we have been clear about this from the start. Let me be clear again: there is not a cost blowout. The total development budget remains at \$715 million. Cost planning is point in time and is continuously being adjusted as the detailed design process progresses. The current cost plan estimate, including escalation, is \$774.91 million. To make up the remaining costs, we have always said we will seek investment from the private sector. There is significant interest from the private sector and we will not let that opportunity pass. We are currently exploring options for more private sector investment and partnerships and we will have more to say about that soon, so this is not a cost to Tasmania, honourable Speaker, it is an investment, and let me be clear, not one dollar is being diverted from our health system.

We are spending \$8.8 million on health every day and we are able to do two things at once. Let us not forget that the federal government is also investing \$240 million towards the precinct. They made it clear yesterday that they have accepted the precinct plan for the site. This will become a world-class destination for our state and the federal government can see that the business case stacks up, the project will deliver economic activity and is a significant return on investment. We are extremely proud of the progress that has been made to date and we are getting on with the job.

[12.12 p.m.]

**Mr WILLIE** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I have said a lot of things about this issue on the public record and a lot of it still stands. I participated in the Public Accounts inquiries and I had significant concerns during the negotiation that the Premier was not standing up for the state's interests. I also said things like there was a failure of collective governance on that side of the House, and clearly there was. The proposal did not go to Cabinet. I cannot understand why senior ministers such as the Treasurer, for example, did not demand to see the deal before it was signed off; they did not even have Treasury go through the agreement to see

if it was a good deal and make some analysis. It was a complete failure of collective governance on that side.

Was it a good deal? There was a lot of debate about that. It is what it is and we have to make the most of it, because there is only one opportunity when it comes to the AFL and AFLW teams and if we do not grasp the opportunity, it will be gone forever. The timelines mean that we have to accept the situation. Yes, I have been very critical of the whole process and how it has played out, but we have to accept it now, because there has been an election and the timelines in the agreement mean that if the agreement is not complied with, we will not get the teams.

We will not be in government in this parliamentary term to oversee the deal if it goes full term. It is this government that has to deliver on their promises; '\$375 million and not a red cent more' is what the Premier promised Tasmanians. I understand the skepticism and we will certainly be holding them to account. They have a long list of failures when it comes to infrastructure projects. You only have to look at the complete mess on the eastern shore when it comes to the high performance centre and how they are putting that community through significant pain because of the mismanagement of that project. We would like to see the government get on with it and deliver these teams because it will be great for Tasmania. A case has been fought for decades to have these teams.

I am a long-suffering, third-generation St Kilda supporter, and I cannot wait for the Tasmanian Devils to run out on the field because it will give me the only excuse in my lifetime to switch teams. I am a loyal person. People who go for St Kilda are strong characters, I can tell you, because of the lack of success.

I have never seen a premiership in my life. I know in my heart when the Devils run out, that I will be going for the Devils. I will still have a soft spot for St Kilda, but I am very excited about these teams because we have such a great history when it comes to the AFL. We have produced some of the best players the competition has ever seen: people like Peter Hudson, Royce Hart, Darrel Baldock, Matthew Richardson, Alistair Lynch, Rodney Eade, Nick and Jack Riewoldt. These are some of the best players who have ever graced the game and they are Tasmanians.

We deserve our own team. The situation is what it is, and we have come to the decision that we have to accept the AFL deal for what it is. The timelines are what they are. We want the Premier to deliver what he has promised so that we can get these teams on the park. This is a significant economic stimulus for the state. We are going to see content in Launceston. I asked Andrew Dillon himself in a parliamentary hearing what sort of content we might see there and he said that we will see Essendon, Richmond, Geelong and Collingwood - we will see those big Melbourne teams playing in Launceston too.

He said that on the public record. It is going to be good for the state to have these teams, and it is going to be great for kids, women and girls to have this aspiration that we can have a pathway into the elite sport. I know my two boys are very excited about the AFL teams -

**The SPEAKER** - And your daughter will be?

**Mr WILLIE** - My daughter is only 18 months old, but she is going to be very excited too, no doubt, when she understands the gravity of the situation and how exciting it will be for the state. Thank you for the interjection there, Honourable Speaker.

We are supportive of a stadium. There are obviously a couple of proposals. One of them has pretty serious financial backup, and I would like to see the government being a bit more open and seeing some competitive tension between those two projects.

[12.17 p.m.]

**Ms BURNET** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for Clark, Ms Johnston, for bringing this important debate on. I am also going to talk about the cost blowout of the Macquarie Point stadium proposal and the huge expense to Tasmanians. They are back-of-the-envelope calculations, but they give you an idea of just how much comparatively we are paying. I will also talk about the transport modal shift, which as Ms Johnston has already said, is phenomenal. It is breathtaking to think how much it is going to change.

Professor Philip Thalys, who is an architect and the 2024 gold medal medallist from the Australian Institute of Architects, has suggested that we could be looking at the most expensive stadium in the world in terms of cost per seat. By his estimate it is 32 times more per head of population than the Western Sydney Stadium. The costs per person for that stadium were \$42.90 per person in New South Wales, and for this stadium presently they are \$1357 per Tasmanian. That is a huge difference of potential costs borne by Tasmanians. It is absolutely phenomenal. Without a sod being turned, we have already seen the price rise by 10 per cent.

To the point about transport, it is wonderful to think that we could have public transport getting people into any stadium. That would be a dream for any city, but the modal shift - the applicants are looking at a 60 per cent public transport movement of people into any event at the proposed stadium. At the moment, public transport in greater Hobart is about 5.3 per cent and there is a huge amount of work to be done. Modal shifts are fantastic, but you need a good and functioning public transport system. People need to be ready to use that. Car traffic at the moment is 65.7 per cent, so it is a significant shift in that transport proposal. Having four Park and Ride facilities in Kingston, Rokeby, Midway Point and Claremont is also something to look forward to.

It troubles me that this is looking at beefing up public transport for a stadium - a stadium that I cannot remember how many events is likely to have.

**A member** - 41.

**Ms BURNET** - That is pretty good for those people who may be travelling by a functioning public transport system to 41 events, but it is unlikely that that transport system is going to be in place ready for any stadium, and certainly not ready for the workers and the residents of greater Hobart now.

To the car park - there are about 300 spaces for private car parking under the concourse. They will be built three storeys down underneath the concourse at Macquarie Point. I do not know if the proponents have thought about the Thwaites Glacier, climate change and sea-level rising, but it is of significant concern that there would be three storeys of car parking below the concourse at Macquarie Point.

We cannot believe these figures. We cannot believe that the government would waste so much money, and this announcement is during Budget week. It is an incredible waste of money and such folly for the Tasmanian people.

[12.23 p.m.]

**Mrs PENTLAND** (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak on this important matter. My reservations about building a new Hobart stadium have been on record since I first put my hand up for election. I voiced my concerns over the cost of the project as a member of the JLN, and those concerns have not changed now I am an independent. While I would not endorse Senator Lambie's colourful suggestions as to where the stadium should go, I am not convinced it should be built at Macquarie Point either.

Yesterday, the first budget blowout was confirmed well before the first sod had been turned. If other major infrastructure projects are anything to go by, it may be the first of many. The Premier has been clear about capping the state's contribution at \$375 million, but the government has been less clear about how the shortfall will be paid for. What sort of public/private partnership are you going to sign the state up to? What risks will taxpayers take on? What payments will taxpayers be liable for?

In Western Australia, the Liberal coalition attracted criticism from the Auditor-General for not being open about how the Perth Stadium was being funded. They used commercial-in-confidence as an excuse for secrecy. I asked the Premier earlier this week to guarantee there would be greater transparency in Tasmania. He told the House there would be, and that is a promise I will be making sure he sticks to.

Tasmanians deserve to know exactly how this project will be paid for and who will be left with the bill if the price continues to skyrocket. As Independent MLC Ruth Forrest said on radio this morning, it is not clear what the value proposition would be for the private investor. If the government has attracted interest from the private sector, it needs to be clear about what sort of partnership is on the table.

Launceston football fans are excited about the \$130 million upgrade at UTAS Stadium, but there is some question over the ongoing content at the ground. I strongly believe that if the Devils run out before a new stadium is built, the lion's share of home games should be played in Launceston. Launceston fans should be rewarded for their passion and dedication. More than 15,000 people turned out to see the Hawks take on the Saints earlier this year. That is 5000 more than the Kangaroos when they played Geelong at Blundstone Arena, a comparable fixture. Every match at UTAS this year attracted more than 11,000. The evidence shows that UTAS is a more popular venue than Blundstone for watching footy. Launceston fans deserve their fair share of content.

There is a lot of speculation over whether Hawthorn will continue its relationship with Tasmania, even after the state has its own team. Would the government be willing to extend that partnership if it stacked up? It could be a way to make the content split between the north and the south more equitable. If we are going to spend \$130 million upgrading the stadium, we need to make sure there is a level of content to justify that investment. UTAS is arguably the best boutique ground in the country and does not deserve to take a back seat in football in Tasmania. It has been home to some memorable moments, from Buddy's 13 against the Roos in 2012 to the high drama of 'sirengate'. I understand the attraction of having a new stadium in

our capital city, but I would urge the government and the AFL to not underestimate the appeal of playing footy at York Park.

As for Macquarie Point, last week's Budget has cast further doubt over whether the state can afford it now. While the Premier points out it is a relatively small amount compared to what is spent on Health annually, it is by no means a modest investment. Taxpayers are already on the hook for \$615 million and, as I said earlier, that figure may well keep going up.

I am excited about a Tasmanian team in the AFL. It is well deserved and overdue, but a new stadium is a different proposition altogether. It is an unreasonable ask of a state in a fragile budget position. I will follow the POSS process closely, but I am far from convinced.

[12.28 p.m.]

**Mr BEHRAKIS** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, we are excited about this development and think it is going to be a turning point for Tasmania. I have to say it feels a bit like *Groundhog Day*. It is not the first time I have sat in the Chamber with the member for Clark debating development in Hobart. I am proud that we are delivering this project. I am proud to be a local member who is able to see through all the negativity we have heard and be grateful for everything a redeveloped Macquarie Point will bring.

We passed a huge milestone this week with the Macquarie Point Development Corporation lodging its submission for the project to be assessed as a project of state significance, and it is significant for our state. To reiterate, we will be spending \$375 million on this and not one red cent more. It is significant for the jobs it will create directly through construction and then on to the operational phase. It is significant for Tasmania to be able to attract a whole new world of entertainment and, importantly, it is significant for all the small businesses in and around Hobart who will indirectly benefit.

Today is National Family Business Day, a day designed to recognise the significant contribution family businesses make to the Australian economy, community and culture. As someone who grew up around a family business in Hobart, I know exactly what a development like the stadium and the Macquarie Point precinct will do for tourism, hospitality and retail sectors. There are so many businesses that are excited about and supportive of this project: small business owners and family business owners like restaurateur Angelo Fraraccio, co-owner of the institution that is Da Angelo, who has vocally been supportive of this project and is just one of the many businesses that have. It is a great restaurant. Before and after a game, people go out, have a drink and a meal and create revenue in the city. It is a great idea to help small businesses around the city.

Macquarie Point currently is a wasteland crying out for redevelopment. We have been committed to developing it for a long time and now we are making progress. It will become a powerhouse of the Hobart economy and a focal point of our city, just like the Tasman Bridge, Salamanca and Battery Point, which let us not forget were rundown trading areas in living memory and now after development, are some of the most photographed areas of our city.

Then comes the negativity writ large - the NIMBYism, the faux outrage, the naysayers claiming the development is going to be so disastrous the city is going to cave in. It is predictable but utterly ridiculous. We know how much support there is for the project in the community, in business and in industry.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF

Here is what is being said about this development. Business Events Tasmania CEO Marnie Craig said:

The stadium and conference facility will significantly boost tourism and hospitality sectors in Hobart and across Tasmania, particularly in the quiet winter months and midweek.

She estimated the new facilities could attract an additional 110 conferences in Hobart and an extra 140,000 visitors. The annual revenue possibilities for such growth were in excess of \$100 million.

The Tourism Industry Council Tasmania (TICT) CEO, Amy, Hills said:

Business events are critical to supporting the visitor economy all year round, but particularly during the winter and shoulder seasons when we know it is a little bit quieter in Tasmania.

THA board member, Paul Jubb, owner of the Customs House Hotel, said:

This would really give some hope to the hospitality sector. I think it's a tremendous opportunity for the state. Any increase in economic activity would lead to an increase for our statewide hospitality venues. We're very much looking forward to it.

Importantly, he went on to say:

We need developments like the stadium to give confidence to our sector for jobs and additional investment.

It is not just the tourism and hospitality sector who are for this development. The Property Council of Australia's Tasmanian executive Rebecca Elston said the stadium was the kind of bold thinking and bold vision Tasmania really needs. Tasmanian Forest Products Association CEO Nick Steele said:

With the release of Hobart's new stadium design, including the use of beautiful Tasmanian timber, I look forward to the pride we will all feel when our very own Tasmanian team runs out into the cauldron of our very own stadium. It will be a pivotal moment for the history of our state.

We welcome Labor changing their position on this after the election. I know they realised they were onto a loser on that and are trying to reinvent themselves as pro-development. It is fantastic. We welcome it. We are consistent on where we stand on this project and we are proudly pursuing it. We will not be silenced by the continuous NIMBYism and negativity that we have sadly come to expect.

[12.32 p.m.]

**Mr BAYLEY** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for bringing this forward. It is a great opportunity to talk about this project and the fact that it is built on utter deceit and delusion. Let me start by reading into the *Hansard* the Premier's comments in August 2022 and an article that is still on the AFL website where it is headlined:

The Premier confirms the stadium will not be part of Tassie's AFL bid.

Tasmania confirms their formal proposal for the league's 19th licence won't include a new stadium ahead of a vote this month.

It quotes Premier Rockliff saying, 'The stadium is not part of our bid'. The deceit started way back then and Tasmanians know that they do not need, they do not want and they cannot afford this stadium. They certainly do not need it.

In that same article, ex-Geelong president, Colin Carpenter, who was commissioned to do a report on this, said:

Tasmanian grounds are regarded as perfectly adequate for playing AFL football at the moment.

They are 'perfectly adequate'. As articulated by the member for Bass, York Park should be the home of footy. It has the best playing surface in the country and we have been playing there for many years at the AFL level. We do not want it. That is a constant message that we have all heard on the doors through this last election period.

People hear of the cuts to health, housing, education, the efficiency dividends, and the debt. People know that we cannot afford this and it is going to come at a cost to essential services. The Budget cannot afford it and that was writ large just in the last week and over the last session of this parliament, debating the budget and looking at the level of debt, looking at the level of deficit and looking at the quantum of the efficiency dividends that our departments are going to have to deliver. Every efficiency dividend is a cut to services for Tasmanians.

We support our AFL teams and we do want them. Originally, when there was tripartisan support for the footy teams, it was based on the commitment of the Premier that there would not be a stadium. We absolutely support a footy team here and we look forward to it happening, but the more we buy into the narrative that it cannot happen without this stadium, the more we just empower the AFL to continue to bully this state into delivering a stadium that we do not need, do not want and cannot afford.

The deceit has been writ large this week with the release of the summary report and application - \$715 million has turned into \$830 million. There is \$50 million upfront that is declared, and then you have to go and bury deep down into the papers to find that there is an additional \$65 million blowout in the expenditure on the LED screens, TV, AV and the like within the stadium.

The other utter delusion is this notion that we have just heard twice now from members of the Liberal Party that not one more cent will be spent over \$375 million. Both the Budget and the summary report that was released yesterday shows that there are going to be borrowings from Macquarie Point that pay for the blowouts over and above \$375 million. Government needs to service those debts going forward. We need to service the interest on those debts going forward, and it is abundantly clear that this is going to cost us more than \$375 million.

That is a question for Labor because your support for this stadium was contingent upon the fact that this would not cost one red cent over \$375 million. You are the alternative

treasurer, Mr Willie. It is clear that servicing those borrowings is going to cost us. This is the product of deceit, delusion and dud deals. The AFL has us, the taxpayer, on the hook for every single cost overrun. The Treasurer failed to negotiate the GST exemption and the federal government is going to claw that back over time. We are going to pay for the borrowings and the interest on the borrowings.

I will touch on the cost-benefit analysis that is in this submission, because you have to look at it carefully. When it came to the cable car on kunanyi/Mount Wellington, we needed to look carefully at the cost-benefit analysis, and in the independent tribunal the proponents' cost-benefit analysis was comprehensively rejected. When it comes to this stadium, the cost-benefit analysis is based on the status quo where nothing happens on that site. It is 'vacant land', which is demonstrably untrue because, before junking it, there was a very well-worked up development plan for the Macquarie Point site. In fact, the government had already started to contract out development of that site. We had to pay out developers from the mainland so that they did not build on Macquarie Point in order to progress this stadium. Are those costs factored into it? It is utterly delusional.

We will stand in solidarity with the community and stakeholders in opposing this stadium, come what may.

**Matter noted.**

## **APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2024 (No. 39)**

### **Second Reading**

**Continued from Wednesday 18 September 2024 (page 116).**

[12.38 p.m.]

**Mr JENNER** (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I have my speech here ready to go, and I have watched other Budget responses over the last few days from home, where I have been ill. I do not intend to reiterate what has already been said in parliament about the Budget, but I have made it very clear what my opinions are about the cuts to frontline staff and the prioritising of infrastructure spending. Consequently, I should be able to keep my speech incredibly short. I would have liked to keep it to four words: 'incredibly disappointing' and 'woefully irresponsible'.

To sum up, the Budget has been reckless and irresponsible. This is my first contribution to a Budget debate, so I am certainly not as well informed as other members who have followed the state's finances for many years. Very clearly, we have a Tasmanian economy that is underperforming, and a population that is both ageing rapidly and is poorer than any other Australian state. An increasing number of people, particularly among young families, are voting with their feet and moving from the state.

The state's finances read like an accounting shambles, with spending far outstripping the capabilities of us raising revenue. The Rockliff government appears to have been papering over the cracks by spending beyond its means, particularly on infrastructure projects. Mr Eslake said;

We have heroically embarked on the biggest infrastructure splurge in relation to productivity capability of the economy anywhere in the country.

Dr Eslake predicted that, within a decade, on our current trajectory, the debt will hit \$16 billion. The debt servicing cost alone will soak up more than \$730 million a year in interest. I am indebted to the Labor Party for indicating what the real cost of the debt will mean unless big changes are made directly. When Labor was campaigning at the state elections against the AFL stadium for Hobart, it pointed out the tradeoff that \$750 million could buy either 1 stadium or 10 000 nurses, 9000 teachers or 3000 houses.

I, for one, will not be supporting a budget which allocates hundreds, if not billions, of dollars for a stadium at the expense of other priorities which have a far bigger impact on everyday Tasmanians. In Eslake's finding and concerns, the biggest was the gap between revenue and spending.

That would be accompanied by a net debt raising of \$16 billion, more than 25 per cent of the state's product and interest payments would triple from \$250 million to \$750 million a year. That grim outlook would almost certainly result in the downgrading of Tasmania's credit rating, increasing the cost of debt servicing even further. Every single Tasmanian knows that if you want to go broke, keep spending beyond your means.

I conclude my contribution by reflecting on one of the many disturbing elements of the Eslake Report. This finding of unfunded election commitments has been a significant contributor to the deterioration of the Tasmanian fiscal position since 2018. In three elections, we know from advice from Treasury and the Liberal Party's own admissions that the cost of promises for the March election this year and that three successive Liberal premiers have run up, are costing the public purse well over \$4 billion, roughly \$1.4 billion per election.

This includes grant commitments, which at face value, appear to eliminate any distinction between public interest and party-political interests. In other words, there is blatant vote buying, effectively telling grant recipients 'vote for us and we will fund your project.' The funds are not the party's funds. These are drawn from the public purse. The Integrity Commission has examined this issue extensively and, following complaints of the Liberal Party election and their promises in 2018, the first paper in a series named up 'indirect electoral bribery,' commonly known as pork-barrelling in Tasmania.

In 2022, the commission released their second paper directly examining grant commitments in the election campaigns. It found there were no mandatory rules applying to the public servants in assessing or administering such grants beyond the Treasury guidelines, and no rules at all applying to ministers. The commission focused particularly on a list of \$21.4 million of regional grants announced just two days before the election. It found that the grant selection process fell far short of good management, principles, accountability, openness, fairness and value for money.

The Integrity Commission recommended that, before the next election, Tasmanians consider adopting the Commonwealth provisions for grants programs, where there are rules that do apply to ministers as well as public services. This recommendation fell on deaf ears. Fast forward to 2024, the state election: it is clear that the Liberal Party's approach to vote buying at the expense of the public purse had not changed as much as one millimeter. I am indebted to ABC News for its disclosure of a leaked copy of a community project election

commitment form distributed to the Liberal candidates during the campaign. This is a two-page form under the banner 'Liberals 2030 Strong Plan'. It starts with the following directions of: 'Internal use only, Liberal Party candidates are not required to complete this form, do not provide this form to any external individual or organisations'. It is hard not to see why.

The form contains 17 boxes for candidates to identify projects and their amounts of funding sought as well as self-declaration as to whether they, the candidate, have a conflict of interest. There are also three boxes marked 'For internal use only' for an identified Liberal Party operative to approve or disallow the grant.

Nowhere is there even one slight mention of public interest. Remember this is public money being co-opted for Liberal Party electioneering. There is no way that the 2024 Liberal grant scheme meets good management principles identified in the Integrity Commission. There was no accountability, no openness, no fairness, and no value for money.

In other words, once again they were allocated at the whim of the Liberal Party or the party politics purposes - vote buying for an election. This is raiding of the public purse. It needs to be cleaned up and sooner the better.

The JLN did not make any huge promises in the election campaign because we were pre-warned about the budget mess, which since has been revealed in the Eslake Report. If parties are going to continue to raid public funds in this way, there must be rules. The House may have heard that there will be no new agreement between myself and the Premier, and that is the JLN. That is because, as a condition of my commitment of confidence and supply, I asked for a commitment that they adopt the Integrity Commission's recommendations for election funding. That was refused, and so, consequently, I will do all my votes on merit.

[12.47 p.m.]

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass - Treasurer) - Deputy Speaker, I thank everybody for their contributions to this debate on the Budget. This is a really important budget for our state and I will be speaking in response to a number of the contributions that have been made about the chamber over the last three days. I say from the outset that this Budget delivers on the plan that we took to the Tasmanian people.

The 2030 Strong Plan is far more than a slogan. It is a huge body of work that our government, our Liberal team, put together and placed before the Tasmanian people in the most open and competitive process known to mankind in establishing governments, the best in the world. It is called democracy and it allows voters, men and women, to decide for themselves on the basis of what they have been presented, who is best to lead our state going forward.

When we did so, that 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, we put forward properly costed, carefully designed and transparently publicised documents. I take issue with those opposite and even the comment from Mr Jenner, who made comments about our election commitments, which, by the way, were about one third of the cost of the Labor Party's. About one third, I mean, what a bunch of hypocrites to bring into this House the volume of election expenditure commitments that we made to Tasmanians coming from the people who said they would spend not \$1.5 billion but \$4 billion,

**Dr Broad** - That is just not true.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Dr Broad says it is just not true. He wants to be very careful saying that in here; he wants to be very careful indeed because it is Dr Broad who infamously messed up his own costings, his financial strategy, in those few days before the election and had to be reissued. I think it had 11 mistakes in it.

The bigger mistake was not the 11 miscalculations. The bigger mistake was to really trick Tasmanians by saying we could do all of this and improve the budget position. I do not think too many Tasmanians would know that Dr Broad and then leader Ms White actually told Tasmanians that they would generate a surplus in this term of office, and yet they told Tasmanians how many billions they could expect to be rolled out from the Public Account.

**Mr Willie** - How many times have you said you would deliver a surplus?

**Mr FERGUSON** - Mr Willie, you have made yourself a cartoon character during this budget debate. Honestly, you have. Some of the childish comments you have tried to bring into a very serious matter have offered nothing to the public discourse nor to the debate in this House. I will pick the member up on one point, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, who scrubbed his speech of the \$150 million savings measure, that appeared in Mr Willie's budget response in this House. I think many people would find it really interesting to know that the Labor Party, the official opposition, are claiming to improve the budget by \$150 million over the Budget and forward Estimates. I found that really interesting and I will come to that but this is in relation to a party that willingly refuses to publish an alternative budget, as it was called on to do by this House and which is the reasonable expectation of the Tasmanian public.

**Mr Willie** - I know you are desperate.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Desperation is promising \$4 billion of additional expenditure and at the same time claiming that it will improve the budget bottom line. I will come to the savings that the Labor Party promised a little later.

This Budget is delivering on the Liberal 2030 Strong Plan for our future and I believe that this is the budget we need for these times for our people, our community, I really do. I see what is happening with inflation, I see what is happening with the writedown of economic forecasts right across the country and I am very concerned about it. I have said so on many occasions, and I do not mean going back to last Thursday, Budget day.

The Rockliff Liberal government has been warning about our growing concern about economic mismanagement at the national level and the way it is affecting our community here, the smallest state in the country. It was the RBA itself that challenged all governments, federal, state and territory, to not make the work of the RBA harder by generating inflationary budgets. It was that organisation, which was then pilloried by the federal Treasurer, who has been generating inflationary budgets and, by the way, also has four years in front of him of heavy deficits in the tens of billions of dollars per year. We have been warning about these pressures. We are concerned about what it could mean for economic growth in our state of Tasmania and we have been concerned about the impact that may have on our citizens.

We have been very concerned not just because we believe the inflation peak is now behind us, and while I welcome that Tasmania's CPI measure, which is named as the Hobart CPI, is lower than the national average, it has been quite consistent. Nonetheless, we are pleased that the peak appears to be behind us. The problem with that is that it can be a seductive

belief that the inflation problem has gone away. It has not, because any CPI growth right now is compounding on what has happened in previous years, with fours and sevens and threes. Those extra costs on the cost of living for our people, our families and our businesses have been challenging when they have been high. They continue to be challenging, even when the peak moves past us.

I said that three times on Friday and Mr Willie knows this, because I said it and he was chasing me around the state, desperate for a grab that he could use in parliament. He did not have the courage of his convictions to ask a single question. There was not a single question from the opposition in a sitting fortnight about the Budget. I look forward to Mr Willie's questions next week. It will really break the drought and I look forward to providing straight answers to Mr Willie, I really do.

As noted by the Premier, our plan, that substantial body of work we developed to take to the Tasmanian people, is not focused on silly politics and juvenile games. It is focused on the issues that matter to our people. It is focused on the people of Tasmania and what matters to them, things that barely got a mention in the Leader of the Opposition's speech.

We are about better investment into stronger public services and supporting our community with their cost-of-living challenges. We know we are not able to carry the load entirely for our families, but we are pitching in with relief measures at levels never before seen in a state budget, and also by making strong investments into the job-creating infrastructure that will unlock continued economic growth. I welcome that the Labor Party, the official opposition, say that they want to see economic growth. I would just like to see it supported by more genuine statements speaking well of Tasmania, not as these two individuals across from me did last year, when the pair of them - I beg your pardon, Mr Willie was not here, it was Mr Winter sitting in that seat - the pair of them with Dr Broad declared that Tasmania was in the recession. It was not but those individuals knew there is power in that word.

**Members** interjecting.

**Dr Broad** - What about your 700 nurses who have resigned since April?

**Mr FERGUSON** - Dr Broad, you should be ashamed. I know what you are trying to do. I saw it in grade 8 maths. This is what kids do when they know they have been called out. We are asking you to be responsible with your statements, not change the subject. When you used that word, you knew the power it contained. You sent a false message from this House, an alarming message. If it had been true, it would have been upsetting and people would have been hurt. I do remember a recession. I have lived through two recessions.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Dr Broad, I see your embarrassment. You can interrupt all your like but I sense your embarrassment because I have lived through two recessions. I remember them very well. I remember the 1989 recession and what my parents had to live through then. I remember it really well.

**Members** interjecting.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Members on my left will cease interjecting. I ask the Treasurer to direct his comments through the Chair.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Deputy Speaker, I remember the recession of 2013. Until the day I die, I will never forget the pain that the people in this House, in this very Chamber, inflicted on the good people of our state. I will never forget what happened in those years: in 2013, the numbers reflected in prosaic black and white that represented heartache in the families and regional communities in particular across this state. The pain was real and I do not want to see that pain inflicted again. The sooner we see really positive language from the Labor Party, the better our economy can be. As I said in my budget speech, I made a call for less of that reckless talk and more of speaking well of Tasmania.

Before the bell goes for 1.00 p.m. This plan and this Budget invests more into Health, \$12.9 billion over the Budget and forward Estimates and a further \$650 million in capital investment into health facilities and hospitals. It is up by more than 6 per cent on the last budget. It is an investment we are making because we believe in stronger public health services for the people of our state, and the Budget can do it. We can afford it. We are able to do it through these times, because to not do so would be a mistake, in my view. We have lived through Health cuts. This budget makes investments into Health.

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

### **APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2024 (No. 39)**

#### **Second Reading**

**Resumed from above.**

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass - Treasurer) - Honourable Speaker, prior to the break, I was reflecting on the additional investment in health, in hospitals and facilities. The government is also investing \$9.4 billion into education and training, together with \$359 million into upgraded schools and skills training facilities to secure the future of our kids and young people, getting them ready for the workforce and to reach their full potential.

As the Budget speech reflected, I repeat again that these investments mean that more than 58 per cent of public expenditure is on health and education. We are doing this while also working very hard to respond to the real challenges that the state's finances faced last year in establishing our new fiscal strategy, something which is to be supported around the Chamber.

The government also recognised the national economic headwinds that I was speaking about. Those headwinds are now very much with us, and with Tasmanian families and businesses. I have reflected on the strong inflation nationally and the higher interest rates, which, relative to this generation of home buyers, are high, particularly given the expectations that were in the community about the future of interest rate settings and policy.

I have reflected on the Reserve Bank's task to try to bring inflation under control. It is a cruel policy. It is a harsh policy, but it works. It brings down inflation, but it is very hard on families. What the RBA is effectively doing - and this is bipartisan policy, if I put it that way, because it works, but it is a brutal policy for people to have to accept - is making decisions that

effectively force consumers to spend less on the goods and services that they want and more on their home mortgage, with the flow-through to rentals. That is hard on families. It has been tough on a lot of people right across the country, including Tasmania.

We again state that the Budget has been crafted in this context and for these reasons. We were concerned about all of these issues, as I said at the budget events on Friday, which by the way, were 100 per cent sold out with a waitlist. We were amazed at the high level of support and interest in our Budget. We framed this Budget. It was the hardest framing of a Budget that I have been involved in either as Treasurer or as a member of the Budget committee for some time. We decided deliberately against a more austerity budgeting approach - we could have, but we decided against it. We have seen what happens in other jurisdictions when that has occurred. I am reminded of previous Budgets even in this House. We were protecting and wanting to be protective about our businesses and their confidence going forward, because again, as I said in the Budget speech, business confidence is so important to our community, and it is something that we need to treasure, protect, support and build up.

We were also concerned about the broader ability by the government to continue, particularly through our infrastructure program, to support jobs and construction. Whether it is commercial construction, residential construction or civil contracting, these are vital industries for our state. It has been a big part of the economic success of the Rockliff Liberal government, the Gutwein government and the Hodgman government. We have made those decisions and they have paid dividends. Not only do we get long-term infrastructure that will be with us not just for years but for decades, but you also get that incredible growth in demand. That has flowed through the cities, the suburbs, the towns and the Bass Strait Islands.

People have been able to get a benefit from that, and as I have explained in my own personal way, that money ends up on the tables of families at night. That money ends up as food on the table because that is the way in which construction infrastructure funds flow through our economy. You are buying goods and services. It is supporting the work of the quarries, the bitumen plants, the designers, the professional services, the truck drivers, the fuel stops, the chiko rolls and the salad rolls in the local takeaway, and the hairdressers. I am very partial to a chiko roll. I am not sure about you, Mr Fairs. We share that interest.

It flows through to the lowest levels of the community - the deepest part of the economy. It builds aggregate demand. It has been a success for our state. We do not do it for that outcome, but that is a big part of the story and it helps explain why we have seen 47,000 new jobs in Tasmania under the Liberal government since the Hodgman government was elected in 2014.

The Premier and I have both said this, and it is not just a rhetorical exercise. Yes, we could have returned the Budget to a balanced and surplus position more quickly than we have. It is possible to do that but be careful what you wish for. We took advice and we listened carefully to the experts who advised government, and we felt the benefits - if there were benefits - would not be worth the pain that the electorate and our business community would be feeling if we rushed to that surplus more rapidly than we are.

We have taken a deliberate decision. We know the politics that get played on this. We get it. I find it quite hypocritical and intolerable that it is the same people who decry the slower pace to a surplus and the rising borrowings who are demanding that we spend more money in the meantime than we already are. How do you sustain those two diametrically opposed

positions? How can one voice say both of those things? It does not work. You cannot have it both ways.

I make the point that our stakeholders are saying that as well. The Budget has been well received. I do not need to go into too much time here, but we are grateful for the support from so many stakeholders. The Tasmanian Forest Products Association welcomed the state Budget, saying it will assist with creating thousands of homes and supporting our state's timber industry. What a great friend of the timber industry we are on this side of the House.

Mr Clerk of Master Builders Tasmania said the continued support for the High Vis Army is vital to help build Tasmania's future. By continuing to fund the High Vis Army initiative, the government is supporting more apprenticeships, more tradies, greater female participation and a better pathway into our industry. We thank Mr Clerk for his comments.

The HIA commends the government for the \$30-million investment to deliver new and upgraded VET facilities and industry-standard equipment at colleges, secondary schools and trade training centres.

The endorsement of Amy Hills at the Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania was brought to the House earlier today by another speaker. Robert Mallett from the Tasmanian Small Business Council - a great advocate for small business, of which there are 40,000 enterprises in Tasmania - said:

Initiatives in today's Budget will support small businesses to reduce the cost of doing business ...

Pattie Chugg, the CEO of Shelter Tasmania, is an exceptional Tasmanian and a great advocate for better housing outcomes across the spectrum of housing needs in our state. I have enjoyed working with Pattie, and although Pattie and the government do not always necessarily agree on everything, she is a great advocate. She said:

Shelter Tas welcomes the state government's continued investment in social and affordable housing in today's Budget and the delivery of its housing election commitments.

I will abbreviate the endorsement of TasFarmers. They said:

TasFarmers supports the government's focus on infrastructure while understanding the challenge of balancing the Budget ...

The final one I bring to the House is from the Civil Contractors Federation (CCF), a fine organisation doing an amazing job working with its members, small and very large. The larger providers are there and the smaller ones are too, the mum and dad businesses. They endorsed the Budget, saying:

The government has made the right call to continue to invest in job-creating infrastructure across the state in the state Budget. Now was not the time to take the foot off the gas by cutting infrastructure spending across Tasmania, as some have been suggesting.

The \$5.1-billion infrastructure pipeline in the state Budget will support thousands of construction jobs across the state and thousands more across the supply chain. This means businesses can employ workers with certainty and workers can plan their future right here in Tasmania. It is a win-win for the industry and the state.

Andrew Winch is doing an amazing job as the CEO of CCF Tasmania.

There were other endorsements as well. I will not read them all. I also recognise that there were others who were not as pleased as one might have hoped. They wanted more of this particular initiative or more spending than we felt that we were able to provide in the Budget.

We understand that. We respect that, and I am not presenting a case that absolutely everybody is endorsing the Budget. However, in those key areas we have made the more difficult decisions to delay the return to surplus by supporting our infrastructure community and jobs in our cities and regions, and by holding the line that we continue to invest in stronger public services - even though it would have been reasonable for a state Treasurer and a Cabinet to think about winding it back because of the difficulty of balancing the Budget. We have not done that, as I have heard some people say.

This financial year, the Budget provides an additional \$66 million for health. Yes, there is an efficiency in there, we get that, but it is more for health, not less for health as some have said. These were not easy decisions for our government to make, but we also recognise that the health system needs that support. There is such high demand pressure with the population that not only needs but deserves the very best that we can offer with some key investments in there across a range of initiatives. They are all listed out in budget paper 1.

I am grateful for the support and those endorsements and for myself in particular, at the Launceston event at the Country Club in Launceston. I was very grateful to hear the president of the Launceston Chamber of Commerce endorse the Budget and more or less say that we are very happy with this Budget, and we are very grateful for that.

I will speak briefly on the Opposition Leader's response. During the debate, this was a not unexpected disappointment. Mr Winter claims to be a new kind of Labor Party. I think even John Howard got a mention in there in the political legacy of Mr Winter's development.

That may serve him with some listeners, but the issue that I have is that the Leader of the Opposition had a golden opportunity to tell Tasmanians what he would do better in this budget, not in a future budget, not in a 2029 budget and going to another election. No, here and now, because the budget that we are debating is this Budget: the one I see here on the clerk's desk, the appropriation bills, this actual Budget, this actual financial year and the forward Estimates.

I do happen to have - and I say it in a funny way - I do have a rare document because it has been wiped off; it has gone. I have the Labor plan for budget repair. This is the closest thing I can find to what Labor would do in a financial sense with the budget. It is the document that they put in front of the Tasmanian people at the last election. Well, why do we not see the alternative budget? It was the Liberal opposition which I was a part of, which every year went through that discipline of producing the alternative budget and I know for a fact -

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr FERGUSON** - I am surprised you want to chip in, Mr. Willie. I know that the Leader of the Opposition during that time had to show some courage, some conviction to actually commit to paper, to commit in writing, what expenditure differences there would be, what revenue differences there would be and what capital investment differences there would be, because that takes guts.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr FERGUSON** - It takes commitment. It takes some courage to actually stand on some principle and be prepared to do what Dr Woodruff has at least - to her credit - been prepared to do. I think that it is fair to say ever since we have been in government, the Greens have produced an alternative budget, and I will come to that.

There was a lot of negativity in the Leader of the Opposition's speech. As the Premier quite correctly pointed out, a bit of AI in there for good measure and some copying; copying existing Liberal commitments and rebadging it as somehow a part of whatever new Labor means. In the budget reply, Mr Winter said 'I' 63 times, I am advised. The word 'team' only got single mention.

More concerning was a speech that was remarkably bereft of any numbers, and it is interesting that a speech that was published online appears to have suffered from a version malfunction because there was a speech from the Leader of the Opposition that actually mentioned a number that was not presented to members of this House. Seems that maybe somebody published the wrong version of the speech. It discussed a further \$150 million savings outcome, which I think is a matter of some exploration next week.

In addition, Mr Winter did not explain what he would do differently on the things that matter to everyday Tasmanians, and I want to be particularly explicit about this. Mr Winter did not explain what he would do differently on those matters. There was no explanation for a plan for health. There was no explanation of a plan for education and training. There was no explanation or even aspiration of a better plan to support Tasmanians with cost-of-living increases.

I was very surprised that there was no discussion on the very expensive but necessary task of responding to the commission of inquiry. I was very surprised about that: not that the government looks for praise in these matters, but even to have said these are the right investments would have been a good thing to say in the Leader of the Opposition's address.

That was a disappointing focus on just being negative, cherry-picking statistics - as the Leader of the Opposition's developed that habit - and claims that are simply not accurate. I will make a quick reference here. To claim that retail trade is depressed is a surprising statement from the Leader of the Opposition. First of all, it is what the RBA is trying to do and secondly, it is actually not even what is happening in Tasmania. Our retail trade figures are near-record highs. As I said at the events last Friday, it is almost as if consumers in Tasmania are showing a defiance against that trend.

There was a reference to exports. Exports have been at a very high level for approximately the last two years and there was no mention of the fact that unemployment, the rate of unemployment, has started with a four for the longest period on record in Tasmania. Now, whatever else is new, it is the same old Labor, the same old reckless language.

Mr Winter even went as far as to say that the economic growth 'barely has a heartbeat', but conveniently ignoring that Tasmania's state final demand was above the national average on a quarterly and annual basis and, as I mentioned before the lunch break, to recklessly have claimed that we were in recession when we were not has now been proven to have been not only false but also reckless.

However, we recognise the real challenges in the economy - and it ought to be something we could agree on - is that the economy is challenged and the Budget is challenged. I am surprised then to see the Opposition criticising what are frankly reasonable and modest efficiencies in the government's Budget, notwithstanding the fact that net-terms health funding goes up, education and training funding goes up, and it is disappointing when we continue to hear really disappointing and false claims that somehow for the massive investment that we have provided into infrastructure over the last 10 years the state has nothing to show for it.

Well, just go for a drive. Look around at our amazing state. Look at the roads and bridges. Look at the irrigation. Look at the new hospital. Look at the beautiful new women's and children's building at the LGH. Look at the new helipad nearly finished on Wellington St. It is like the Eiffel Tower of Launceston right now. Everybody can see it. Look at the amazing work that is happening in rail, in port, in education and recognise that we have been dealing with legacy under-investment in this state in a new and special way. It is a better quality of life and better assets that our people can enjoy, but, more than that, it is the platform for a stronger economy going forward.

We do not just build new capital assets to create construction jobs during that time. That is a part of the narrative. That is a part of the benefit, but the real benefit is the gains that our community obtain from those better assets over the life of those assets, not just while they are being built. I think of the classrooms that I taught in when I was a school teacher. First of all, no heating in a Tasmanian high school; no heating and outdated facilities.

I know, and you know, that you can have a great education if you have a great teacher and a real willingness to learn, but it is pretty hard to learn in a cold classroom in Tasmania in winter. By providing better learning environments - and I mean a lot more than just cooling and heating - but I mean the infrastructure that allows strong pedagogy to be implemented in a school, stronger teaching and learning practices, a real valuing of that boy, that girl, that this is your workplace and we want it to be contemporary because we believe in your education, we believe in your future. That sends a powerful message.

Gymnasium facilities, science blocks, libraries, school ovals - these are investments in our future economy and an investment in our most precious Tasmanians. I always say the young children of our state are the most precious Tasmanians and it is an investment in them. I want to see a stop to people saying we have nothing to show for this investment because we have tons to show for it and there is a ton more to come as we continue with our plan.

I will leave behind a lot of that critique of the Labor leader to make a final point. We all need to see an end to that hypocrisy of, on the one hand decrying the deficit and the delay that we have agreed to do on the return to balance and return to surplus, and on the other hand demanding more recurrent spending, which I think we would all recognise, only they are completely contradictory.

The Budget continues the government's fiscal strategy we introduced last year. It is not a short-term strategy and it is not a one-year strategy. While the budget papers have been designed under the new strategy to do a year-by-year report as to what measures are being met and what are not, it is a 2032 target date. It is not a rolling target date; it is not always 10 years away. We have agreed, and it was Treasury that advised me on this, we have locked it in until 2032. This is where the state should be aiming for. We are not meeting all those fiscal targets in the strategy and this is the point: we need fiscal repair. I stated so very bluntly when I became Treasurer that we want fiscal repair.

The fiscal sustainability report, I think it was 2021, set out a range of numbers of what the net debt position could be by 2034-35 without corrective action. It set out that net debt could in fact go from \$16 billion to \$30 billion by 2034-35 without corrective action, and I have said to this House and to Estimates committees that we need to chart a course to put in place those corrective actions to rebuild those fiscal buffers.

We can sustain the deficit, we can sustain the borrowings that we are taking during this period, but it cannot always be this way. We cannot always borrow this much money to build this much infrastructure. Despite the free advice that you get from different individuals, it is something that Mr Eslake and this government, in a long-term sense, would agree with, but now is just not the time to take the foot off that pedal. That would be a mistake. We have recognised this and that is why the fiscal strategy is so important long-term. It is about having a robust framework to guide budget sustainability over those 10 years. It was in fact rubbished by my political opponents, which was surprising, but it was praised by the ratings agencies. They saw it as a positive step and I hope over time it becomes bipartisan or at least non-political.

Through the fiscal strategy we have committed to implementing budget repair measures aimed at fiscal improvement over the longer term to meet those targets. I would commend that chapter to members of this House, particularly the front discussion in that chapter, which talks about how it is a 2032 strategy and how there is no single indicator of fiscal sustainability. That is why we have to try to present a picture of how we are going and where we need to end up.

We stand by the fiscal strategy. It is a long-term plan that will take time to deliver. I accept that and that is something that over time, this government, future governments and future treasurers will embrace as we guide our state towards a very positive future, while in the meantime we are making these investments and providing stronger public services.

Briefly on the Greens - and I said this to Dr Woodruff face to face - I respect that they have had the courage of their convictions to produce an alternative budget. I see some problems with that alternative budget and it would be no surprise that the Greens, on a policy basis, live in a very different ideology to this side of the House. This is not a sarcastic comment or a platitude. I respect that they have been prepared to commit to writing a document that they can be praised or criticised on about how these policies would translate into a budget outcome.

I believe the Greens presented a budget alternative that showed a net benefit to the budget if all those policies were implemented, but I do not think that stands the test of scrutiny. It was either minister Abetz or the Premier this morning who asked: how can you tax an industry that you plan to destroy?

**Mr Bayley** - We want to move it on land.

**Mr FERGUSON** - You would move it on land? Okay, so it would make no money. How do you take a tax benefit by heavily increasing taxation to an industry that you are committed to destroying? There will be no rate base. There will be no tax base. Mr Bayley, while I think you are a decent person and you say it will be brought on land, you have a long way to go to demonstrate that you will actually have a successful business that can pay the tax rates proposed in the Greens' agenda.

I said this last year. You cannot just deduct off-road spending in an alternative budget unless you are also prepared to accept that you are going to lose a lot of federal revenue. You cannot just, let us say, reverse out a \$100 million road or bridge project. That is not a \$100 million saving. The state might actually only save \$20 million because you will also have to send back \$80 million to Canberra, so that is not a \$100 million saving. Those are problems. However, with those criticisms, at least the Greens have done their job with far less staff than the official opposition.

I broadly accept the praise and the criticism that was offered by the independents. We have a number of independents in this House and like the rest of society, we are all a little bit different to each other. We are entitled to our different views and it is great that we are able to express them in this House.

I particularly appreciated Mr O'Byrne's contribution, I have to say. I thought it was more than fair. He did not necessarily praise the Budget but I believe I can honestly say he gave a very measured tone about the decisions that we as a government had to make. Mr O'Byrne did point out the hypocrisy of the opposition and their suggestion that it was a shock to learn that the state's finances were under pressure. Mr O'Byrne pointed out that as far back as February when we had the Revised Estimates Report (RER) and I believe it was very late February when we had the Pre-Election Financial Outcomes (PEFO) report and we were all advised of the pressures that our budget faces. Nobody can claim to be surprised about it.

Mr O'Byrne also acknowledged the impact of the pandemic. He acknowledged the impact of the commission of inquiry. He also acknowledged that these were not secrets and that their impact is not a surprise.

To the extent that we are political parties, those of us who are, we all framed our election promises in the full knowledge of the PEFO and it did not stop that difference in spending commitments made by Liberal and Labor. I have made the point with Labor that I think it is probably the biggest spending set of promises in the state's history, promising spending of \$4 billion. It was extraordinary for me as Treasurer and the Liberal Party's Treasury person looking at these numbers. My colleagues listening to me right now came to me and said, 'Michael, can we do this?' We had times when we could say, 'Yes, we can do this', and as many times we had to agree that we could not fit this in. We cannot keep up with Labor on their spending promises because it was just out of control. We would have liked to have supported every good request we had, but we felt that we had to be more responsible.

Mr O'Byrne also rightly pointed out that there was and has been some very selective quoting of Saul Eslake's independent review. It is disappointing that some people are using that report politically.

I am grateful for the fact that Mr O'Byrne has been a minister and understands the Budget process, because it is well understood that the Budget is framed and finalised weeks in advance

of Budget day. That is why on this side of the House we have committed to considering Mr Eslake's report with proper respect and with due care, and to respond to his recommendations in due course. With the timing of the Budget being set and the timing of the release of that report, it was entirely impossible to provide a comprehensive response to Mr Eslake's report, but we will do that.

Mr O'Byrne noted it is a moral question of how to steer a path to rebuild our fiscal buffers, and it is a question I posed in different words in my Budget speech. Do we take a measured, prudent approach over a longer period of time, or do we take more drastic corrective action now with the acceptance that it will have an impact on jobs, both in the public service and also in the broader economy?

I also acknowledge the first ever Budget contribution by Mrs Pentland as one of the newest members in the House. I enjoyed her sense of humour in her speech, and as a fellow representative of Bass I have appreciated working with her on some local priorities. Mrs Pentland has also pointed out the hypocrisy of Labor policy to outsource their election platform to unelected bureaucrats. Like Mr O'Byrne, she recognised that if Labor had been elected, the budget situation would likely have been much worse than is being presented today, given that massive, big-spending agenda. While we do not agree on absolutely everything, I am gratified that Mrs Pentland has recognised the value of the government's cost-of-living relief.

I have thanked Mrs Pentland, Mrs Beswick and Mr Jenner for their Budget submissions, and we have agreed with the very sensible and honourably intentioned request to invest more in school maintenance. We agreed with the merit of this. We have adopted their suggestion, noting that this was prior to the changes in those different people's affiliations. Nonetheless, those submissions were put forward in good faith and they were received in good faith. It is an example of the increased spending that we put in the Budget, even though that spending that has added to the deficit position, but we believe that is an investment that is needed for our kids. Thank you, Mr Jenner, Mrs Beswick and Mrs Pentland.

I also thank Ms Johnston for her positive comments regarding our support for Shelter Tasmania and our investment through Winteringham. I must say that is a wonderful development. Everyone should get around that place and get to know it; it is wonderful what has happened there. I note Ms Johnston's calls to meet 100 per cent of the school resourcing standard. Government's response to Ms Johnston is that, like so many other things, the government is prepared to do its part and to play its role in this space, and we are working as best we can with the Australian Government to achieve that. I will not discuss those negotiations on the floor of the House, but suffice to say we are working hard on that. It is hard not to note that other Labor states on the mainland are not able to come to terms with the Australian Government at this point in time, and I hope that changes.

I also thank Mrs Beswick for her first Budget reply contribution as the new member for Braddon. I also thank her for recognising the fact that Mr Eslake's report was published in August, later than when the Budget was being set down - a fact that I feel is important to mention here. I respectfully disagree with Mrs Beswick that we have demonstrated an unwillingness to consider Mr Eslake's recommendations. I have said it many times and I say it one more time today: I greatly respect Mr Eslake and I am thankful for his work. We have indicated, because we are expected to - I think it is reasonable the government should be expected to give an initial response to that report. We have done that. We have disagreed on some aspects that do not align with our commitments to the community.

We have undertaken to consider Mr Eslake's report more fully and to respond in due course. As my own colleagues note, in the private conversations we have in our party room and other places, I have discussed Mr Eslake's contribution positively, and I think it will serve as a useful document that can guide decisions going forward. If we disagree on any key recommendations, we should be asked to explain why, and we will.

I appreciate Mrs Beswick's positive commentary regarding the gender Budget snapshot, as I know Minister Ogilvie does too. This is an important part of the Budget day package of materials. It is something that Minister Palmer and I pioneered. It is now in its third year under the Rockliff government. This is our innovation. Others have asked us to do it, and we are doing it. I beg your pardon - Minister Howlett played a key role as well. I think we have had a lot of support there, which I appreciate. This has been delivered by the Department of Premier and Cabinet. It takes that whole-of-government, and in many ways whole-of-state, view as to how our government and our Budget is adding value to quality of life for all Tasmanians and, in particular, women.

I acknowledge Mr Garland's first Budget contribution. It provided much food for thought. I thank him for his support of my call for working in unity to deliver better outcomes for Tasmanians. We do not agree on everything about how we can achieve that, but my ears particularly pricked up when Mr Garland said that we want to see improved outcomes for people of our state, and he looked at me and said, 'but you do not have to do it on your own'. I appreciated that.

The government does not have to do it on its own, and where we - particularly members of crossbench and, on certain occasions, members of the opposition as well - can find areas of agreement, that is a really good day for our state, because it sends a huge message to the community that these people down in Hobart get it. They are focused on me and my family, and they are focused on good policies and good outcomes, not what passes for politics in Tasmania.

Can I disagree with Mr Garland on one thing? The pathway to surplus is not as Mr Garland has described it. I disagree with that. The government has set out the timeframe for that pathway. We are prepared to explain it and to defend it, and we are simply looking for all sides of politics to share in that commitment and that task going forward.

I thank Mr Jenner, the member for Lyons, for his contribution earlier today. I hope that the comments I am making here today equally apply to his contribution. I think it is the case - I wonder if we could agree - that we would all like to do more in a whole range of areas. There is ultimately a price, and we have decided as a government we are prepared to take longer to return to surplus because we are prepared to invest in jobs, public service, public services and the wider economy.

Briefly, to the government members who have spoken: I really appreciate the kind support and thorough comments that have been made by this side of the House in their speeches. I will not go into them individually as I had planned. I think that I will be kind to the House and not repeat, only endorse those comments - the pro-industry, pro-Tasmanian and pro-economic positions that have been outlined.

Our ministers have a huge job to do. It is massive. There are huge commitments to deliver. The 2030 Strong Plan is a massive agenda. It is a packed agenda, and it is all about

better quality of life for our people. It is this team of ministers, parliamentary secretaries and members of our team who have a united belief in not only delivering what that document contains, but also the spirit of it, and what it sets out to achieve. It is about a stronger future for our state and setting up Tasmania for a great long-term outcome. It is about making Tasmania a place that people can feel they can continue to invest in, set up a business in, raise their kids in and feel safe in.

Finally, I would like to offer a few thank yous. First, to the Department of Treasury. That team is an amazing group of Tasmanians. You will not find a more passionate group of people committed to Tasmania's economic and financial prosperity. They are not good at bragging. They are not public servants who go out and tell others how good they are. They just quietly get on and do it. I have appreciated their support so much.

Our previous secretary, Mr Farrell and current secretary, Mr Swain, and the budget branch, have been amazing and I am very grateful for them. Our Cabinet and our team are grateful for them.

May I just single out the Secretary, Mr Swain, the Deputy Secretary, Mr Craigie, and Director of Budget Management Branch, Ms Patterson. They are great people who have worked tirelessly on this. I would not expect members to know this, but these people, since budget, have worked most weekends and many nights on this Budget. If I did not say it, you would not know. They are great people.

Thank you also to the many other people across the department who have worked so hard.

I thank the staff of the parliament for their role in delivering the Budget. Not only does this place additional requirements on them, including as we go into Estimates committees, but the whole process is a big commitment.

I also thank the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Launceston Chamber of Commerce and Business NorthWest. I really appreciate them helping us with the task of explaining the Budget to the business community and the not-for-profit sectors that attended our events in huge numbers.

Thank you to the Premier; I applaud your commitment to our state and the leadership that you provide to our Liberal team. You led us through the 2024 election, you brought us back to government, you have worked closely with the crossbench and have shown respect, diligence and passion in those discussions. I believe that everybody the Premier has worked with would say these are honourable discussions and in good faith.

Why would we be this way? Why is the Premier like that? It is because we believe in this state. We want stability. We want a prosperous future. We know we are going through economic challenges and financial ones, but with our investments into health, education, cost of living, keeping our most precious Tasmanian safe and our continued passion for the capital program, we are committed and we believe that our state and the people of our community will be able to move to a more positive future as a result of the initiatives this Budget supports.

**Bill read the second time.**

# UNCORRECTED PROOF

## APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2024 (No. 40)

### Second Reading

[3.13 p.m.]

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass - Treasurer) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the bill be read the second time.

The second Appropriation Bill recognises the unique role of parliament and independent statutory officers in Tasmania's parliamentary and democratic system. The bill appropriates \$53,235,000 from the Public Account for 2024-25. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr WILLIE** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to say that we support this part of the Budget as well and look forward to scrutinising some of these agencies and statutory officers through the Budget Estimates process next week.

**Mr BAYLEY** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, similarly, we look forward to the Budget Estimates process. We acknowledge the work that has been done in scheduling that out and ensuring that some of these agencies and officials are available to us in that period. We look forward to that process and the discussions.

**Bill read the second time.**

## FARM DEBT MEDIATION BILL 2024 (No. 33)

### Consideration of Legislative Council Amendments in Committee

#### Clause 9

Relationship of Act with other laws

Page 15, subclause (2), after "duty of the"

*Leave out* "Reserve Bank"

*Insert instead* "Australian Prudential Regulation Authority"

**Mr FERGUSON** - Chair, I move -

That the amendment of the Legislative Council be agreed to.

This is very minor. This is a government amendment in the Legislative Council that identified a drafting error, if I can put it that way. What the amendment does is put the correct name in. The bill previously had the words 'Reserve Bank' but should have referred instead to the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority. The amendment corrects that.

For the information of members, this bill is modelled on the equivalent act in New South Wales. When their legislation was passed, the duty in Division 2 of Part 2 was held by the Reserve Bank. The federal financial regulation framework has since been changed and the duty

is now held by APRA, the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority. The amendment simply fixes this reference to align with Commonwealth legislation and I commend the amendment to the House.

**Council amendment agreed to.**

**Reported that the Committee resolved to agree to the Council amendment.**

**Resolution agreed to.**

## **JUDICIAL COMMISSIONS BILL 2024 (No. 41)**

### **Second Reading**

[3.22 p.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Minister for Justice) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the bill be read the second time.

At the state election earlier this year, the government committed to establish an independent oversight body that will manage judicial complaints and support a consistent, contemporary and accountable judicial system. This is to ensure Tasmanians have confidence that judicial officers are accountable to expectations of judicial behaviour. This bill fulfils this commitment and establishes the Judicial Council, a judicial conduct body in Tasmania to receive and consider complaints against judicial officers and the ability for commissions to be established for serious complaints.

As Attorney-General and, therefore, First Law Officer, I wholeheartedly respect the central role that the separation of powers plays in our democracy. There are established legislative and common law provisions, as well as conventions that ensure the judiciary is free from political interference. This bill has been drafted so as not to undermine or jeopardise that in any way.

Tasmania and Australia are blessed with a legal system that is stable, professional and fair. This is reinforced by the inclusion of a robust and transparent complaints handling process. Such processes have been established in most Australian jurisdictions, each varying in approach but most with common features.

The bill before you today has considered all the models currently in place in Australia and tailored an approach that suits the Tasmanian context and is quite similar to that in smaller jurisdictions such as the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory.

The bill was released for public consultation on 20 June 2024, the day that it was also tabled as a paper in this place. The public consultation period closed on 26 July 2024. The Department of Justice received a number of submissions on the bill, with eight submissions available on the Department of Justice website in accordance with the government's publication policy.

The bill has also benefited from close consideration by the Justice Forum, a group of key legal stakeholders that I convened, including the Chief Justice, the Chief Magistrate, the president of the Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (TASCAT), the Solicitor-General, the State Litigator, the Director of Public Prosecutions, a representative from the Tasmanian Bar, a representative from the Law Society of Tasmania, the director of Legal Aid, the registrar of the Supreme Court and the administrator of the Magistrates Court and the secretary of the Department of Justice. Both the submissions made to the consultation process as well as the discussions with the Justice Forum have proven invaluable in ensuring this bill has been thoroughly considered and refined.

The framework in this bill will operate in addition to, not instead, of, existing avenues for the suspension or removal of judicial officers.

Fundamentally, this bill is about establishing a fair, efficient and transparent process for gathering information and appropriately handling complaints in relation to judicial officers in Tasmania. It applies to judicial officers, defined as being judges, magistrates and presidential members of the Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. Presidential members of TASCAT are defined as the president and deputy presidents, as other members of the tribunal, are appointed for fixed periods and have appropriately clear pathways for removal from office.

For example, a senior ordinary member of TASCAT is appointed for up to five years and their appointment may be revoked by the Governor for reasons such as the president's recommendation that the member has breached the code of conduct. The president can also already suspend such a member. Under the bill, complaints can be made in relation to a judicial officer's behaviour or physical or mental capacity.

In investigating and assessing a complaint, the behaviour of the relevant judicial officer will be considered in light of accepted standards of judicial behaviour. These standards are established in common law and are also in key codes of conduct such as the Guide to Judicial Conduct as published by the Australian Institute of Judicial Administration.

I acknowledge that the judiciary across Australia and common law jurisdictions have collaborated extensively to identify and articulate appropriate judicial conduct.

I believe it is worth reading into *Hansard* the guiding principles included in chapter two of *the Guide to Judicial Conduct*, and I read as follows

The principles applicable to judicial conduct have three main objectives:

- To uphold public confidence in the administration of justice;
- To enhance public respect for the institution of the judiciary; and
- To protect the reputation of individual judicial officers and of the judiciary.

Any course of conduct that has the potential to put these objectives at risk must therefore be very carefully considered and, as far as possible, avoided.

There are three basic principles against which judicial conduct should be tested to ensure compliance with the stated objectives. These are:

- Impartiality;
- Judicial independence; and
- Integrity and personal behaviour.

These objectives and principles provide a guide to conduct by a judge in private life and in the discharge of the judge's functions. If conduct by a judge is likely to affect adversely the ability of a judge to comply with these principles, that conduct is likely to be inappropriate.

The Judicial Council - 'the council' - established under the bill has the important function of receiving, examining and referring complaints about judicial officers. Under the bill, the Council consists of four people. One, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, who is the head of the council. Two, the Chief Magistrate of the Magistrates Court. Three, an Australian lawyer appointed by the Minister for Justice on the joint nomination of the Law Society of Tasmania and the Tasmanian Bar. Four, a member appointed by the Minister for Justice who is not an Australian legal practitioner, has never been a member of any Australian parliament and has the qualifications and experience to assist the council.

I note here that the bill refers to Minister for Justice in relation to functions that are appropriate for another minister to exercise if the Minister for Justice is unavailable. However, key functions of the bill are reserved for the Attorney-General. The effect of this is that only the minister authorised to act as Attorney-General can exercise those functions

On receiving a complaint, the council is required to conduct a preliminary examination of the complaint during which the council may dismiss complaints that, for example, are not within the jurisdiction of the council, raise trivial matters or are lacking in substance or otherwise do not warrant further consideration. Given complaints can only be made about behaviour or incapacity, complaints are not able to be made simply because someone disagrees with the decision of a judicial officer. For this reason, the bill clarifies, for the avoidance of doubt, that complaints cannot be made based solely on the fact that a person is unhappy with the decision of a judicial officer in relation to a judicial proceeding. If the behaviour of the judicial officer in the course of that proceeding departed from judicial standards, a complaint could be made.

A complaint is also automatically dismissed if the judicial officer dies, retires or resigns from office or is otherwise no longer a judicial officer. This is in line with other Australian jurisdictions. The reason for this is that the purpose of the bill is to address the conduct or capacity of the judicial officer, such as counselling for minor matters or parliamentary removal of the officer for serious matters. If the person is no longer a judicial officer, there is no purpose in continuing with the complaint.

That said, if the matter has raised broader issues that need addressing, TASCAT or the relevant court can certainly still address those matters. An excellent example of a court taking appropriate action after the retirement of judges is the High Court's response to the conduct of

former Justice Heydon, where a full administrative inquiry was launched to ensure appropriate action long after the Justice's retirement.

If the complaint is not dismissed, the council must then proceed with a full examination of the complaint. If necessary, the council may hold hearings as part of this process, which are not limited to the matters raised in the initial complaint. Generally, these hearings must be held in private. Conduct prior to the appointment of a judicial officer can be considered where it is relevant to when the judicial officer is unable or unfit to perform the functions of the relevant judicial office.

In conducting this examination, the council must determine firstly whether there are reasonable prospects of the complaint being wholly or partly substantiated. If the complaint is not substantiated or should be dismissed because of one of the grounds specified in section 36, the council must dismiss the complaint and prepare a written report of its examination.

The council is able to refer a complaint to the head of the jurisdiction relevant to the judicial officer if the complaint, while substantiated, does not justify the removal of the judicial officer from office and the head of jurisdiction is the appropriate entity to take further action in respect of the complaint. The council must provide a report to the Attorney-General outlining the relevant evidence and reasons for the decision to make such a referral.

The bill provides that the judicial council appoints a judicial commission to examine a complaint in two scenarios: if the Council is satisfied on reasonable grounds that there are reasonable prospects of a complaint being substantiated and the complaint is of a nature that would justify the removal of the judicial officer, or if both Houses of parliament pass a resolution for the examination of a complaint in relation to a judicial officer by a judicial commission. In either case, the council must, in appointing a judicial commission, specify the period within which the commission is to provide a report on the complaint.

Upon a judicial commission being appointed, the judicial officer who is the subject of the complaint is excused from office and may not perform any functions or exercise powers, unless otherwise authorised. A judicial commission will consist of three members, two of whom are appointed from a pool of potential members established by the council and one from the pool of potential members established by the Minister for Justice. The council is required to nominate one of the members as the presiding member. The people within the council's pool must be or have previously been judicial officers, or an equivalent office in another jurisdiction, and, in the opinion of the council, hold the appropriate skills or qualifications to enable them to be a member of a judicial commission.

The people within the minister's pool must not be or have ever been, a judicial officer or a member of any parliament and must have, in the opinion of the minister, appropriate skills or qualifications to enable them to be a member of a judicial commission.

As soon as practical after being appointed, a commission must conduct an inquiry into the complaint, which may involve holding hearings. Subject to certain exceptions, a hearing of a judicial commission must be held in public. Clause 46 provides that a commission may make directions as to whether the hearing should take place in private and prohibit or restrict the publication of evidence and of documents lodged in the commission. The bill provides that it is desirable, where appropriate, for hearings to be held in public and for evidence to be made available to the public.

After completing an examination of a complaint, the commission must prepare a report of its examination and submit it to the Attorney-General. The Attorney-General is required to table the report in parliament and provide the report to the relevant judicial officer. The relevant judicial officer is then able to provide a written statement in response to the report. This written statement is also to be tabled in parliament. Both Houses of parliament can use this report and any written statement to inform themselves as to whether the judicial officer should be removed from office. The work of the commission is complete upon submission of its report to the Attorney-General.

It should be reiterated that the power to remove a judicial officer continues to rest with the parliament. The parliament can consider the report of a commission, which may or may not recommend removal. It can also consider any statement made by the relevant judicial officer. Parliament then has the role of determining whether the judicial officer should be removed from their position. Clause 33 of the bill sets out the process for removal under the bill.

It provides that a judicial officer is removed from judicial office if a complaint has been made under this act in respect of the judicial officer, a report of a commission in respect of the complaint has been tabled in both Houses of parliament under clause 50, and a resolution is passed in both Houses of Parliament confirming the removal of the judicial officer from judicial office in accordance with the clause.

It is noted that, like some other jurisdictions, this transparent process makes the decision entirely a matter for the parliament. No action is required from the Governor. The clause confirms that the judicial officer must be given the opportunity to make a written statement, and also must have the opportunity to address a House of parliament in accordance with the Standing Orders of that House.

The bill acknowledges the need for an appropriate level of transparency. The bill provides for various information in relation to complaints to be made public. The council is required to publish an annual report that contains data as to the number of complaints and the outcome of those complaints, as well as descriptive information that may include patterns in types of complaints. The subjects of complaints will not be identified in this reporting unless the judicial officer has already been identified in the public domain.

The bill also recognises the natural justice and procedural fairness in the handling of complaints. Therefore, the bill ensures that the relevant judicial officer is advised of the complaint as soon as a preliminary investigation is conducted and the council determines not to dismiss the complaint. The relevant judicial officer is entitled to appear at any hearing conducted by either the council or a commission. The relevant judicial officer may be legally represented at any hearing of the council or a commission. The relevant judicial officer or their legal representative may examine or cross-examine witnesses at any hearing.

If the council dismisses the complaint, the relevant judicial officer receives a copy of the written report on the substantive examination. If the council is required to prepare a report under clause 44, the relevant judicial officer receives a copy of this report, and finally, where a commission is held, the relevant judicial officer must be provided with a copy of its report as soon as practicable after it is tabled in parliament. The judicial officer is then able to provide a written response, and is also to be provided with an opportunity to appear before both Houses in accordance with their Standing Orders.

Finally, I am pleased that TASCAT, the Magistrates Court and the Supreme Court are already committed to professional development for judicial officers. The newest TASCAT and Magistrates Court legislation confirms their head of jurisdiction has responsibility for promoting such training, and the Chief Justice also takes on this responsibility in practice in respect of training. This bill implements the legislative recommendation in the commission of inquiry recommendation 16.16. That is, the Commission of Inquiry recommended consideration of legislative change, and the responsibility of the Chief Justice to professional development is now formalised in the *Supreme Court Act 1887*.

Further, the council's functions were updated after consultation, and include providing recommendations in respect of professional development and educational training for judicial officers. For example, the council might observe that a particular officer would benefit from training, or a pattern of complaints might identify areas where training would assist.

On first being appointed Attorney-General, one of my first priorities was to discuss with the department a need for a judicial complaints body. As subsequent events even more clearly demonstrated, such a body is needed in Tasmania. I am pleased to say that this bill quite rightly allows for complaints about conduct of judicial officers, whether the conduct occurred after the bill commences.

Thankfully, the experience of judicial complaints handling bodies in Australia reflects that our judiciary is, on the whole, professional, impartial and fair. Complaints requiring commission-style investigations are few and far between across Australia. Our hope and expectation are that this will be the case in Tasmania.

However, having a robust system in place provides all participants in the legal system with the opportunity to raise any concerns and with the confidence that there is an established and transparent process for these concerns to be considered. This can only serve to strengthen confidence in the integrity of the justice system in Tasmania.

I again thank all those organisations and individuals who took the time to make a submission on the bill as well as the members of the Justice Forum for their generous contribution. Many changes to the bill were made as a result to get the balance right. The bill commences on proclamation and, Speaker. I commend the bill to the House.

[3.42 p.m.]

**Ms WHITE** (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to make a contribution on the Judicial Commission's Bill 2024 and indicate the Labor Party's support. At the outset, I pay thanks to the staff, the Attorney-General's office and the department for the multiple briefings that were provided on this bill and the patience and their time in answering a number of questions that I had following consultation on the bill and reading through the submissions.

This is a significant piece of work that, as this parliament knows, does have a bit of history to it. I will touch on some of that, but also on what function this bill will help the Tasmanian judiciary to deal with in the future, because it is important that we do have a complaints handling body like this established.

I acknowledge the Tasmanian Women Lawyers (TWL), who on 19 February 2021 put out a statement which at that time I think was regarded widely as quite a significant thing to do, and acknowledge their efforts in highlighting the obvious challenges that are faced by

people in subordinate positions dealing with people in authority, particularly judges, who hold extraordinary power when they wish to raise complaints against those people for their behaviour or conduct in the workplace. The Tasmanian Women Lawyers statement, amongst other things, called on this parliament to implement a judicial commission which is effectively what the bill before this House seeks to now do.

That came on the back of publicity about an incident which I will not go into because I have not spoken to the person involved, and do not have her permission to share that story, but what I will talk about is the structural imbalance and power imbalances that exists across the Tasmanian judiciary, where there is somebody in a workplace, it could be any workplace really, where there is a power imbalance and that person has executed that power in an improper way.

How do you then raise a complaint without fear of retribution or humiliation or intimidation? How do you know that complaint will be dealt with appropriately and that there will be a remedy for the complainant at the end of that? That is largely the reason why the Tasmanian Women Lawyers put that statement out and they spoke about a number of challenges that they had identified. I would like to quote from that statement on 19 February 2021, in particular this section:

TWL recognises that the historically male-dominated and tight knit nature of the legal profession has led to a culture in which sexual harassment and misconduct has been allowed to continue. We understand that members of the profession have been reluctant to discuss this matter publicly out of fear of recrimination. We call for an end to this culture of secrecy.

All too often, the women caught up in such incidents face vilification and negative professional consequences when they become public knowledge. TWL reiterates that, in situations where there is an inherent power imbalance between the parties, the person in a position of authority should always bear the consequences of their action. Women and other subjects of such misconduct should be supported and made to feel safe by the profession.

Tasmanian Women Lawyers went on to make some further remarks in this statement. I will share them because the history for the genesis of this bill is relevant, notwithstanding the Attorney-General's comments that it was something that he identified as a priority when he came into the portfolio. I probably preceded these matters becoming public knowledge. I am not sure, but I presume that that is the case.

**Mr Barnett** - You did.

**Ms WHITE** - Thank you.

The Tasmanian Women Lawyers' statements certainly put it on the public agenda and made all of us aware of the importance of the need to establish a judicial commission.

They spoke about some of the challenges in trying to raise a complaint and challenges in having transparency about the process where a complaint is made. From their statement:

This incident highlights the lack of transparent and accountable process for investigating allegations into judicial misconduct or impropriety. We call

upon the parliament and the judiciary to implement a judicial commission, similar to models used in other Australian states, which would allow clear process for all complaints regarding judicial behaviour that is open and allows for procedural fairness for all parties.

This would provide opportunity to restore public faith in the justice system by showing the willingness of the judiciary to be held to the same standards and process for accountability as public servants.

That was a statement provided in 2021 in February. Here we are in September 2024 and the government is now progressing a bill, and this bill is again not without its own history. Members who were in this place in the last term of parliament would remember that this parliament was recalled for one day only at the very end of the session of last year, after all the matters that had been dealt with, to deal with the iteration of the then Judicial Commissions Bill. I think the government had perhaps gone through about 14 different drafts of that bill, and so parliament was recalled to deal with that bill and that was the only reason we were asked to come back.

The parliament never got to debate that bill, the bill was never brought on for debate, and the House adjourned before we got to even start conversation about this matter. I think that points to a couple of things. One is that there was a real rush to try and solve a problem that had become very urgent to address because of a matter that is still before the courts. I will not go into that, but I think everyone understands the reason why this became an urgent matter to deal with. The other was that, despite the Tasmanian Women Lawyers putting this statement out in February 2021, still by December 2023, the government had not prioritised it and done enough consultation on a bill to be able to present something to this parliament for it to debate, to establish a judicial Commission. That is the history that goes to the reason why we are debating this bill here today.

The bill that is before us today has done a very good job of thoroughly consulting with the legal fraternity and the wider community and asking for their input to help us develop a commission that works in Tasmania in a small jurisdiction. I commend the work of the department in the consultation that has been undertaken. I have had it explained to me that not only has it been through written submissions, which have been provided and available publicly on the Department of Justice website, but also through the different forums that I understand you have been at personally, Attorney-General, where open conversations have been had about the best model for Tasmania.

In the work that have done since this bill was tabled as the final version in consultation, I have had a lot of feedback and for the most part I would say it is very positive. There is a general agreement that this bill will be workable in the Tasmanian context and that it will provide an avenue for complaints to be raised and for them to be dealt with appropriately and transparently given that there will be annual reports provided that outline how complaints have been dealt with if complaints have been received, noting that the most serious of complaints that might warrant the removal of a judge are likely to be very rare indeed. What it does provide - and this is really important is a central place where anybody can make a complaint if they are concerned about the behaviour or the actions of someone in the judiciary. At the moment, it can be quite complicated, a difficult and not very clear for people who wish to do that. Coupled with the legislative work that this parliament is considering, there is also the advertising and public awareness campaign about how complaints can be raised through this forum and that it

is not just about the most serious of issues that might warrant the removal of a judge, but also other matters relating to behaviour or conduct.

Noting the Tasmanian Women Lawyers statement from 2021, there are issues that exist across the judiciary that have to be addressed and they are cultural problems. My hope is that this judicial commission will shine a light on some of those challenges and also provide the educative work necessary to change culture and behaviour so that we improve the standards across the board and prevent people needing to raise a complaint because hopefully the workplace and the culture is far better than it has been in the past.

Fundamentally, those who hold an office such as a judicial officer must uphold the highest ethical standards. Unfortunately, that has been called into question in recent years because of the behaviour of one particular judge. It is necessary for us to demonstrate that we are taking seriously our responsibility to put in place frameworks that provide avenues for complaints to be raised if matters like this, or other more minor matters, are found in the future and can be dealt with appropriately.

People who hold an office such as the office of a judge must uphold those high ethical standards at all times, not just professionally, but also in their personal lives. Again, I point to more recent examples where that has been demonstrated to not occur. Ultimately, these people sit in judgment of others and I do not think the Tasmanian public can have confidence or trust their decision-making capability if they do not at all times uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct themselves, both in a personal and professional capacity. It is vitally important that this parliament does what it needs to do to ensure we can restore public confidence in the judiciary: make sure that where people who hold positions of authority and have power can be held to account and there is no negative consequence or repercussion for people who raise complaints and we can provide a safe place for complaints to be raised and start to improve the culture.

There were a number of questions through submissions that I have had some responses to through the briefings, but in the interests of transparency I indicated that I would be seeking to raise them again here. I think it is important to recognise that there have been a lot of very good submissions made through the consultation on this bill and a lot of people put a lot of effort into providing that feedback. I will go through some of the submissions and place those questions on the public record to provide an opportunity for the Attorney-General to answer those things so we can hopefully satisfy some of the concerns that have been raised by different individuals and groups who have made submissions.

I will start first with the joint submission on the draft Judicial Commissions Bill that was authored by a number of individuals but namely Gabrielle Appleby, who is an adjunct professor at the University of Tasmania Law School and also director at Gilbert + Tobin Centre of Public Law at the University of New South Wales Law and Justice faculty.

I thought personally this was an incredibly thoughtful submission. It is a contribution that was made not only by Professor Appleby but Ebony Brooks, Cleo Hansen, Laurie Anya Hilcommeyer, Leigh Sealy SC and Professor John Williams AM, so it is very credible, but there were a couple of questions I will place on the record, and those include going to recommendation 1 from the submission which relates to the source of power to suspend or remove judicial officers.

Recommendation 1 from the joint submission was that clause 4 should be amended to clarify the act as the sole source of power to suspend or remove a judicial officer and this power should only be exercisable where there is provided misbehaviour or incapacity in accordance with the process set out in the bill.

The Attorney-General will answer this, but my understanding from the briefing is that this sits on top of the existing legislation, so parliament still has the discretion to remove or not remove a judicial officer based on the report that might be provided by the commission. I am sure the Attorney-General will provide a more comprehensive response to that, but certainly in the briefing I was satisfied with the explanation that was shared with me.

The second recommendation the joint submission made was regarding the membership of the Judicial Council. Their recommendation was that that particular element be amended so the minister must appoint the person jointly nominated by the Council of the Law Society and the Tasmanian Bar. The person must have a minimum of seven years' legal practice and it should be made explicit that the person may be a legal practitioner from interstate.

The explanation provided to me is that given the appointment needs to be recommended by the Council of the Law Society and the Tasmanian Bar, it is to be expected they would recommend somebody appropriately qualified and suitably experienced to perform that duty, but making it prescriptive in law by requiring a minimum of seven years' legal practice might actually prohibit them from recommending the most suitable applicant. I was satisfied with that response.

The third recommendation by the joint submission was about the membership of the council and this is the minister's appointment. This was the requirement to stipulate types of qualifications and experience that somebody might need to sit on the council. Again, the response provided to me in the briefing was that it was deemed too restrictive to be so prescriptive in law as to outline the skills that might be appropriate for somebody to have and that by leaving it open it provides the scope for a suitably qualified person to be chosen who might meet the needs of that council at the time, depending on the nature of the complaint.

The next matter was a conflict of interest in relation to providing an amendment so that a council member is not able to perform a functional exercise of power where there is a bias or apparent bias, and I am sure the Attorney-General can deal with that in the response.

As to staff and facilities of the council, I did flag that I would ask this question of you in the briefing as well, Attorney-General. This is in relation to making sure that appropriate independent public service staffing is provided for the council and that if existing State Service employees are seconded to work for the council, it must be in an exclusive capacity, not in conjunction with their existing State Service employment and confidentiality obligations that attach must be clarified.

I shared some concerns about this. Obviously, there needs to be some secretarial support provided to the council. They will need to do a fair bit of research and will not have permanent employees assigned to them because you would hope that they are not always in session, so it would be as required from time to time as complaints are raised. It could be that somebody does that and has another responsibility elsewhere in the State Service, but it would be important for the Attorney-General to clarify where that might be and what that might look like and really how this will work so there is clarity about how that will operate in practice.

The ninth recommendation from the joint submission related to the delegation by the Chief Justice or Chief Magistrate. This is a recommendation that would have made it clear where there is a delegation of functional power by the Chief Justice or Chief Magistrate, because they are unable to perform their function, this be automatically given to the next most senior member of the court who is available.

In the briefing, it was explained to me that the bill is silent on this because it may not be somebody who has been at the court for very long, or they may have a conflict of interest themselves so they may not be the most appropriate person, and therefore their delegation might need to be provided to another person, but again, if the Attorney-General could address that.

Recommendation 10 was about provision of information to the Attorney-General. This has come up a few times and this is whether or not the report of the commission should be provided to the clerk of the House or provided to the Attorney-General to lay on the table as a report for the parliament. Recommendation 10 was that the power to request information through the council was given to the Houses of parliament, which may be done through the Attorney-General, rather than the Attorney-General having that explicit power without needing the consent of the parliament.

In the briefing it was explained to me that the council might refuse the Attorney-General if there was a power to request information that came from the Attorney-General to the council, so they are not bound to share information if they do not wish to. Whilst it is not in this part of their submission, I would like the Attorney-General to explain the reason why reports are provided to the attorney rather than provided to the clerk and tabled in the parliament. That would be useful.

There was a question in their recommendation 13 about procedural fairness, and that is to state explicitly that the council and commission must accord procedural fairness, as is appropriate. There was concern that that was not explicitly named up in the bill. In the briefing, the explanation provided to me was that it is named up in the bill that the council and commission need to act in a fair way, but I think it would be useful for the parliament if the attorney could also respond to the reason why those explicit words are not included in the final bill.

Their recommendation 15, which related to who can make complaints, was to amend it to allow for anonymous complaints in an own motion investigation. There is provision now for anonymous complaints, but there is no provision for an own motion investigation. As it was described to me, that is because, if it was included, it would create the potential risk, albeit maybe a very small risk, that the council could prosecute a position without approaching it objectively, or they could continue to raise an issue over and over if they wished to, despite the fact that parliament would never come to a different conclusion if they were tabling a report. It could end up in a bit of a cycle.

It is also important to note, as I said at the outset, that anybody can make a complaint. It can be an anonymous complaint. It can be a complaint on behalf of somebody else. It can be a complaint from an entity; it does not have to be from a natural person. I think this is sensible because, as we heard from the women lawyers, but also generally, we have people acting in positions of authority. There is always the risk of fear if you are raising a complaint against that person. If somebody else can do that on your behalf or you can make a complaint

anonymously, so long as they can provide sufficient evidence, those matters can be progressed without that person feeling like they are at risk of potentially losing their position.

There were some other matters from the joint submission. One was in relation to the power to subpoena judicial officers. As it was explained to me, it would be very unusual for someone to refuse if they were subpoenaed, and the report that came to parliament would clearly show if somebody had made such a refusal. I understand that the chief justice was quite comfortable with that clause as worded in the bill, which I think we should pay heed to.

With respect to transparency - I touched on this earlier - there are annual reports that will be provided to the parliament. I understand those annual reports allow for recommendations of the commission on any changes, and this allows for transparency as well relating to some of the structural matters contained within the bill. There is no review provision in the bill, and I know there are other members of this Chamber who have cited that as a concern. Personally, I am open-minded about that, but I also respect that with annual reports being provided to parliament we will be able to determine from that if there are challenges or whether recommendations are contained within that about amendments to the act that might need to be progressed. That could happen far sooner than any review might happen anyway, so arguably that transparency measure is like a review that happens annually.

I did raise some questions about procedural fairness in relation to the tabling of the commission's report in this parliament, and that was a concern that went to the fact that the Attorney-General receives the commission's report and is required to table that in the parliament as soon as practicable, and that the person against whom the complaint was raised against has 14 days to respond. I am concerned there could be reputational damage within that 14-day period, because the report might make quite a significant finding against an individual who potentially may not have had a right of reply.

It was put to me in the briefing that during the work of the commission, the person against whom the complaint is raised has the chance to cross-examine witnesses, and that will be contained within the final report. Arguably, the opportunity should be there for that report to capture all of the arguments. Procedural fairness should be afforded to those individuals because it should be shown in that final report who said what and why, and it should all be clear at the same time when that report is tabled. The judicial officer against whom the complaint was raised then has 14 days to provide further information that will be tabled in the parliament.

I can understand the arguments that have been shared with me. I note that there are some in the legal fraternity who feel a bit nervous about this because there is always the risk to somebody's reputation if something is tabled in this place, or made public, and they do not feel like they have had a right of reply. I would appreciate the Attorney-General addressing that fact and providing assurance about that, because I think it is important we get this right and do not create an unintended consequence.

There have been a significant number of other questions raised by submitters. I note that Civil Liberties Australia remain quite concerned about some elements of this bill. I do not have time to go into it now, but I would like to quickly touch on the submission made by William Forster Chambers, which is a reflection on another similar small jurisdiction, the Northern Territory. The concerns that have been raised in that submission are about how essentially, everybody knows everybody, and if you have a committee, a council or a commission

established whereby you have the Chief Justice or other senior justices sitting on that body, it is very likely they will know the other judicial officers against whom any complaint may be raised. There may be personal relationships that exist. There are requirements for conflicts of interest to be disclosed and for that to be dealt with appropriately.

The submission by William Forster Chambers highlights that there are inherent risks in a small jurisdiction where people know one another that you can have quite perverse outcomes. I would appreciate it if the Attorney-General could provide a response to the concerns raised in that submission to explain how in Tasmania you expect this to operate fairly, without bias and without the risk of conflict of interest. There have been some suggestions that you have an interstate judicial officer sit on those councils or committees to be able to provide an independent perspective that is more removed from the Tasmanian context. I appreciate your response to those points because it is a valid question to ask how you are going to manage those potential conflicts of interest and personal relationships when you have such a small pool from which to draw on, given our jurisdiction.

I suspect we will be going into committee anyway and I can ask some further questions there, but I will finish up by saying that we certainly need a judicial commission in this state. I thank everybody who has provided advice to me and the government through submissions to the bill. It is well overdue and I realise that we are in a bit of a rush to the end of the year to hopefully get something in place and there are some other urgent matters that I am sure are on the Attorney-General's mind, so hopefully we can deal with this today if possible.

[4.11 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Honourable Speaker, I indicate that this is a bill which falls into Cassy O'Connor MLC, member for Hobart's portfolio, so I am taking carriage of this through the House on her behalf. It is the intention of the Greens to support this bill, but we have a lot of questions and some amendments which we have flagged and circulated to members.

I start by appreciating the work of the Attorney-General's staff. They have been extremely helpful and comprehensive in their briefings and answered a lot of questions and gone backwards and forwards, which is really important and welcome. I say what a difficult space this has been for members of parliament, particularly those who were involved in that process at the end of last year on the very last day of parliament. It is not a comfortable place for members of parliament to wade into.

It is an incredibly important principle of the Westminster system that we maintain a strong separation of powers between the judiciary and parliament. We must not go down the path that other countries have trodden down, some more recently than others, in interfering and reaching in to the decision-making and the independence of the judiciary. That is a pathway to doom and we have seen that from history. There are so many examples and current countries around the world. That is not where anyone in this Chamber wants to go; I am confident of that and I feel confident that I am surrounded by other members who take this matter very seriously.

We are here today because we have no mechanism that is considered adequate for dealing with members of the judiciary whose behaviour and conduct is below what is expected, and we especially have no mechanism for suspending a member of the judiciary while an investigation takes place and for removing a member of the judiciary if an investigation takes place, other than the incredibly antiquated process of parliament having to deliver a commission of inquiry

process. To do that it is so heavy-handed and is so cumbersome a process and fraught with danger that we got to a stage last year where the government had intended to bring on legislation but then they just pulled it before we had even had a chance as members to debate it.

This is really important to set a framework in place. The Greens support establishing a process that is transparent where there must be a mechanism for holding judges to account. Who judges the judges? That is really what we are here deciding today. What are the appropriate safeguards for our democracy to have a mechanism to judge judges? It is very clear from the particular circumstances that are in play at the moment that we are motivated by the urgency of particular circumstances that are happening in relation to the behaviour of one judge, and potential instances of alleged serious behaviour that calls into question the capacity of that person to continue in that role, were that found to be the case.

There is no mechanism at the moment to do something about it. However, this has been on the record and has its antecedents much earlier than this particular instance. While the instance in question is a matter of public record, if it were found to be true it would take it through to the question of suspension. There is no mechanism to deal with lower-order issues or issues that need to be investigated properly so that a matter of potential removal could be considered.

I am talking about the sorts of things that the Tasmanian Women Lawyers raised in their excellent submission and they, by the way, are very pleased that parliament is considering how to implement a judicial commission to address concerns about complaints and disciplinary issues. They said very strongly in their submission that:

Tasmania lacks a transparent mechanism to deal with errors of judgment, judicial bullying of legal practitioners, inappropriate remarks or conduct towards court users or litigants, or conduct in a judicial officer's personal life that fundamentally calls into question their capacity to continue to serve in that role professionally.

They say:

Judicial bullying is a problem which Tasmanian Women Lawyers is particularly concerned with, as research across Australian institutions show that judicial bullying is a significant source of workplace stress and causes legal practitioners to leave the profession. Even the highest court in Australia is not immune from allegations of judicial bullying.

The lack of a complaints process in Tasmania to address judicial bullying means that unlike other jurisdictions, Tasmanian legal practitioners have no effective mechanism for having severe bullying behaviour investigated and addressed. This contributes to the widely recognised psychosocial stresses for legal practitioners and risks the loss of skilled and valued individuals from the legal profession.

That is a really terrible state of affairs. They are writing from the point of view of women lawyers and the instances they have raised in what I just read out could happen to a person of any gender, but they also go on to talk about matters which are particular to women lawyers and Ms White has read out the statement they gave in 2021.

They say sexual harassment and in particular gendered bullying, belittling, discrimination, and the marginalising of women in the profession has been occurring and is still occurring in Tasmania, and this is something we have to have a mechanism to deal with. Currently, the mechanism does not provide for confidentiality in people bringing forward complaints. It does not provide confidence to people who bring forward complaints that the person they are complaining to, who may have connections with the person they are complaining about, will make an assessment which is independent of their relationship with the person who they are alleging has behaved badly. This issue of the smallness, essentially, of the profession and the enormous disparity in power between the most senior judicial officers, the chief magistrate, the chief justice and everybody else in the profession, is very difficult, and it is something that has to be dealt with properly.

I understand that the Attorney-General has dealt with many of the issues that have been raised in the submissions that were provided in July. We will go through in committee and unpack these concerns, and make sure that they have all been dealt with properly. We have a number of questions about how that has happened, and that is a process that we want to go through. The Tasmanian Women Lawyers have also said that it is very important that we have to explicitly make our purpose clear for the guidelines for the work of the proposed judicial council. There has to be a clear process for guiding complaints so that the public perception of judicial officers is that they are not immune from consequences, no matter the power that a person may wield in the courtrooms, for errors of judgment or for things that fall short of public expectations of judicial behaviour.

Some of the public expectations of judicial behavior are about language that is used in the courtroom. It is about the behaviour of a judicial officer to other members of the legal profession and in their duties. These are very important matters that provide information about the capacity of the judicial officer to do their work with objectivity, independence and the ability to be impartial to the types of person and circumstances, and to apply the law when they are considering the matters that come before them without the bias of their own personal views or without any bias that could affect the outcome.

The public has to have real confidence in it, and it will be a better thing for Tasmania's justice system to have this mechanism in place - to have a framework so that complaints can be made and heard. That is why it is so important to have this mechanism. At the moment we have been focusing on bringing in this legislation for a very serious matter that might still be in train in the courts that potentially could go to removal of a judge, but there are so many other things that this legislation would and should seek to deal with.

The other mechanism that we need to have is something that can deal with the failures of performance of a judge or magistrate, that is, something that can deal with the capacity of a judge or magistrate to hear and to provide judgments on cases, specifically in relation to matters of misconduct, bullying, inappropriate private life conduct and sexual harassment. These are things where there has been unquestionably a disinclination amongst a male-dominated profession to have these matters dealt with in a way that other workplaces would deal with those sorts of allegations of misconduct and misbehaviour. That is why we have to have this mechanism in place.

We have four amendments. We have had a range of amendments proposed. We have been backwards and forwards, and we have four amendments to discuss today. There are

several other matters that it is likely, depending on the outcome of where the House lands, Ms O'Connor will take up in the Legislative Council. I will certainly flag those things in debate.

I thank the people, in addition to the department staff, who have given us their time and provided us with briefings: Duncan Kerr, former Federal Court judge; and Chris Gunson SC, have both been very generous and comprehensive in providing their thoughts on the bill, and that is very welcome. The people who made the submissions are very important in the views they provided, many of which have been attended to by the Attorney-General, some of which are outstanding or we have questions about.

It is important to say that the question of the privacy of hearings is a complicated matter. It is a very fine point whether hearings should be public or private. The Tasmanian Women Lawyers summed it up nicely, saying having hearings in private allows for anonymous complaints, which is good, but it also allows for less transparent accountability processes, which is not good. They recommend that an appropriate balance to be struck to ensure that complainants are confident that their concerns are being addressed in a rigorous analysis and in a manner appropriate to the scale of the complaint and any privacy concerns involved.

They recommended that the bill incorporates a model where there is a register similar to that kept by the LBPT - I am not sure what that stands for - and accessible via their website, or to that used in New South Wales or Victoria. Those processes recalled all findings of substantiated complaints, with council to have the discretion as to whether to publish such material with pseudonyms or other protections for complainants, witnesses or the judicial officer concerned. I would appreciate the Attorney-General's comments on the matter of -

**Mr Barnett** - It is the Legal Profession Board of Tasmania.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - That is what it is, thank you. I would appreciate the Attorney-General's comments on the recommendation of having a similar mechanism.

The other matter that we want to raise in the bill is in relation to the keeping of records of a report from the Judicial Commission that is tabled in parliament. Currently as it stands in the bill, the report is to be shredded. We have a problem with that. Parts of the report can be held confidential and not made available. The report is to be tabled in parliament by the Attorney-General, and part of the report may be removed for any confidential information, and then after the process the report is to be shredded.

The concern we have with that is for history. This is a document of parliament. It is different from what is happening in government. There is a process for Cabinet-in-confidence papers which are tabled with the archive, and I understand are made available for, I do not know how long - 20 years or 25 years. I am not sure what the timeframe is for Cabinet-in-confidence papers. There is a mechanism so that history will know the decisions that have been taken by members of parliament in their role as Cabinet ministers. They are working for the public interest and it should be there for the historical record. By the same argument, we would like to see a process where the information can be retained for historical purposes and made available at a later date. That is a novel and probably slightly different process to the process of archiving Cabinet-in-confidence papers and decisions. It is something Ms O'Connor will probably deal with in the Legislative Council, but I would like to hear the Premier's thoughts on this. Obviously, it is about maintaining confidentiality at the time, but it

is about keeping truth to the people of Tasmania for historical purposes so that information can be made available, as it is for everything else.

I will not go into any more detail about this now, except to say I have heard Mr O'Byrne's thoughts, which he will discuss himself, about having diversity on the commission panel. The Greens support diversity on the commission panel; that is manifestly a good thing. I understand the Attorney-General is introducing some amendments about the guidelines and some of the issues that were raised by Tasmanian Women Lawyers. That is also welcome. I think Mrs Beswick initiated that process.

The Greens have quite a lot of stuff to say but we support this bill and are keen to work towards getting it passed.

[4.32 p.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to speak briefly on the bill. There have been a number of points made by the speakers prior to me which are valid and important and questions that the minister will no doubt respond to in his summing up.

For those newer members of the House, this is an echo or a next instalment of something that occurred which was quite remarkable in the previous parliament, quite a remarkable set of events that looked quite untidy, but I feel there was a genuine attempt to resolve an issue of great concern and whilst it probably was not executed in a manner which led to a swift resolution, it was a step on the path to where we are now. I acknowledge the minister's, his officers' and the department's efforts in trying to come to a form or process that would allow us to deal with this very important and very delicate matter given what is occurring.

I will be supporting the bill because there is a clear need to establish a framework for the management of judicial complaints in Tasmania, particularly after the matters that have triggered such a discussion in the public domain. The integrity of our judicial system is immensely important and it is imperative that the public and the parliament have confidence within it. Based on the discussions that were triggered late last year and the consultation since and regarding this bill, there does seem to be broad support amongst the legal community and experts for some form of judicial commission similar to what other states have in place.

Whilst there are some differences of opinions about the mechanics of the commission, about how certain clauses should operate and who should serve on or make appointments to the commission, and whilst there are a number of different views among the legal profession and experts about the technicalities of this bill, it is important to recognise that there is unanimous support for some form of judicial commission.

There are some valid concerns that experts and stakeholders have raised that should be looked into and investigated. I have formed the view that it is better to have some form of judicial oversight than not, and it really cannot come soon enough.

While the model proposed under this bill is perhaps not perfect, it is far better than nothing and any delay will prolong the status quo of no accountability, which, in the public's eye, is unacceptable. Hopefully through some of the amendments that are being proposed and discussed, and no doubt the work of the other House, hopefully we can swiftly move through to achieve a framework of management of judicial complaints, one that provides a level of confidence in the community.

The member who just resumed her seat, the Leader of the Greens, flagged that I would be moving two amendments, essentially dealing with the same matter in two areas, and I will do that in the committee phase. I will briefly talk about it. Clause 15.1 and 15.2, establishes a process for appointing two pools of persons who might be appointed by the Council to judicial commissions.

The first pool is appointed by the Council and includes six persons who are or have previously been judicial officers or the equivalent in Tasmania or another jurisdiction. The second pool is appointed by the minister and are not judicial officers but, in the opinion of the minister, each holds the appropriate skills or qualifications to enable the person to be a member of a commission. There is no requirement for these pools to reflect the diversity of the Tasmanian community. Stakeholders have raised concerns with me that, due to the heavy reliance on formal judicial officers, there is a risk that they will be dominated by men and could lack ethnic or other forms of diversity as well.

It will be important for public confidence and for the legitimacy of the commission that they reflect the diversity of the community, which should be a consideration of their employment appointment. There are two parts to the simple amendments that I will introduce in the committee phase. The first is amendments to clause 14, which requires the minister and the Council establish pools that reflect, as far as practicable, the diversity of persons within the community. Similarly, the amendment to clause 15 introduces a requirement that the diversity is a consideration when a commission is appointed from these pools.

These amendments are not intended to be too prescriptive. The intention is to ensure that the pools and that judicial commissions include some degree of diversity. I believe this enhances the bill and would improve public confidence in and the operation of judicial commissions in the critically important role they will have in preserving the integrity of Tasmania's justice system.

They are small, but I think important amendments which will add to the bill. I have been made aware of other amendments that I think other members may be forecasting and I will show my support and we will work through those in the committee phase.

I am sure the minister will, either in his summing up or when we do reach the committee stage, provide some commentary and some feedback. He has indicated to me verbally that the amendment is something that will add to the bill, so I am hopeful that we can find some way to resolve that quickly for the sake of everyone.

In terms of the Greens' proposed amendments, I know that we will work through them in the committee. I understand that this has been a complex process to work through and, at some stage, I think there was an amendment. I am not sure if you are still continuing to move it to include former members of parliament in that. That may may be an amendment. I am in two minds about that. Careful what you pray for, in some respects. I will reserve judgment on that. Whether it is appropriate that former members of parliament, regardless of their status and regardless of their ability and standing in the community, I am undecided on that. At the end of the day, having diversity of people on the tribunals and the commissions is important and we will work through that, no doubt, through the committee stage.

With those few short words, I indicate my support for the bill in principle and look forward to the committee stage, where we can discuss some constructive amendments which hopefully improve the bill.

[4.40 p.m.]

**Mr GARLAND** (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, while the purpose of this bill is to be lauded and is urgently needed to deal with the outcome of the criminal prosecution of a particular judge, the model proposed in this bill will not achieve its desired aim.

In a small and highly networked jurisdiction like Tasmania, the commission must have a real degree of independence from Tasmania's judiciary and this model fails on that front. The proposed judicial council will be presided over by the Chief Justice, who will chair the council, the Chief Magistrate, and, most likely, an experienced Tasmanian lawyer or a layperson. It will operate as the gatekeeper for complaints reaching the commission, yet three out of the four of those deciding what to do with the complaint will very likely have an extensive connection to the person being complained about. Requiring the appointment of interstate lawyers or interstate retired judges to comprise at least two of the positions or to chair the council could have overcome this concern, but the government has chosen not to require this as part of the bill it has presented.

Tasmania is not the first jurisdiction to implement this sort of body. However, in looking to other jurisdictions for guidance, the only fair comparisons are to the ACT and Northern Territory, which have similarly small, highly networked legal professions.

For this reason, I found the submission from Alistair Wyvill SC, a well-respected barrister from the Northern Territory, about the effectiveness of their judicial commission established in 2020 to be very instructive. According to his submission, the Northern Territory Judicial Commission has failed to deliver because it does not comprise of members from outside the jurisdiction. Mr Wyvill gives some concerning examples of how this is played out in practice. In his words:

It is asking too much of human nature and a small jurisdiction to expect judges to be able to properly discipline themselves. Personal relationships with the judiciary are too ubiquitous and too substantial. The chances of compromising connections with the subject matter of a complaint are also much greater than they are in larger jurisdictions.

Similar concerns were raised by Civil Liberties Australia, who suggested the council and commission be managed by independent external people not closely connected to the legal justice system in Tasmania, preferably entirely unconnected.

This is not the only problem I have with this bill. I will read from a submission prepared by a number of legal academics, including the former Solicitor-General, Leigh Sealy SC. The lead author is Gabrielle Appleby. The Appleby submission criticises the structures created in the bill because it means that the judicial council must determine whether a complaint is of a nature that would justify the removal of the relevant judicial officer. This is a standard for which there is no clear resolve test and is constitutionally the responsibility of the Houses of parliament to determine. It is inappropriate that the council should act as a gatekeeper for determining whether a complaint meets this threshold.

It also means that complaints that relate to conduct that might not justify removal are not fully investigated and rather, are referred back to the head of jurisdiction with all the current limits on their powers of further investigation and response.

There seems to be no compelling reason not to use the mechanism of the council and commissions to investigate such matters and either provide an appropriate response or to recommend such a response to the head of jurisdiction. Indeed, it would improve the status quo to introduce an independent and robust process for them.

Consider the example of judicial bullying of legal practitioners. It is rarely, if ever, going to rise to the level of justifying the removal of a judicial officer, but under this act, such conduct, no matter how recalcitrant, will continue to be handled through the current system, as opaque and secretive as it is.

While the threshold is certainly justified to ensure frivolous or vexatious complaints are weeded out before investigation and reporting, the bar set by this bill to enable investigation and reporting by an independent committee is too high. There are other less significant problems with this bill identified in the Appleby submission. I have only selected a few to speak to.

If a complaint is made about a judicial officer and they retire or resign, the complaint is not investigated any further. This does nothing to encourage a culture of learning from mistakes made, provides no vindication for the complainant and misses important opportunities for institutional reforms where the conduct raises systemic issues. It also does little to instill public confidence in the administration of the disciplinary regime. The bill fails to make explicit that procedural fairness must be afforded.

Finally, there is no review clause in the bill, which is unusual, considering we are establishing a new institution. Tasmania needs a judicial commission that is effective, independent, transparent and accountable and ensures ongoing trust and confidence in the Tasmanian justice system, but the model proposed by this bill will not achieve this. If we pass this bill, we will burden the state with a commission that is highly likely to suffer from the same defects as its Northern Territory counterpart.

I do not want to vote against this bill. I think it can be salvaged in a timely way if it is sent to the Government Administration Committee B to look at more thoroughly. I understand the Greens have circulated some amendments to the bill this morning, which strengthens my call for the bill to go to Committee B for review. Honourable Speaker, I move an amendment:

Leave out all the words after 'That' and Insert instead;

- (1) The Bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Government Administration Committee B for inquiry and report thereon.
- (2) The Committee report by 19 November 2024.

**The SPEAKER** - The amendment has been circulated? Could I ask the member - you needed to circulate copies of the amendment to - sorry, you do need to do that really quickly if you could get that happening. We cannot actually ask people to speak to it in the absence of

that, but perhaps if the Attorney-General could at least see the amendment. Do you have a copy?

For reference, amendments must be circulated at the time they are moved, or preferably beforehand, otherwise the business of the House gets held up and we are now very close to the Adjournment being moved unless the Attorney-General is intending to extend the sitting or the government can vote against the Adjournment after the conclusion of Adjournment contributions and we would then have one and a half hours to finish debate of the bill. We are now on the amendment, but I will allow a little bit of latitude if you were going to seek the call on the substantive one.

Actually, no, we need to see the amendment. You need to be able to speak to the amendment. I am sorry. The Attorney-General wishes to address it in waiting. It is not particularly complex amendment; just to refer to committee B. I am very comfortable for you to do so, Attorney-General, and provide you with some latitude.

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Minister for Justice) - Honourable Speaker, I will very briefly respond. I thank the member for his remarks and his comments about the merit of progressing with the bill in a timely manner. With respect to referring it to a committee, that is not something that the government would support. We do want to progress with the bill in a collaborative way and with goodwill. I think I have demonstrated that throughout this debate and it is not something that we can currently support. We would like to progress as soon as possible but I do appreciate the intent of the honourable member to try and land something that is very appropriate. There are a number of amendments that have been flagged and foreshadowed, so your amendment has just been circulated, but thank you very much for that.

I will not delay the time of the House now on that amendment, but it is not something that we can support at this stage.

**The SPEAKER** - If the amendment could be circulated to those members who are planning to speak: the member for Braddon, the Leader of the Greens, the shadow attorney-general and the member for Franklin probably all need to have a copy. Thank you, Charles, in that priority then anyone else. If anyone is ready to jump on this, otherwise we will actually have to put it because there is no one speaking to it. If no one is planning to jump on the amendment, then I have no option but to put the amendment in the absence of someone jumping.

**Mr O'BYRNE** (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, I will just speak briefly on the amendment. I understand and acknowledge the motivation that is behind the member for Braddon's view on the need to refer to a committee for review. He obviously does not have the benefit of what we went through last year, and I am not criticising him at all for that.

My only concern would be that there are some matters that he raised in his contribution which cannot be dealt with in a small state like Tasmania by a committee. A committee would not deal with the size of the community that we have here and the potential people to draw on to form such work. I believe that whilst legitimate, we are the size we are, and we have to make sure that these things are appropriate. We cannot always - and it is not practical to - look for people far and wide to form these committees and tribunals. We have the size of the legal community we have. The concerns are legitimate, and hopefully they can be purposefully dealt with and managed through a selection process, which I would be comfortable would occur.

In terms of a review, it is a legitimate point, and that is something that may be dealt with in the other place or it may be dealt with in the committee stage. Whilst I support the sentiment and the thought and intent behind it, I cannot support a referral because we do not have anything at the minute and we need something.

[4.52 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Honourable Speaker, I thank Mr Garland for bringing on the amendment. We do not disagree that this is an issue that needs a lot of attention. I am comfortable that the conversations that we have had with the Attorney-General and the changes that have happened to the bill are such that it can deal with the majority of the issues that Mr Garland has raised.

I think it is very important that we get a process in place. The situation that happened last year was unholy and chaotic. It showed our incapacity as a parliament to be able to deal with a very serious matter in a just, measured and effective way. I think some of the things that you have raised in your speech, Mr Garland, can be dealt with in this House in the committee process, and as I flagged, we have other amendments that we are going to talk about. Some of the things like a review are things we should have a conversation about. We can amend the bill and do that if we think that is a good idea.

We are very open to addressing any other issues that you have about things like that, and I think that we can do that in the committee stage. It could be something that goes to the Legislative Council and there could be some drafting by the Office of Parliamentary Counsel (OPC) in between for the Legislative Council to consider on particular matters. I am comfortable that this is a matter that the parliament needs to progress on. The work has been done on consulting with the legal community and getting the best view, which is what we have here today, and it is really up to us now to make a decision.

**Amendment negatived.**

[4.54 p.m.]

**Mrs BESWICK** (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, I am pleased that this bill is about making sure we have a fair, accountable and transparent system for dealing with complaints about judges and magistrates. These are important steps towards ensuring Tasmanians can trust that our judicial officers are doing the right thing, and that there are appropriate checks and balances in place to uphold the high standards we expect from our judicial officers.

I am comfortable this bill does not interfere with the independence of our judiciary. It is crucial our judges and courts are free from political interference, and this bill respects that. What it does is add some checks and balances to make sure these judicial officers are held to high standards.

It introduces essential safeguards to ensure that judicial officers are subject to a fair and impartial process when complaints arise. This system strengthens accountability without compromising freedom to operate independently.

Tasmania, like other Australian states, is fortunate to have a strong, fair and professional legal system. However, no system is perfect, and when something goes wrong, we need a proper process in place to handle things. This is where the Judicial Commission comes in. This bill fills the gap by establishing a framework that ensures complaints are dealt with in

a way that is fair, thorough and transparent. Similar systems exist in the Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory, and this bill has been tailored to Tasmania's needs.

I understand the bill has been through a variety of versions to get to this point. This version was made available for public comment in June 2024 and eight submissions were received reflecting a range of perspectives. I acknowledge that within those submissions there are concerns. These have been raised today in this debate. While I support this bill in principle and believe it represents a positive step forward, there are areas where it can be improved, particularly in terms of support for vulnerable people and individuals with disabilities.

The consideration of these groups has been on my mind a lot lately, especially in light of the Disability Inclusion and Safeguarding Bill we will be debating soon, and the Evidence, (Children and Special Witnesses) Amendment Bill we debated recently. Both pieces of legislation include vital provisions to protect vulnerable individuals, and I believe the Judicial Commissions Bill should be no different in this respect. Just as vulnerable witnesses are provided with special protections in court, we need to ensure there are similar provisions in place when we make complaints against judicial officers.

In the Evidence (Children and Special Witnesses) Amendment Bill, for example, vulnerable individuals are afforded several options to make their experience less intimidating. They can have a support person present, give evidence before a trial, or even give evidence from behind a screen if necessary. These provisions are essential to ensuring that all individuals feel safe and supported when participating in the legal process. If a vulnerable person or someone with a disability needs to act as a witness against a judicial officer, they should have the right to a support person to help guide them through this process.

Additionally, other accessibility options should be made available to ensure that individuals can engage in the system in a way that accommodates their special needs. This would make the complaints process not only more inclusive, but fairer for everyone involved. In collaboration with OPC and the Attorney-General's office, amendments have been drafted to address these concerns. These changes will ensure that vulnerable individuals and those with disabilities receive the necessary support when lodging complaints or providing evidence.

There are some specific issues I would like to highlight in relation to the bill. First, the current requirement for complaints are that they must be made in writing. I believe this poses a challenge for some individuals. While this seems straightforward for many of us, it is important to remember that not everyone finds it easy to communicate thoughts in writing. For people with disabilities or those who struggle with literacy, this requirement could become a significant barrier to lodging a complaint. This concern has been accepted by the Attorney-General's department, and amendments have been circulated.

I was particularly alarmed in the handling of cross-examinations and the risk of undue balance of power. This has been quite well articulated by the member for Lyons, and I believe that the Attorney-General will address that in his reply.

To sum up, the Judicial Commissions bill is a positive step, but could be enhanced further to ensure it is accessible to all, particularly vulnerable people and those with disabilities. By implementing these changes, we can create a system that is fair, transparent and accountable to all, regardless of their circumstances. I look forward to collaborating with my colleagues to

improve this bill and I hope we can pass these changes. It is our responsibility to ensure Tasmania's judicial complaint system is as inclusive as possible.

**Debate adjourned.**

**ADJOURNMENT**

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

That the House does now adjourn.

**Question on Notice**

The following answer to a question on notice was tabled:

**No. 6 - Gas Connections in Social Housing**

Ms Haddad to Minister for Housing and Planning, Mr Ellis

**See Appendix 2 on page 105.**

**Answer to Constituency Question - Moriarty - Power Reconnection**

**Answer to Question - Salmon Hatcheries - Water Monitoring**

[5.00 p.m.]

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Honourable Speaker, earlier today under Constituency Questions, Dr Broad asked a question and the Minister for Energy and Renewables has sought that I provide an answer given the urgent nature of the matter. The answer is as follows: Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) and TasNetworks have reached out to Dr Broad's constituent, Erin, to gather additional information in order to minimise any further delays in power restoration to her property.

Prior to TasNetworks being able to reconnect the property to the network, damage to private power lines on the property needs to be repaired. TasNetworks has worked with Erin to coordinate this work with her private electrician to be completed tomorrow. TasNetworks will ensure a crew is dispatched on the same day so that Erin has power restored to the property without further delay. The minister is also pleased to confirm that Erin has now received both the \$350 Emergency Food Grant and a \$6000 Temporary Living Support Grant.

The minister would like to thank Erin for her patience in working through this matter and urge any other Tasmanians in a similar situation who need support to reach out to TasNetworks or SmartyGrants. Anyone who needs assistance with applying or who is unsure about their eligibility for the Emergency Assistant Grant can contact the Tasmanian Emergency Information Service through 1800 567 567.

The government understands that many people have had to wait a very long time for reconnections, and that this has been disruptive and frustrating. As well as the extent of

vegetation and debris that has affected the network, restoration has been impacted by how difficult it has been to access some areas due to flooding and fallen trees and the sheer scale of the damage. An unprecedented 20 per cent of the network was out, disconnecting 47,000 customers at its peak.

The minister would like to take the opportunity to thank the first responders for their tireless efforts, including TasNetworks staff who have been working around the clock to reconnect Tasmanians' power. He would also like to thank the community as a whole for their patience during this difficult time.

In Question Time earlier today, the Leader of the Greens asked me a question which referred to matters detailing the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA). With respect, that should have been directed to Minister Duigan, but I have an answer from him as follows: he is advised the EPA is in the process of varying the Millybrook environmental licence for the inclusion of interim water quality limits, including biomass limits and the imposition of several conditions to update the environmental and operational monitoring and reporting requirements.

This will include the requirement of monthly and annual reporting to ensure transparency in the provision of information to the Tasmanian public. The EPA advises that the variation process requires review and analysis of site-specific water quality data to set limits, and the licence holder has a right of reply to new conditions. The minister is told the director must consider any response before imposing new conditions.

The establishment of interim water quality limits for inland farms requires multiple years of water quality information at a scale that is statistically robust from which to set regulatory limits. The minister is advised that Huon Aquaculture has advised the director of the EPA with monthly data for the Millybrook finfish farm in accordance with conditions in their current environmental licence and as part of the freshwater environmental management program.

The minister understands all results received have been analysed by the National Association of Testing Authorities Accredited Laboratory.

**Time expired.**

### **Child Homelessness**

[5.05 p.m.]

**Ms ROSOL** (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I rise tonight to speak on an issue that should disturb every single one of us in this Chamber: the heartbreaking reality of child homelessness in Tasmania.

Last night, as part of the University of Tasmania's Island of Ideas series, Associate Professor Catherine Robinson spoke about child homelessness in an address titled 'Unaccompanied Children Homeless Alone'. Professor Robinson shared haunting stories from real children across Tasmania. She revealed the brutal truth of unaccompanied children experiencing homelessness - children who, through no fault of their own, find themselves alone and without a roof over their heads. As Professor Robinson stated, how on earth do we arrive at a scenario in this country where we see children freefalling through the care of families and multiple agencies of the state and experiencing homelessness on their own?

These children, some of them as young as 10, are not just statistics. They are not faceless names in a report or figures in a budget sheet. They are Tasmanians - our children - living through the trauma of homelessness, isolated and unsupported. Professor Robinson emphasised that we must be relentless in supporting children in the face of systemic failure. Every adult must do better for them. According to the 2021 census, homelessness in Tasmania has increased 45 per cent since 2016. This rising tide of homelessness is disproportionately affecting our children, and one quarter of Tasmania's homeless population is aged between 12 and 24.

What is perhaps even more confronting is that 400 children and young people presented to services in Tasmania last year unaccompanied, and these are just the ones who found the courage to seek help. Some of these children are living on the streets, sleeping rough, couch-surfing or moving from one unstable situation to the next. These are children who have fallen outside our existing systems of care. They are not in the formal child protection system and not under the state's care, and they are too often lost in a culture of referral where responsibility is passed from one agency to the next. No one wants to own these kids or to take responsibility for their safety and wellbeing.

Every day in Tasmania, requests for urgent help from children aged from two to 17 go unassisted. The problem is not just a lack of affordable housing, though that is certainly a significant factor. It is about a crisis of care. We have failed to provide the services these children desperately need, and the system designed to protect and support them has gaps so wide they are swallowing the futures of our most vulnerable children.

The solution is not simple, but the problem is not impossible to solve. First, we must acknowledge and name childhood unaccompanied homelessness as a critical issue in its own right. We cannot continue to lump these children in with general homelessness statistics. Just today, Mission Australia and Origin released a report entitled 'Counting the Cost of Living: the Impact of Financial Stress on Young People'. This report underscores the urgency of last night's Island of Ideas event. The study, based on nearly 20,000 responses to Mission Australia's youth survey, highlights the profound financial stress facing young people across the nation. The report shows financial stress is entangled with the housing crisis, poor mental health outcomes and systemic inequities that are leaving too many of our young people behind.

The parallels between this data and the realities faced by unaccompanied homeless children in Tasmania are clear. Our children do not just face housing crisis, they are living through the accumulating impacts of financial stress and societal neglect. The government must step up and commission support specifically designed to address unaccompanied child homelessness. That means better prevention and early intervention services, and stronger, better-resourced systems for the care of children. As it stands, we are watching younger and younger children present for help, and yet the services that can meet their unique needs are shamefully underfunded.

In light of both the Mission Australia report and Professor Robinson's speech last night, I urge the Rockliff government to act. We cannot afford to turn a blind eye to the growing financial stress and housing instability affecting our children and young people, especially those who are already the most vulnerable. Rather than continuing down a path of denial and inaction, we must follow the lead of this report's recommendations and implement solutions that give our children and young people a fighting chance.

## Dementia Action Week 2024

[5.10 p.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Attorney-General) - Honourable Speaker, I would like to share a few remarks tonight about Dementia Action Week 2024. It has been a big week for many of us in this state and across Australia. Dementia is a condition that touches the lives of many Tasmanians. Like other people in this place, I have a family member who has dementia and I to commend right here, right now, Rob Fairs for his contribution last night, which I thought was outstanding and powerful based on personal experience, and I commend him for his courage in sharing that. Likewise, to Jacquie Petrusma for sharing about the importance of Dementia Action Week, and as Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing, I know how important it is and, with 10,000 of our fellow citizens currently living with dementia, it is an issue that we cannot afford to ignore.

In terms of the numbers, that will double by 2050. Those are the statistics that are facing us right now. It is certainly going to put a significant strain on our healthcare system and the communities that support those living with this condition. I recently met with Steve Wright. I pay tribute to Steve and his wife, Diane. He was speaking about his life as a carer for his wife, Diane. We caught up in Launceston. We had afternoon tea together and I just want to pay tribute to him and to Diane and Diane's story. It is inspirational, although not without its challenges as they have learned to live with Di's early-onset Alzheimer's disease.

Steve told me about the night he stepped into a Brisbane ballroom dance studio and the most stunning blue eyes he had ever seen stopped him in his tracks. He knew he had met his future wife, yet he did not know her name. So, there you go. Diane's name was revealed two weeks later at the next dance, and only 22 hours together over six weeks to propose before leaving for 12 months national service in Vietnam. Vietnam veteran Steve, thank you for your service. It was a dramatic and romantic start and it set the tone for Steve and Di's life together. Some 53 years they have been together. What a wonderful story.

Dementia for Di set in in 2005, when memory issues came up for Di. She could not remember that her godson had passed away in the year before and Di was 55 years old. A 10-year period followed before Di was finally diagnosed with early-onset dementia when she was 62 years old, as Steve tells how brilliant Di has always been with numbers. Now, she can no longer remember how long they have been married - as I said, 53 years. During our coffee and chat, Di asked Carmen if Steve was her husband but also showed moments of great respect and public displays of affection. It was an interesting time together that we had.

I pay tribute to Dementia Australia. They are supporting people with dementia, their families and carers. The theme for this year's Dementia Action Week is 'Act Now for a Dementia Friendly Future'. That is exactly what we can do in this place. I know people in this Chamber, through collaboration and goodwill, are very much on the same page and I acknowledge that.

Steve does have 14 hours of respite care a week, but he is there caring for Di 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Again, a tribute to Steve. I commend that and thank the many organisations and volunteers who work tirelessly to assist those living with dementia. Early diagnosis and intervention are critical in managing dementia and we must continue to invest in research and development to find better diagnostic tools and treatments.

I acknowledge, the Wicking Dementia Research and Education Centre and Dementia Support Australia. They have collaborated to create a program of online learning and a community of practice and face-to-face coaching. DREAM (Dementia Respite Education and Mentoring) is funded indeed by the Australian government and is free to access. I draw that to your attention. It is certainly something in terms of that research that is been conducted in Tasmania and I draw that to your attention and note the benefit of that for our community.

In conclusion, thank you Steve, thank you Di, and to all those involved and are affected in some way, thank you for what you do and for sharing and caring in a beautiful way. I thank the House.

### **Housing Support for Vulnerable People**

[5.15 p.m.]

**Ms FINLAY** (Bass) -Honourable Speaker, I rise this evening on behalf of a constituent in Launceston from Waverley, Lorraine. Lorraine has shared with me and many others across the community her experience of life and the challenges that she faces living with complex PTSD and living currently with deep concerns about her housing situation. Lorraine has lived in Waverley in her home with her son for the last seven years and together they have contributed to the household and rental payments. They rent a property from Community housing Limited (CHL) as an extension of the state government.

Recently, Lorraine's son was in a position where he could move into different accommodation. Unfortunately for Lorraine, that started a long-time experience of living with uncertainty, which is growing into fear of becoming homeless. Lorraine was presented with an eviction notice when CHL identified that her son was going to move into rental accommodation and - I say as a term of endearment - an older member of our community, older than me, which means that she is older with uncertain potential for future living arrangements. She has shared with me and wants to have raised in this place her concerns about that situation.

Setting aside the fact that that process is going through an appeal at the moment, one of the other things that Lorraine has shared is her concern to stand up for herself and how she would go about participating in the process in a way that she feels empowered.

It is fantastic that there are organisations in the community that can support people when they have concerns and they want to advocate for themselves, but Lorraine now finds herself in the situation that if the process is such that when, through an extension of government, an organisation seeks to challenge an individual in the community, she is confronted with the potential of costs if she is not successful in that situation.

One of the things that Lorraine wanted to share with this parliament, particularly for the attention of the minister, is to understand the trauma that gets associated with not having certainty about your housing situation: the fear and the trauma associated with having to stand up for and defend yourself in what for many people in our community is a complex and difficult to navigate process and the concern that when you are currently housed in the middle of a housing crisis and, for circumstances that change, you then find yourself with the threat of not being housed, for someone in their community that has a growing family, children and grandchildren and a mother to care for, has been an extremely stressful time.

On behalf of Lorraine and for the attention of the minister, consideration of the individual circumstances of people in our community when they find themselves stressed about their future living situations is something that people in our community would like us as parliamentarians to understand and to be mindful of when creating processes, but also when seeking to have people navigate those processes on their behalf.

### **Pork-Barrelling Ban**

[5.18 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Honourable Speaker, what we have seen in the Budget over the last week is a self-confessed admission by the Liberals that they have spent \$1.3 billion of taxpayers money in election commitments, so-called. It is another term for pork-barrelling - pork-promises. It is what the Integrity Commission has called electoral bribery. It has been happening under the Liberals for multiple elections now: 2018, 2021; the sports rort affair was extreme and very public and now we have had it at the recent election.

When Labor announced on the weekend - Dean Winter, the Leader of the Opposition - that if it wins government at the next election that they will ban pork-barrelling, it was incredibly welcome to hear and many Tasmanians sighed relief. On Monday, he firmed that up to saying he would do that and be open to doing that, bringing on these reforms in this term of parliament and not wait. The Greens strongly support that. I have written to the Leader of the Opposition showing our support, working together to stamp out this pork-barrelling.

What happened was an immediate blowback from the Liberals. It is obviously a huge threat to their electoral success because they have used it with that purpose in multiple elections, and Premier Jeremy Rockliff said that Labor's proposal is 'breathtaking in its hypocrisy', and that was an extraordinary statement to come out so hard against what is obviously a corrupted process. The Minister for Business, Industry and Resources, Eric Abetz, took it to another low with a media release that he issued and he said:

The Labor Opposition is back in bed with the Greens planning to trash Tasmanian democracy and entrench big brother Government in the State.

Dean Winter's plans to have a politburo of bureaucrats review and strike out election commitments should send a shiver through the community.

It's up to Tasmanian voters to decide how their money is spent, not unelected government employees.

The Government is elected to govern, not to have its election commitments buried by red tape and outsourced to unelected, unaccountable officials.

Democratically elected members of Parliament should not be the ventriloquist dolls of bureaucrats.

This was an offensive statement by Mr Abetz. It was a whacky, tin hat response, but beneath it there was a real demonising of hardworking Tasmanian public servants. Describing them as not working in the public interest is offensive. It is one thing to attack members of parliament,

but it is quite different and wrong to imply that the processes and intentions of State Services are disreputable. I will read a statement from Thirza White, the head of the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU). She said:

Minister Abetz's comments are incredibly offensive to the 35,000 plus public servants who dedicate their working lives to delivering services to the community. In addition to being offensive, these comments are reckless and downright dangerous. There is absolutely no place for this divisive commentary that spreads disinformation and mistruths about how government operates and by consequence erodes trust in our Public Service. This language is the language used by Trump in his deliberate attempt to erode trust in public officials, paving the way for hyper politicisation and dismantling of core foundations of civil society and democracy. Minister Abetz should apologise or resign. [TBC]

On behalf of the Greens, I ask him to make an apology for his comments. He fervently defends his government's right to determine what spending commitments are dished out at election time. His government must also take responsibility for determining what services will be cut to fund these election commitments.

Ms White finishes by saying:

Instead, his government is more than happy to use senior public servants as a shield to avoid responsibility and accountability.

No one has a problem with giving money to community groups. There are so many needy and deserving ones. The only thing that is a problem is political parties hand-picking which ones get it to suit their political interests, and sometimes even their personal ones. What should happen is that they are assessed by an independent grants process, which is what happens with all other government grants. It is a process governed by a long-established risk audit committee of government and a high-level committee that comprises external actuaries, audit experts. We hope that Minister Abetz will apologise for those offensive comments.

### **Evandale Festival of Rail 2024**

[5.23 p.m.]

**Mr SHELTON** (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I rise this evening to pay tribute to an event run by the Evandale Light Rail and Steam Society which I attended last Sunday. It was in the beautiful northern part of the Tasmania, the northern Lyons area at Evandale, and was a culmination of many hours of work from volunteers with a passion for their craft.

After a hiatus of about 15 years due to various reasons, the Evandale Festival of Rail was held on Sunday the 15 September 2024 at Morven Park in Evandale. The event was open for attendance between 10.00 and 4.00 p.m., with lines of cars filled with excited patrons who were waiting patiently at the entrance to pay their entry fee well before the gates opened. The number of attendees was estimated at about 1300, a total which shocked the volunteers greatly and was very pleasing at the same time.

The vice-president, David Swan, and his committee of selfless volunteers from the Evandale Light Rail and Steam Society organised a great day of affordable family entertainment, showcasing their enthusiastic love of all things train and rail. Displays were both indoors and outdoors, featuring model rail from British Railway Modellers and the Hornby Railway Collectors Association, along with other model trains and steam engines kindly on loan for the day from Pearn's Steam World at Westbury. Many trains were available for rides, as was a restored traction engine. There was face painting for kids, and even a large steamboat featured at the event.

Families came from far and wide to the event, which was widely supported with excited children running between displays and rides with wide smiles and screams of excitement. With the gates due to close at 4.00 p.m., there were still excited children lined up for the face painting and train rides, and at 3.45 p.m., there was still a line in front of the food vans, which was estimated to take another 30 minutes for those to move through - especially, I am told, the donut truck, so a lot of the kids were having donuts before they went home.

Public attendance was great and the common theme in the feedback received was that it was a wonderful family day and that people were so happy that the event had been so well organised. The event was supported by local rail groups such as Pearn's Steam World, Northern Midlands Council, Evandale School, Evandale footy club, Longford Rotary, with many more groups and individuals supporting the event. Thankfully, the weather last Sunday was favourable, which helped contribute to such a successful day. The society has been running many train rides at the Evandale market every Sunday for many years and, being a volunteer organisation, this fundraising is the main source of their income.

If you are not from the north, the Evandale market is a fantastic Sunday morning event for anybody to go and have a look at. They operate the small trains there, provided the weather is favourable. The volunteers get to see the joy on the faces of the young children on the train rides every Sunday.

Do you have a passion for trains? Would you like to be a station manager, a signal operator, a driver or a guard? Do you have a passion for tinkering with old engines to see the finished result when they come to life? If so, new members are always welcome at working bees or the restoration and fundraising activities at the Evandale Light Rail Society.

My congratulations to the Evandale Light Rail and Steam Society for coordinating such a wonderful, fun and informative day for families. With the support of business and community groups alike, this event can only get larger and more popular.

### **Northern Regional SES Long Service Awards Presentation**

[5.28 p.m.]

**Ms BUTLER** (Lyons) - On Saturday 14 September I attended the northern regional medal presentation of national medals and clasp fifty- and sixty-years long service medals. It was held at the Launceston Conference Centre, and I believe the Speaker was also in attendance, as was Mr Fairs, the member for Bass. Who else in the room was at that event? It was a well attended event.

One of the wonderful things about the medal presentation was the depth of community volunteerism. Within the room there were people who had contributed most of their lifetime to their communities in working for the fire service as a volunteer or working for the state emergency services as a volunteer. It was also a really big celebration of not only their contribution - because their contribution saves lives; their contribution is what makes our communities tick - but also a celebration of their families and their friends.

I was sitting with people who were telling me stories about when their husband used to volunteer for the SES in times when there were no mobile phones, and they would not know for days on end whether or not they were safe. Some of the wives I was talking to were talking about their husbands being away fighting fires, and it was only the brigade chiefs and the communication that was coming through those communities that would ease their nerves, because they would not know for days on end. These are people who have contributed for most of their lives.

I will quickly read out the names of the recipients. The National Medal, fourth class, went to Robert Gee, John Gee, Leon Hodges, James Langdon, Rodney Springer and Greg Wise. The National Medal, third class, was awarded to Brian Baxter OAM and Rodney Mullins. The National Medal, second class, was awarded to the wonderful Joan Gee, Aaron Parry, Gregory Saltmarsh, Tanya Thompson and Steven Wilson.

The National Medal, first class, was awarded to Walter Bertrand, Terry Bricknell, Andrew Isles, David Moore, Kevin Rowbottom, Vicky Rowe, Belinda Schultz and Ian Wheeler. The National Medal, Tasmania Fire Service, was awarded to Andrew Bailey, Max Cassidy, Simon Chandler, David Claridge, Michael Gao, Trenton James, Andy Kendall, Bradley McDonald, William O'Reilly, Adrian Parsons from Mathinna, Gail Scott, Laura Smith, David Stebbings from Perth, and Paul Webb.

The National Medal, State Emergency Service, was awarded to Anne Farley-Dalmot, Brett Robbins and Rob Thomas. The Long Service Medal and Certificate, 60 years, was awarded to Warren Clark, Ian Dickinson, and David Oakley AFSM from Campbell Town. The Long Service Medal, 55 years, went to Edwin Chug, Robert Gee, John Gee, Leon Hodges, James Langdon, Frank O'Connor, Trevor Williams and Greg Wise. The Long Service Medal, 50 years, was awarded to Michael Hazelwood and Barry Pern.

Congratulations to all medal, certificate and class recipients. Your contribution to your community really needs to be recognised and awarded. Thank you very much for your service.

### **Football Stadium - Launceston**

[5.33 p.m.]

**Mr GARLAND** (Braddon) - I will talk about football. In 1985 at West Park Oval, we had the North West Football Union (NWFU) representative side take on the Tasmanian Football League (TFL), the southern best that they had. We beat them in that competition and, to this day, we still have the title as being the best in the state.

From that point on, things changed dramatically in our football area. The TFL had two sides dominating down here. Attendances were falling, so then they went to a statewide competition, which eroded the strong NWFU competition. For a while, it was well supported,

and I would say it was reasonably successful, but then they also brought in the elitist plucking of young talent out of junior clubs and put them in Mariners. That further eroded the competition, and now in the last couple of years, football clubs in country or regional areas are folding because they cannot get the numbers.

Now we are having a discussion about a stadium nobody wants and that we cannot afford, and what it means for the north-west by building that stadium down in the south. It effectively prices us out of the equation. Those marginal-income workers in the far north-west where I live will not be able to afford to come down, get accommodation and buy a ticket to attend those matches. We already have a very good venue in Launceston at York Park. I have played on that oval. It is central for all Tasmanians. If we want young people to engage in our football clubs, it is very important that they are given the opportunity.

Basing this stadium in the south prices out all those young, marginal-income workers in the north who otherwise would go along. Football has always been a cheap way of entertaining yourself on a Saturday. It is also very important for anyone who is not having much success in life or finding a job, to get involved in a greater group. That is what football does.

If you get on the field and you show that you are having a go, that shows people in the crowd that you are out there, you are having a go and it opens up doorways and pathways. My point is that having a stadium, which we already have in the north and which is openly accessible to all Tasmanians, is the way to go forward. We certainly do not need to put ourselves further in debt to build a stadium that nobody wants, that we cannot afford and, like I said before, it prices the north-west people out of the equation. I would like to highlight just the talent that has come from that north-west region: Darrel Baldock, arguably the finest footballer that has ever been produced, Ian Stewart, Royce Hart, the Gale brothers, the Febey brothers, the Atkins twins, the list goes on and on.

**Mr Bayley** - Garland. That fella, Garland, he was an all-star, was he not?

**Mr GARLAND** - I was offered the opportunity to go to Richmond, but I just spent a year in the Navy and I saw what cities were all about and there was no way in this wide world that I would have gone back into that environment. Tasmania is for me. It was the most beautiful place I have ever lived in and I love that football culture. If you want to have a go, you will get a go. My great coach, the greatest coach I have ever had, John Newman, a larger than life individual, stated from the start: if you have success on the football field, you will have success in life. It is all about opportunity and application, and today, we need to make this accessible for all our young Tasmanians. Launceston is the place.

There are already a significant amount of businesses. There were two-bit burger joints alongside York Park when I was there in the '80s. If you go there now, there is a successful number of businesses that are totally reliant on people coming to that area and going to the football. I think football is super important; it borders closely on a religion.

I would like to throw down a challenge: the North-West Football Union (NWFU) has still got the title as the best in the state, so the south has to come up and meet us up there in the future and be given a chance to take that title back down here.

**International Overdose Awareness Day**  
**National Brain Injury Awareness Week**  
**National Dementia Action Week**

[5.37 p.m.]

**Mr BEHRAKIS** (Clark) - Thank you, Speaker. Tonight, I rise to talk about just some of the events I have recently attended around the electorate and how it is given me some continuing reflection on the importance of engaging with the community, listening to people with lived experiences, and raising awareness of the issues that are facing Tasmanians.

It was an honour to represent the minister for Health to mark International Overdose Awareness Day. The event, which was hosted by Jackie and Emily from the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Council and the Drug Education Network, focused on reducing the stigma around alcohol and drug use.

The message was that our words have the power to create a safer environment for people to seek help where they need it and when they need it. We are pleased to support and promote the Tasmanian Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Communications Charter. The government has published the new Tasmanian drug strategy released by the minister, as well as continuing to fund free take-home naloxone, which is saving lives by reversing the effects of opioid overdose.

Additionally, I recently attended the National Brain Injury Awareness Week and my Clark colleague, Helen Burnet, was there as well. The event was held at the Moonah Arts Centre and focused on the launch of *Hear My Voice: Real Stories About Life With Brain Injury*, a gallery exhibition of artwork created by participants.

Acquired brain injury (ABI) refers to any damage to the brain that occurs after birth and can result from various causes, including trauma, such as a fall or a car accident, stroke, infection, hypoxia, tumours or substance abuse. It can lead to a range of physical, cognitive, emotional and behavioural impairments, the variance of severity depending on the location and extent of the injury. Effects of ABI are often long-lasting and can impact multiple aspects of daily life from memory, attention, problem-solving abilities and emotional regulation.

Rehabilitation often involves a complex and multidisciplinary approach where some people experience partial or even full recovery over time. However, others live with permanent disabilities.

I also attended the Golden Wattle Club morning tea in Glenorchy, hosted by event organiser and co-founder, Agnes Frith, alongside members of the Glenorchy community to increase awareness for National Dementia Action Week. Whilst I enjoyed the morning tea, the most important aspect of the day was a deep and meaningful conversation shared about dementia, its impacts on the community and raising awareness about how it touches so many Tasmanians. This is demonstrated by the number of contributions we have heard in this place from members and the passionate contributions by Mr Fairs and Mrs Petrusma.

It is estimated that more than 10,600 people live with various forms of dementia in Tasmania, the figure expected to grow to about 15,500 Tasmanians by 2054. Dementia is often referred to as a long goodbye because of the way it gradually robs people of their memories,

their identity, their independence, all while their families witness slow loss of a loved one. It does not just affect the person diagnosed, but everyone around them.

This is something my own family and I know all too well, having lost my grandmother, La Bruni, to the disease just a few years ago and experiencing the impacts it had on her and us made all the more difficult by the language barriers with her not speaking English.

It is events such as these, and continuing to engage with and speak to Tasmanians with lived experience in regards to so many other issues, that demonstrate why it is so important for us as decision makers to listen to their stories. Whilst we in this place often have positions and differences of opinion based on principle, often the issues that arise from talking to hearing and listening to those with lived experiences are the things that we would not have even thought to think about until they were raised with us.

For example, things like how dark plates provide a high visual contrast for food which makes it easier for Tasmanians with dementia, something I learned just this week, or difficulties faced by those with an acquired brain injury in something such as engaging with the police, made more difficult due to things like compromised hand/eye coordination, inhibition, control and speech resulting in what would be a routine interaction for many of us, escalating into confrontation and often ending with people with acquired brain injuries getting charged or ending up in jail.

In this place we have so many things to keep on top of from different portfolio issues, the Budget we have been debating this week, and so much more. It remains true. The only way for someone to be sure that a member of parliament is aware of the issues they are facing is if they have had those conversations themselves. The onus of that truism is on us more than anyone else to continue proactively going out there, having those conversations and raising our own awareness of the issues that Tasmanians are facing to make tomorrow better. We need to continue to engage with and listen to those who have those experiences.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

### **Macquarie Point Stadium - Transport Issues**

[5.42 p.m.]

**Ms BURNET** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I rise again to speak about the Mac Point Stadium, now that it has gone to be considered as a project of state significance. We have heard that impassioned discussion about football and why there is no need for a stadium, how disadvantaged the north-west is from the member, Mr Garland. I completely agree. However, I suppose those priorities that this government has considered as the priorities versus the priorities that our community actually needs - there is a considerable gap in their thinking.

I talked earlier about the transport modal shift. About 60 per cent of people drive in greater Hobart and that is about the amount that the public transport would be considered for match days if we look at now the capacity on the roads and what would be required because that modal shift is going to be very difficult. As I discussed earlier, the capacity on our roads currently is considerably limited, particularly if you think about traffic coming into a stadium at a particular time for a particular event. There are concerns about the knock-on effects for not only the community, because there will be this emphasis as we have discussed, about funding

the stadium and things about the stadium, but it is also the knock-on impacts on the City of Hobart.

Quite often, when we look at what is proposed in the project of state significance papers submitted, there are considerable requirements of what would be desirable. If you take active transport, there is a proposed active transport corridor and a proposed bridge from Collins Street to the stadium area, but that is not funded. There is a large area, if you look at where bikes come into Mac Point now, where the bike riders will actually have to dismount and will not be able to ride in that area. If you are commuting through into the city, then you would not be able to use that route. Bike parking is another consideration that needs to be undertaken.

We see also in the papers that there is the capacity for ferry transport, but presently it is a very small number of the overall percentage. A lot of work needs to be done. There is a considerable amount of expense to put in. The bus rapid transport is looking at an estimated cost of \$445 million. All of these things would be nice to have for the city, but we are not necessarily going to see that anytime soon.

Of the projects identified that are needed for the transport plan to be successful, four are considered essential and three of these are unfunded. Seven are considered high priority and four of these are unfunded. Total cost of unfunded essential and high priority travel needs is \$44 million. The Greens look forward to Budget Estimates to ask more questions about this as a project, as well the priorities that this government is making.

### **Taroona Scout Group - 70th Year Anniversary**

**Mr BAYLEY** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about the Taroona Scout Group and the 70th year anniversary celebrations that were held on Saturday afternoon last weekend. I start by acknowledging Uncle Dougie Mansell, who sang and welcomed us in on that day, and told of his experience as a young fella on Flinders Island as part of the scout group over there. It was truly an honour to have Dougie there to sing to and welcome us.

I acknowledge also leaders past and present, in particular Simon, Janet, Mike, Emma, Ruth and Julian. Some of these people have been involved in this scout group for literally decades. I think Mike Green - he has got a timber plaque hanging in one of the sheds there at Taroona - has been involved for something like 35 years. It is truly an incredible effort. These are volunteers. They do not get paid for this work and they put their heart and soul into it.

The Taroona Scout Group is a really strong group. I think they have about 80 young people there at the moment. Over 70 years you could imagine that there would be thousands of young people who have been through that shed and that group. My daughter had a couple of years there and she had a really good time connecting with people across the community.

The Taroona Scout Group has a really fabulous permanent base on the foreshore of Taroona in Apex Park. They have a big scout hall there. They have auxiliary sheds and skillions to put boats and camping gear and equipment in. I also acknowledge the Kingborough Council that provide that land and give them the opportunity to be in such an amazing place.

They do great work themselves in applying for grants to improve the infrastructure there at their scout hall and getting gear. They have boats, tents, Trangias, and all sorts of gear, and

a hangout space for the Rovers, the elders of the young people within the scout troop. The scouts go off onto the statewide Jamborees. They individually undertake their camps and then on a Tuesday they do their activities. There is lots of paddling, as you can imagine in a foreshore scout group. They are also a camping group and being there in Apex Park, they have a great opportunity to have bonfires, toast marshmallows, and really generate a sense of community in there.

The event itself was fantastic. I thank the Taroona Scout group for the afternoon tea. I acknowledge that minister Ogilvie and the honourable Meg Webb from the other place were there as well. The young people had designed patches, baked food, and arranged photo boards that dated back to the 1960s of Taroona Scout trips up to some of the mountains in the south. It was truly fantastic.

I acknowledge as well that I learned some incredibly important historical information. Who would have thought that the woggle, that little thing that the Scouts have around their scarf, are made out of Singer sewing machine leathers, the belt that goes on those old Singer sewing machines. Who would have thought that the very first woggle that was ever invented was actually in Tasmania? It is in the Scout Archives and Museum at The Lea. That is a fact that you would not have got unless you went to the Taroona Scout Group 70th year anniversary. I count myself lucky, along with a couple of members of this place, in getting along on that afternoon.

I will say that, in 1907, as started by Robert Baden-Powell, a British army officer, the scouts may have been a pathway into the army. Today, they are truly - and have a program called - Messengers of Peace. It is truly a program that gives people a lot of life skills: not only bush skills, but life skills as well.

Thank you to the Taroona Scout Group for the invitation. Congratulations to those leaders for their work with young people in and around Taroona. Good on those scouts who are there. Stick with it because you can progress through Scouts, get recognitions for the achievements that you gain and get a whole lot of life skills that will hold you in good stead going forward.

Thank you again to the Taroona Scout Group.

**The SPEAKER** - Before putting the vote, I thank members for their approach to what can be a very tense and challenging week, the Budget reply week. I appreciate the way everyone has conducted themselves during this week. I remind you, however, that next week is also very tense and very stressful, but in particular it will be tense and stressful for the staff who are working to make it all happen for you.

With that, I ask and remind members and urge and expect them all to be very kind to the staff who will work very hard while the building is full of people to make it work next week and appreciate the support that you give each of them here. It has been an absolute blast in the Chair this week. I will see you all in October.

**The House adjourned at 5.52 p.m.**

## Appendix 1

### QUESTION ON NOTICE

Question No. 13 of 2024

House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Craig Garland MP

ANSWERED BY: The Minister Energy and Renewables, Hon Nick Duigan MLC

#### QUESTION:

In relation to renewable energy projects in Tasmania and the Renewable Energy Zone proposed for the areas inland of Burnie and Wynyard that was recently announced, and the acknowledgement by the Minister that there are more appropriate areas for Wind Farms, can the Minister provide:

1. A full list of the locations where the Government believes the more appropriate areas for Wind Farms are located?
2. What criteria the recently proposed Renewable Energy Zone satisfies to achieve its selection for such a categorisation?
3. Which of these criteria have been used to determine the appropriateness of Robbins Island for a wind farm?
4. An indication of the weight that will be given to community consultation on the proposed Renewable Energy Zone and what criteria ReCFIT will be using to determine if it has social licence in the community when making their final recommendation to the Minister?

#### ANSWER:

1. Australian Energy Market Operator's (AEMO) Integrated System Plan identified potential Renewable Energy Zones across the National Electricity Market, including three areas in Tasmania. Renewable Energy Zones are areas with high quality renewable energy resources, where clusters of large-

scale renewable energy can be developed using economies of scale. The potential North West REZ is located in the largest area identified by AEMO.

Other places in Tasmania may also be appropriate for renewable energy generation, subject to commercial decisions and relevant statutory approvals.

2. The prospective area for the North West REZ was identified through extensive spatial analysis work. This included assessment of the compatibility of potential areas for REZ against over 60 spatial data layers including land use, resource, environmental and heritage values, and technical constraints.

The spatial analysis identified the North West REZ region having the desired attributes, including a strong wind resource. This work also found the area to be one with the least potential impact on environmental and natural values, cultural heritage or conflict with existing land uses – it is largely a changed landscape of plantation forestry and grazing lands, both of which have been shown to coexist well with renewable energy projects.

It is important to note that a prospective REZ does not mean projects can be developed anywhere in the REZ. Some areas may still include localised sites of protected habitat or threatened species, which could exclude developments in these areas. Any proposal still requires all statutory approvals and planning processes to be followed.

In 2023, a public consultation process, called Mapping Important Places, was conducted in parallel with the spatial analysis. This provided an interactive tool for the North West community to identify both values of importance to them in the region (i.e., areas new renewables should avoid) and areas the community believe would be best suited to renewables development. Feedback through this process was also used to determine the prospective North West REZ boundary.

3. The process discussed at Response 2 aimed to identify areas which could host 'clusters' of development.

It did not provide a granular assessment of the suitability of individual development, such as the proposed Robbins Island Wind Farm.

4. Community feedback is an important consideration in any decisions around the proposed North West REZ. All submissions and community feedback made to the REZ consultation process will be considered by the Renewable

Energy, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania (ReCFIT) when providing advice and recommendations to Government on a REZ.

Under the draft legislation, it is proposed that the Minister must be satisfied that the objectives for a REZ are being met before an area is declared. This includes the objective to foster community support for renewable projects through community input into planning a REZ location and to share the benefits of that REZ with local communities. The extensive consultation process being undertaken by the Government will inform this decision.

☒ APPROVED ☐ NOT APPROVED



Nick Duigan MLC  
**Minister for Energy and Renewables**

Date: 18/09/2024

Appendix 2

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Question No. 6 of 2024  
House of Assembly



ASKED BY: Ella Haddad MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Felix Ellis MP

QUESTION:

In relation to social housing managed by Homes Tasmania, community housing providers, Aboriginal housing providers, and other housing providers overseen by Homes Tasmania:

- (1) Have any new homes constructed had natural gas heating installed over the past 24 months, and if so, how many, broken down by month and category of housing provider?
- (2) Have any existing homes had natural gas heating installed over the past 24 months, and if so, how many broken down by month and category of housing provider?
- (3) Have any new homes constructed had natural gas cooking appliances installed over the past 24 months, and if so, how many, broken downs by month and category of housing provider?
- (4) Have any existing homes had natural gas cooking appliances installed over the past 24 months, and if so, how many broken down by month and category of housing provider?
- (5) Does Homes Tasmania have any policies and procedures in relation to the management of the health risks from indoor natural gas appliances, and if so, what are they?

ANSWER:

I. For Homes Tasmania properties – Nil

For Community Housing Provider properties – Nil

CA

2. For Homes Tasmania properties – Nil

For Community Housing Provider properties - Nil

3. For Homes Tasmania properties – Nil

For Community Housing Providers – Nil

4. For Homes Tasmania properties – Nil

For Community Housing Provider properties - Nil

5. Homes Tasmania complies with the *Gas Safety Act 2019* and Gas Safety Standards 2021 in relation to ensuring the safety of indoor natural gas appliances installed in properties it owns.

Homes Tasmania does not have any specific policies or procedures in relation to the management of health risks from indoor natural gas appliances, such as heaters. The Homes Tasmania home heating fact sheet encourages tenants to regularly clean their heaters to avoid the heaters breaking or becoming dangerous.

APPROVED/NOT APPROVED



Felix Ellis MP  
Minister for Housing and Planning

Date: 19/9/2024