



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

REPORT OF DEBATES

Wednesday 2 April 2025

REVISED EDITION

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Wednesday 2 April 2025

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

TABLING OF PAPERS

Government Administration Committee B - Inquiry into Tasmanian Adult Imprisonment and Youth Detention Matters - Report

[11.06 a.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre) - Mr President, I have the honour to present the Legislative Council Sessional Committee Government Administration B Targeted Inquiry into Adult Imprisonment and Youth Detention.

Report received and printed.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCY AMENDMENT BILL 2024 (No. 27)

First Reading

Bill received from the House of Assembly and read the first time.

[11.08 a.m.]

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

That the second reading of the bill be made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

Motion agreed to.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, before moving onto Orders of the Day, I would like to warmly welcome the grade 6 students from The Friends' School. We have had a bit of a Friends' frenzy this week with many groups touring the Chamber, which we think is very good.

I have been told that the grandfather of one of the students joining us here today, Ellie, was Scott McKenzie. He was the Clerk prior to the Clerk. Yes, so two Clerks back. Scott was a long-term Clerk in this place and remembered by many. I think we still use his hat to draw our committee positions from. It was his grandfather's hat or something.

Ms Rattray - And the wonderful chairs outside the Chamber, Mr President. Beautifully made.

Mr PRESIDENT - Indeed. This morning we have just gone through our formal business. We have a set business we do to open up and then we go onto our Orders of the Day. Today, we have our third readings of bills and we have some appropriation bills; they are all about money and bits and pieces. We will be working our way through our order and then we will have our Question Time at 2.30 p.m. I do not know if you were in the other place when they had their Question Time, but our question time is slightly different and it just goes for half-an-hour.

That is our work for the day. We really enjoy having students. It has been great to have so many friends from Friends' join us to see how it works and, particularly, in the Legislative Council. I know that all members here are very pleased to see you all and will make you most welcome on your visit today.

Members - Hear, hear.

PUBLIC HEALTH AMENDMENT (VAPING) BILL 2024 (No. 47)

Third Reading

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

That the bill be now read the third time.

Bill read the third time.

HEALTH MISCELLANEOUS BILL 2024 (No. 48)

Third Reading

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

That the bill be now read the third time.

Bill read the third time.

FAMILY VIOLENCE AMENDMENT BILL 2024 (No. 51)

Consideration of Amendments made in the Committee of the Whole Council

Ms PALMER (Rosevears - Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence) - Mr President, I move -

That the bill as amended in Committee be now taken into consideration.

Motion agreed to.

Amendment read the first time.

Amendment read the second time.

Amendment agreed to.

FAMILY VIOLENCE AMENDMENT BILL 2024 (No. 51)

Third Reading

Ms PALMER (Rosevears - Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence) - Mr President, I move -

That the bill be now read the third time.

Bill read the third time.

APPROPRIATION (SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION FOR 2024-25) BILL 2025 (No. 1)

Second Reading

[11.14 a.m.]

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

That the bill be now read the second time.

The Appropriation (Supplementary Appropriation for 2024-25) Bill 2025 seeks a supplementary appropriation of \$467.5 million out of the Public Account for the operating services of government for this financial year. The supplementary appropriation is required to meet above-budget expenditure for operating and demand cost pressures for existing government services and programs since the finalisation of the 2024-25 Budget. The bill recognises the updated expenditure estimates that were included in the 2024-25 Revised Estimates Report.

Tasmania has not been immune to cost pressures in our health system and will always prioritise providing the best-quality health care to our patients. We also know that the federal Labor government's failure to meet their obligations of 45 per cent of the cost of servicing our hospitals has also contributed to the cost pressures in our health system.

An appropriation of \$345 million is sought for the Department of Health across the Health and Mental Health and Wellbeing portfolios, including \$340 million to address health services demand and growth, together with increases in the cost of health service delivery, particularly in relation to hospital admitted and non-admitted services and \$4.97 million to address continuing demand pressure on the delivery of mental health services in Tasmania,

including an increase in registered statewide mental health services consumers and emergency department presentations.

There is an additional appropriation of \$42.9 million, which is required for the Department of Justice across the Justice and Corrections and Rehabilitation portfolios, including \$25 million to meet cost pressures for the Tasmania Prison Service, including overtime due to continuing difficulty attracting and maintaining sufficient levels of correctional staff, growth in the prison population, increases in workers compensation premiums and general prison expenses such as food and clothing and \$17.9 million to meet the anticipated above-budget payments for redress and civil claims compensation payments.

The bill also provides an additional operating services appropriation of \$21.2 million for the Department for Education, Children and Young People, which includes \$14.1 million to support an increase in the number of children accessing special care packages and an increase in the cost of those packages. Also, \$2.95 million is for additional staff resourcing to meet increased calls to the Advice and Referral Line and \$4.14 million for staff resourcing at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre.

For the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management, \$14.5 million is required to meet anticipated above-budget expenditure for the rising cost of workers compensation premiums, which is driven by an increase in case complexity and numbers. Additionally, for the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania, \$8 million is required to meet above-budget operational costs in Tasmanian national parks and reserves, including additional programs and associated expenditure to meet land management and legislative obligations, increased maintenance and other costs associated with increased visitations, new visitor facilities and fly-out waste from remote toilets.

In addition to operating and demand cost pressures for existing government services and programs, the bill seeks \$35.9 million for expenditure related to decisions of the government since the finalisation of the 2024-25 Budget. Of this amount, \$11 million is sought to meet the cost of the government's response to the severe weather events across Tasmania in August and September 2024.

The government response provided grants for the purpose of emergency food relief, flood assistance and recovery and restoration programs following the storms, \$10.5 million to support the reopening of the Dolphin Tungsten Mine, \$4.5 million for a tourism and hospitality support package to assist operators impacted by cost-of-living pressures and the delays of the new *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels becoming operational.

There is \$8 million to increase the state's contribution to TasRail to improve the ongoing reliability, efficiency and safety of its services. There is \$1.2 million for Homes Tasmania to implement the government's commitment to women in crisis accommodation initiative, supporting women and their children at the former Bethlehem House in Hobart. There is \$500,000 for a grant to Wine Tasmania to support the wine industry with market development activities and domestic market promotions. Finally, there is \$180,000 to fulfil final payments under the Tasmanian HomeBuilder Grant program.

I commend the bill to the House.

Recognition of Visitors

Mr PRESIDENT - As the Leader is making her way back and before I call for speakers to this bill, I welcome another group from The Friends' School that is visiting us in the Chamber today. The members of the Legislative Council have just started debate on a supplementary appropriation bill, which is where the government needs some money to keep things going and we have to approve that request. Honourable members in the Chamber get the opportunity to speak about that bill in the second reading stage. We have that to get through and then we will move on to some other legislation throughout the day.

We hope you are enjoying your tour through the Parliament of Tasmania. I know that all members of the Legislative Council are very happy to see you participating in our democratic process and will make you most welcome around parliament today.

Members - Hear, hear.

[11.21 p.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Mr President, first, I thank the Leader and her advisers for the briefings this morning; they were very interesting. Obviously, there are a lot of questions. Some questions were answered, some not quite to our satisfaction, but obviously you can only work with the answers you have.

I did appreciate the supporting information for the appropriation bill, the pages that actually outline the areas; I thought that was really good; it did answer a lot of questions - more details, a bit hard for Treasury to come up with some of the answers that we might want to know between budget and the appropriation bills. I thought it certainly gave a bit of a wide overview of what some of these amounts were for - particularly when you look at \$4.14 million for places like Ashley Youth Detention Centre, to fund additional staffing costs and overtime costs. It is a lot of money for out-of-home care, \$14.1 million; the Advice and Referral Line, \$2.95 million. The sad part there is that the money is actually needed because more people are phoning and needing help. Certainly not things that you could refuse to give money to.

At a glance, I think we always look at the Tasmania Prison Service and the extra \$25 million going in and there is always a lot of overtime - as the member for McIntyre this morning provided the reports that we have just finalised on the Prison Service.

It is no secret that the state's finances are in trouble right now. It is not a matter for debate. It is just a fact. It is easy to simply look at the numbers as black and white printing on a piece of paper. As I said, we are talking in millions; you just get used to the numbers.

The health of the state's finances translates directly into the wellbeing of our community. It affects people's livelihoods, not just those who are employed in the public service. We know that the effect of public employment, public spending and contracting echoes right through our economy, and there certainly has been some very ambitious or proposed spending in the public sector over the past few years. Ships, a stadium, a bridge, berths for our new ships. All good examples of big-ticket items that have been funded substantially out of the Tasmanian taxpayers' pockets.

All in addition to our bread and butter services like our health system, our emergency services, our education system, our roads, our environment just to name a few, all absolutely vital for the functionality of our state. It is actually what allows us to send our children to school or drive safely on our roads. We will be able to go to the hospital when we get sick or hurt, or call 000 when we need help.

We know we are in financial trouble; we have a government that is potentially looking to sell our GBEs and SOCs to ameliorate our debt.

Since the 2024-25 Budget was passed last year, we have seen the situation go from worse to even worse. Just to service the debt we have accrued we are looking at hundreds of millions of dollars outstanding with credit agencies at risk; our reputation as a state that manages its finances responsibly is diminishing rapidly.

Frankly, it is a bit of a joke, but no-one is laughing.

What are our options? The supplementary appropriation bill is for essential services Tasmanians rely on. The Leader stated:

- \$345 million for the Health and Mental Health and Wellbeing portfolios
- \$42.9 million for the Justice and Corrections and Rehabilitation portfolios
- \$21.2 million for the Department for Education, Children and Young People
- \$14.5 million for the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management
- \$8 million for the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, as well as \$35.9 million for expenditure related to decisions of the government since the finalisation of the 2024-25 Budget, including \$11 million for severe weather event response. Obviously, some things you cannot budget for.
- \$10.5 million to support the reopening of the Dolphin Tungsten Mine
- \$4.5 million for a tourism hospitality support package
- \$8 million to increase the state's contribution to TasRail
- \$1.2 million for Homes Tasmania
- \$500,000 for a grant to Wine Tasmania, to support the wine industry
- \$180,000 to fulfil final payments under the Tasmanian HomeBuilder Grants program. That one is totally understandable. Obviously, these are grants that come in the next financial year.

If you say it really quickly, they are just numbers, but unfortunately, they are more than that. These are significant undertakings above, and in addition to, a budget which we only passed several months ago. It has not even been a full year, and here we are again debating the appropriation of almost half-a-billion additional dollars for the government and the state to continue operating.

Has anyone paused for a moment to ask what is actually going on here, and what are we doing? We are in trouble, and there is no simple solution available to us. It is going to take a lot

of creative and innovative thinking to make this better if we want to avoid some of the more unpalatable options like higher or additional taxes.

This is no reflection on the current government. It is not one colour or the other. It is simply the state of what it is. We cannot assume that we are going to be bailed out by the federal government, and we must be mindful of how the other states view us when we take our big slices of the GST share. I know when I go to Western Australia, and I have met and had dinner with some of the legislative councillors in the past from Western Australia and others, they do not look favourably at Tasmania and the share of the GST we receive.

Mr Duigan - They have been there, though.

Ms ARMITAGE - I am mindful not to stray too far from the actual substance of the bill, but I do think quite a lot about the very large capital works that are taking place around the state. Of course, these do feed back into and stimulate our economy, but I wonder what sort of things we could be doing if we had that sort of money for our health and our education systems. We are seeing the government ask for more money in addition to what was appropriated for the budget last year, and I would be extremely worried if this became an ongoing trend. We would have some very serious questions to ask.

I thank the Leader for the briefings - they were very valuable. I thank the people who gave the briefings. Obviously, you cannot have all the answers because you do not know what all the questions are going to be. You did an admirable job answering as best you could. I do thank the Leader for the briefings. I look forward to hearing what my other colleagues have to say. Thank you.

[11.29 a.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre) - Mr President, the member for Launceston has certainly covered all the numbers that have been provided. I also acknowledge and thank the Leader and those who briefed us this morning. There was quite a lot of information provided, and that was due to a lot of questions being asked. You would expect that would be the case when the government of the day is asking this House and members to approve an additional amount of almost half-a-billion dollars for, essentially, operating services.

There are some exceptions to that. I do not call \$500,000 to the wine industry an operating service - not in my book. Others might disagree, but not in my book. That starts me off with the first question: why was that money not taken from the Treasurer's Reserve? That was around marketing for the export for the wine industry. As far as I am aware, the wine industry has a very effective peak body in this state. I am not sure if you have been out of late, Mr President, and purchased a bottle of wine. There is not much on the menu that is under about \$65 if you want a decent bottle. In amongst that \$65, surely, there is a component of that that goes to the peak body to promote the industry and promote the product. It is such good wine; I wonder why it is not just promoted by those people who have some wine appreciation. There is a question to the Leader that I might -

Mrs Hiscutt - Treasurer's Reserve?

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, \$500,000 to the wine industry. It was obviously a bit of a commitment made when there was some movement around the state or whatever you might like to call it, and there was a grant provided. I would expect that is not, and should not, come

under operating services. The rest of some of the other matters, I would like to walk my way through those, if I might.

The \$345 million for health - an enormous amount of money. We know, and as local members, we understand significantly the demands on the health industry and on the health services that this state provides, but how did we get to needing an additional \$345 million? The question was asked: wages component of \$232 million for staffing - \$232 million over and above what is provided.

The breakdown, and I acknowledge there are a lot of numbers in this: additional agency nurses or agency nurses - \$100 million. As an aside, I am aware that the North Eastern Soldiers Memorial Hospital in Scottsdale mostly has its staffing from agency nurses, so imagine the cost. We have plenty of qualified nurses in the area, but often they have to go to Launceston for full-time work. We have agency nurses covering shifts and we have local nurses heading out to get a full-time contract or a full-time employment opportunity. I expect that is some way towards contributing to the \$100 million for agency nurses, and that is just one hospital, one rural hospital around our state. I expect there are plenty of others that have that arrangement in place.

Locums - \$90 million. Who wouldn't want to work three days a week on a locum salary and have the other two days rest and relaxation?

Ms O'Connor - Four days.

Ms RATTRAY - Four days. There needs to be a concerted effort, in my view, by the department to engage those locums on a contract basis, and have 'these are your set days and this is the quantum or the salary that will be received'. We know that there is a huge pool and demand for qualified doctors around the country. They pretty much name their price.

This is a lifestyle here. You can go mountain bike riding three or four or five different places. My house in Scottsdale has a locum. It has locums coming and going and nearly every one of them has a bike rack. When they come with their vehicles, they nearly every time have a bike rack. They obviously come to the area, the north-east, so they can have some of those other lifestyle experiences.

Let us work on trying to hold them here for longer than a two-week stint and paying them exorbitant prices for their services. There needs to be some sort of effort put in by the department and not just paying whatever price somebody asked for because look what it does to the budget. Then we go down to that \$340 million, \$50 million extra for doctors. Is that an overtime component? Is that just for securing doctors? Is that covering holidays, covering time out, workers compensation or sick leave? Whatever that might be, \$50 million. Then nurses in general, \$30 million. I expect that is probably a component of overtime, because many of us would know and have friends or family who are nurses who do double shifts.

Interestingly, \$20 million of that large number is on pharmacy supplies and the increased cost of medication. We have heard in some of the federal government election promises that medication prices will go down. I will believe it when I see it. I am not always convinced that will actually be the case when the time comes. You cannot see many of them. Is it the government or is it the manufacturers that take less? Or is it the wholesalers or pharmacies and the pharmacy owners that take less? Nobody wants to take less, so I do not know how that is

going to occur, but \$20 million of that \$340 million is related to pharmacy supplies. The explanation was that there is a demand growth. That means that the expectation appears to get higher from our community and this is the end result, a significant request for additional funds.

Moving on, one of the areas that did generate quite a bit of questioning and responses was the \$10.5 million allocation to Group 6 Metals. I did a google search, thanks to my seat buddy, the member for Hobart, and a Tasmanian director is one of those three directors on that company, but there is a list of 20 highest investors also. Anyone can Google that and have a look at that. Interestingly, this emanates out of the TDR originally providing a \$10 million loan back in March 2023 and that loan has not been able to be serviced by the company. It would be interesting to know whether it is just the fact they have not been operational. I did send a message to someone I know on King Island to see how many people actually work there, because when you read the company's expectations, they are saying there could well be 60 full-time positions. It would be interesting to know how many people are actually employed at Dolphin Tungsten at this point in time.

Ms O'Connor - I thought when I read the materials, the business looks on paper like it has a good philosophical or ethical foundation at face value.

Ms RATTRAY - I expect there are dozens of those businesses around the state who would dearly love to have the government invest in their business to the tune of \$10.5 million.

Ms O'Connor - Give them \$10.5 million.

Ms RATTRAY - It could well be, because if the business fails, there is effectively no way to recoup the money. No way. The \$10 million that was initially provided as a loan has now increased to \$10.5 million as an equity injection, because the \$500,000 covers the interest component of that loan. They have not even paid the interest. The company has not even paid the interest. That is an interesting one.

We all want to see businesses succeed, particularly on the island. They are great employers. When you have small business on-island, the more people they can employ, the more families you attract, the schools, the childcare - all of those businesses benefit. We all know what the benefits are. The flow-on effect is there for everyone to see. However, how much should this government be putting into those types of arrangements?

We were told that that amount of funds would generate a 10.5 per cent interest in the company. It is approximately 13 per cent of the existing loan structure that the company has. My question is: does it get us a seat at the table? Is there a way for the state being represented on the board or as part of the company? When you are providing that type of money, I expect that there is some sort of oversight, whether it is the department secretary, the minister, whoever it might be - I would want to know that somebody was looking out for the investment on behalf of the people of Tasmania, and watching it very closely.

I know you can go to the ASX website and have a look at the release, but that is after the decision has been made. That is after the decisions have been made - exactly like this is here. This is after the decision has been made. What happens if this House says no? What are our options? As you know, it is a bundle, and you cannot just take one out and say, 'Look, we absolutely support the allocation for Health, and we absolutely support the allocation to the

prison service, and for those other areas that were unforeseen and do cover operating services'. You cannot do that in this process. You either pass it or you reject it.

That is my offering on that. I wish the company all the best. I wish the island all the best. As a state, however, do we need to be bailing out every company? If I had a company, and I were struggling for a cashflow - you did it for one, you do it for the next and the next and the next. Then we have an interest in every business in Tasmania.

Ms O'Connor - Maybe you need to make a donation to the party of government, honourable member.

Ms RATTRAY - I need to make a -

Ms O'Connor - A political donation to the party of government, because it is entities that donate to governments that seek their favour that might get favours made in return.

Ms RATTRAY - Not on my watch.

Ms O'Connor - Not your business. I am just saying in a hypothetical situation, as a business, if you wanted a government's favour you might have had to have done them a favour first.

Ms RATTRAY - Mr President, I will not enter into that space. The honourable member will have her turn.

I am just making the point of how far do we go? How many businesses across the state? You only have to listen to the news. Regularly you hear of businesses talking about the challenges that they are facing in being able to stay viable, particularly with that beautiful stretch of water. That does bring me to the beautiful stretch of water where there has been some money put forward for the *Spirit*, for the hospitality industry.

Now a couple of weeks ago, and I do not know whether this is because of more people coming to the state, but my usual home across the road when I am in Hobart, full house, Tuesday night, full house. I had to make my way up the highway and do my next day's committee work from my office. I did not fancy sleeping in my office all night and it was pretty expensive in other places. Again, that proves that it is really busy, particularly in Hobart. I expect that it is quite busy all around the state, so is it always necessary to provide funding for businesses? I am interested to have some understanding of what the allocation to the tourism and hospitality industry gained us in relation to the money that was provided - visitor economy support. I believe some of that went to travel across on the *Spirit* and perhaps airlines also.

I do not know if you have tried to get out of Tasmania at fairly short notice anytime, but it is a very expensive exercise. For the tourism and hospitality support package, \$3.5 million: is that absolutely necessary? I still have as a notice of motion the Tourism annual report that I do want to get to sometime. It has not taken a priority at the moment, but it is an interesting read. Why do we need to continue to pump money into these particular areas when it appears we have plenty of visitors? Get on the roads and see how many vehicles are travelling. From the information provided this morning, there are extra day sailings. Do we need money provided to companies to put on an extra day sailing? Isn't that TT-Line's responsibility? I am assuming they have a new CEO or someone acting and they have managers up and down the

line. I do not understand why we continue to do these things. They put their hand out, government will pay. The government only gets its money from the people of Tasmania.

The infrastructure support for TasRail, \$8 million. Yes, we do need to keep the maintenance up on the tracks. You never know when we might get a passenger train back.

Ms O'Connor - Wouldn't that be great?

Ms RATTRAY - We could go back to starting on Tuesday afternoons at 2.30 p.m., get the train down. That is why there used to be a 2.30 p.m. start in this place so that members could get to Hobart on the train. I know I am pipe-dreaming now - that is a stretch, probably too far. It has been a very long time since we have had a 2.30 p.m. Tuesday start; we have, but we did not come on the train.

Mrs Hiscutt - Nostalgic, will we do it next week?

Ms RATTRAY - No. I understand why the government would want to be supporting TasRail. They certainly cannot afford to sell it and buy it back again, so we need to keep it operational because it does provide a fantastic service across the state.

The allocation for Homes Tasmania in regard to more housing support for women facing homelessness, \$1.2 million. I have no issue with that. There are over-55 or 50-plus women who, perhaps, have a relationship breakdown and there is not enough equity in the family home for two adults to have a home in the future. It must be a terrible situation, and for those others who for whatever reason choose to leave their existing home and do not have anywhere to go. I am absolutely supportive of that. I have no argument with that.

The AYDC, members will have noticed that the committee of three - finally we ended up being able to finalise our report and get an opportunity at a later time to thank everyone involved, but certainly acknowledge the work of the honourable member for Launceston and the honourable member for Nelson in being able to complete that report. There are some learnings from that and some information I believe will be useful for government. I look forward to the government's response to that report in the coming weeks. It will be something that the committee and all those people who provided input into that will be looking forward to.

An increase of \$4.1 million; staff being paid, that is suspended and some of them have been stood down for approximately three years, an additional \$1.6 million. They have been found to have no case to answer. There are instances where there is no case to answer. Why are they either not back at work or there is an opportunity to part ways and move those people on to whatever they choose to do in the future?

Overtime is \$2.5 million, the good old double shifts. Again, is it just that there is not enough staff to cover the numbers at the AYDC? Perhaps the Leader will organise a briefing down the track for members to have some understanding of where the new centres are at?

Mrs Hiscutt - Through you, Mr President. Maybe even a tour.

Ms RATTRAY - A tour?

Mrs Hiscutt - Of this new place but we will consider that, yes.

Ms RATTRAY - I mean, it is information in particular that I expect members are looking for. Whatever the government might like to offer, I think it would be useful for a lot of people to have an understanding. Certainly for me, I would really appreciate having an understanding of where we are.

The remaining amount of the \$4.1 million is the sick leave amount and it is not lost on me that it is a challenging environment, because I have visited the AYDC facility a number of times just outside of Deloraine. I imagine working there eight, nine or 10 hours a day, which would be a real challenge. Again, we need to have some understanding of why we continue to have to cover these additional costs over and above what is budgeted. I would have thought that most agencies have a pretty good handle on what is going to be required, but certainly not in this area. We know that in the Prison Service itself, we have been talking about the additional overtime component of staffing correctional facilities and it continues to be a drain on the state's resources.

In the area of the severe weather events and the \$11 million allocated there, nobody can foresee that type of call on emergency services. There is quite a detailed breakdown on the paperwork that we received: \$65,000 of resilience and recovery salaries and wages related to the event, \$161,000 of casual labour hire for the call centre support for Tasmanian Emergency Information Service, not-for-profit organisation grants of \$442,000 - there were 10 grants paid. I am interested in how those 10 grants make up that \$442,000 that is significant for those non-profit organisations. Can I have some understanding of how that is related to the severe weather event? Temporary living support grants and that is significant. There is a significant amount of grant, which is \$4.8 million, but there are 2208 grants paid. There were a lot of people displaced. There were emergency food grants of \$4.5 million and 13,062 grants were paid, recovery and restoration grants of \$128,000 and 47 grants were paid, and then a contingency for future grant request. Grants are open until the 30 June 2025 at a cost thus far of \$513,971, so there will still be more I expect if the grants are open until June 2025. There will be more call on those funds. Again, nobody can foresee what is needed.

Are we overcompensating - not the people who have been directly involved, but those who assist? I do not know that. I have a question in the system because I was advised by somebody who attended the West Coast fires around Queenstown earlier in the year that food was flown from Queensland to feed the people who were assisting with the fires. I have a question around that in the system. The Queenstown local stores, the shops and takeaways were gearing up to provide the additional food that was required for people. If that is the case, it is an appalling situation but that needs to be confirmed and I expect I might well have an answer back today. It has been in the system for a few days now. I hope that is not the case. That would be one that most people would be shocked at if that was the case. I have either had poor intel or someone has got the completely wrong end of the stick.

Do we pass this and steady as she goes or do we say no? But as I have said, I do not believe we have any option because they are all bundled in together. There are aspects of this supplementary appropriation bill that I absolutely support and there are others that I have a question mark over the value back to Tasmanians and why this state needs to have significant interest, a \$10 million worth of interest, in a tungsten mine on King Island of which we are not sure of being able to deliver what it was set out to do. We know how fickle the mineral industry

is at times. It is always reliant on the price and that is why it shut down in 1992, because of the price of tungsten.

That is my offering and I always look forward to other members' contributions because everyone has a different take.

[12.00 p.m.]

Ms LOVELL (Rumney) - Mr President, I wanted to make a few comments on the supplementary appropriation bill. We do these regularly, every year, really. Every year somebody makes the same point that, whilst there are often unforeseen circumstances, like the funding in this bill for extreme weather events, there are other things that need to be funded that should be able to be foreseen. This seems to happen every year. We have a budget handed down every year, and every year we say: 'You are underestimating. We know this is coming.' We look at how much money we spend in health, as an example, each year. We look at what is in the budget. It is always significantly under the actual spend.

We know the cost of health services goes up every year. We know the demand increases. We know the cost of providing those services goes up. That cannot be avoided, that is going to happen. Therefore it is frustrating when, year after year, we have a government handing down a budget saying they are saving money because they are not spending as much money in health or they are cutting funding here, or what have you. We all know that in six or eight months we will have one of these bills in front of us essentially funding that shortfall that we know is coming. It is dishonest. It is a dishonest way of doing a budget, and it happens again and again.

I know last year we did not have a supplementary appropriation for health, but we had a RAF. We had funding in the past, we have had RAFs. We have had the Department of Health fund it through their special purpose account. It does not matter where the money is coming from. The money is coming from somewhere and we know it is coming. We know it is going to be needed, so we should be able to be upfront about that and be transparent and plan for it. However, that is not what we see in the budgets that are handed down each year. Remembering that the Budget that was handed down was in September last year, it is not even six months later. Four months later they have blown the Budget. This bill was before us at the beginning of March. It is not long. We had the revised Estimates report handed down four months later. We know they have blown their Budget before the year has barely started.

I wanted to comment on a couple of the items in the supplementary appropriation bill. I have spoken about health already. I do not know why it seems to come as a surprise every year that we need more money than what is allocated in the budget for health. We all know it is coming. We talk about it when the budget is handed down every year. It would be nice if the government could just be upfront about that at the start of the financial year and account for that in their budget.

The additional funding for the Department of Justice, \$25 million, is to meet cost pressures for the Tasmania Prison Service, including overtime due to continuing difficulty attracting and maintaining sufficient levels of correctional staff. Again, this is not a new problem, this has been a problem year on year on year. It is a problem because this government has shown no interest and no willingness to work with the staff, to work with the people representing the staff to address the issues that will mean we can attract and retain staff in the prison service.

We should not have overtime levels at the levels that we have them, but we do. I know that is something that is questioned at every Estimates. Every Estimates we ask for that figure, and every Estimates it is extremely high. If you talk to the correctional officers, they do not want to be working like that. With the amount of pressure they are under, it is no surprise that this funding also goes towards increases in workers compensation premiums, increasing claims. We are getting more workers compensation claims because we are putting the staff under such immense pressure.

Ms O'Connor - Because there are more people going into prison because of tough-on-crime.

Ms LOVELL - Yes, that is related too, but even before the tough-on-crime and more people going into prison. I was a union organiser 15 years ago working with correctional officers. It was a problem then and it is still a problem now.

The bill provides additional operating services appropriation of \$21.2 million for the Department for Education, Children and Young People; \$14.1 million to support an increase in the number of children accessing special care packages. We have heard some figures on that increase and an increase in the cost of these packages. There is \$2.95 million for additional staff resourcing to meet increased calls to the Advice and Referral Line. Now, I am not questioning either of those funding items, they are important and they need to be funded, but again, particularly, increased staffing to the Advice and Referral Line. This is not unpredictable. The Advice and Referral Line has been under immense pressure for a long time.

The commission of inquiry was several years ago now. We knew there would be an increase in reporting - that was predicted by the commission itself. We knew there would be an increase in reporting to the Advice and Referral Line. We had the new requirements come in under the Reportable Conduct Scheme. These are all things that we know are coming; we can see this. The staff can tell you this is coming. We should not have to be funding these things through a supplementary appropriation bill after the fact, when we should be planning for these things. We know there will be an increase in demand.

We heard in the briefing this morning there had been an increase in staffing. I will put on record, I heard there was 12 additional staff in the department, and 11 through non-government organisations with the Advice and Referral Line and that additional \$2.95 million. I will put on record, my question to the Leader is whether or not those 12 staff with the department in particular are permanent, whether those staff have been put on as permanent employees, and whether this additional funding will be an ongoing cost that will need to be allocated in upcoming budgets. I hope they are permanent, because we know there has been a significant need for staffing, increased resourcing in the Advice and Referral Line, for a very long time.

I will also put on record, we heard that there was a predicted budget shortfall of, I cannot remember if it was \$14 million or \$17 million, but that that would be partially offset by salary savings of around, I believe, \$3 million. I would like to clarify where those salary savings are coming from. I suspect, if the Leader cannot answer that question today, we will be asking it in budget Estimates. I would like to know where those salary savings are coming from, particularly if there are vacancies that are not being filled, where those vacancies are located within the department.

Again, there is \$4.14 million for staff resourcing at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. I do not believe anyone is going to argue against this; this is important funding. It is important that we are adequately resourcing Ashley Youth Detention Centre, particularly while we wait for a new facility. There needs to be significant changes to operations at Ashley, but this is not a new problem. This has been a problem for a long time. We have had trouble for many years attracting and retaining staff to work in Ashley, and I hope that there is work being done on that. I know there have been some changes in staffing levels, but this should not be something that we are funding as a surprise halfway through the year. This should be something that is planned for, and that the government is making a financial commitment to resource adequately at the beginning of the year.

We have had an increase, \$14.5 million, required for the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management. That is largely due to the rising cost of workers compensation premiums being driven by an increase in case complexity and number. We heard that this morning in the briefing. I thank the Treasury officials for the briefing. They were very forthcoming with information. I know a lot of the questions we asked were not questions for Treasury officials, they were questions for departments and for ministers around policy decisions. I appreciate what they were able to tell us. There has been an increase in the number of workers compensation claims for the department and also in case complexity, which is largely due to an increase in the number of psychosocial claims.

I am not going to argue that funding is required. What I would like to know, and perhaps this is not the forum but I will be looking for opportunities to ask the minister, what is being done about that rising number of cases? What are we doing to better support our staff so that they are not having to put in workers compensation claims? This is a real problem, it is a very real problem in the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management, I know. It is also a problem in many of our other departments. I know it is a massive problem in the Department for Education, Children and Young People, both within Child Safety Services and Education. This is a very real problem that we need to be looking at. What action can we put in place to better support our staff so that we are not having to fund increased workers compensation claims, as one thing, if you want to look at it from a purely budget perspective, but the human cost of that? Let's remember, an additional \$14.5 million, how many people are behind that? What is the damage being done to those people, those people who are working within our public service, providing services for Tasmania, who are in this position that they are needing to put in these workers compensation claims? We all know the lifelong impact that those types of incidents can have on a person. I am frankly more interested in what we are doing to prevent that than I am about what we are spending on it at the other end.

The member for McIntyre has already talked about some of those other line items in this bill.

Obviously, we will support the bill. We always support supplementary appropriation bills because we know it has to be done. It is not a great position to put the parliament in when a lot of these things can be foreseen. They can be predicted. If we had a government that was more transparent about funding services properly in the first place, we would not be here debating many of the line items in this bill. I do not hold out any hope that is going to change this year, but I will put it on record, as we do each time.

[12.11 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Hobart) - Mr President, the Greens will not be opposing the Appropriation (Supplementary Appropriation for 2024-25) Bill 2025, but we certainly echo the concerns raised by other members in their contributions. We are only six months into the budget cycle after the delivery of the 2024-25 State Budget and we have a request here for \$467.5 million to come out of the Public Account to fund operating services. This is not about capital delivery. This is about just keeping the machinery of government going, which is why we need to see this bill through.

That is nearly half a billion dollars and through the lens of some of the discussions both Houses of parliament have been having over the past couple of weeks, it is a very pertinent number. We have a government that is in such difficult financial circumstances - and it is not just that the government is in difficult financial circumstances, the state of Tasmania therefore is in very difficult financial circumstances - that is proposing to sell the family jewels at the same time it is spruiking a stadium that Gil McLachlan in his time and the AFL demanded of us in return for the team that we have long earned. Now we are coming back in here and it is black and white, it is so obvious that the budget is dire.

We have a government flailing around trying to work out what to do about it. It is needing to borrow to fund operating services. My first question to the Leader of Government Business is: can you confirm what amount of that money, the \$467.5 million, will be borrowings? It has had to be the practice of government in recent years to borrow to fund recurrent costs and operational services.

Is there \$467.5 million sitting in the Public Account ready to be dispersed or will this supplementary appropriation be funded through borrowings? Once the supplementary appropriation is taken out of the Public Account, what will the balance be in the Public Account?

That is information that Treasury should have available to us so we understand the picture we are really looking at.

Other members have gone through some of the provisions in this supplementary appropriation that touch on nearly all government agencies. Clearly, the \$345 million or so in extra supplementary appropriations for the Department of Health's operating services are the largest element of this supplementary appropriation bill. In part that is because as a state with the highest level of chronic disease in the country, the oldest and fastest-ageing population and with significant equity and poverty issues, particularly in urban fringe areas and in rural and regional areas, we are not investing nearly enough in health and wellbeing. It is something that governments pay lip service to, but do not pay money towards in any meaningful way. Partly that is because we live in four-year budget cycles and the whole frame through which a treasury or a government looks at its spending is through a four-year budget cycle. Having that cultural shift where you recognise that a sustained and substantial investment in health and wellbeing, in preventative health and ensuring food security is an investment that has a significant return in terms of reducing the impact on our health system.

We cannot be also blind to the fact that across the country and the world, healthcare workers and professionals and allied health professionals have been leaving the profession. This has sharply ticked up during the pandemic. Now, there may be many layers of reason for that. Some of it will be because as a society we decided to let an immunity-disabling virus loose

on our populations and our healthcare workers are on the frontline of that massive public healthcare failure. I refer members to data available on healthcare worker numbers and shortages right across Europe and the UK. I refer members to data that is coming in from public health authorities showing an increase in cancers, heart attacks, strokes, all manner of chronic illnesses, childhood diabetes.

We have, as a society, and we are not all culpable in this, but we have watched an erosion of public health, an erosion of trust and authority of public health that has had significant consequential flow on throughout our health system. It is also impacting on our education system; teachers are leaving the profession. There is a reason we have a massive Metro and public transport bus driver shortage around the country. There are shortages of critical workers across all sectors across the country and here in Tasmania. This is because we stupidly and blindly, in service of necrocapitalism unleashed, without taking proper care of our most vulnerable and our children, a disabling virus and there is more on the way. Until we come to grips with the need to clean the air that we work and live in, make sure that our healthcare settings are safe for the workers in those settings and everyone who comes into contact with them, because there is one place you are more likely than almost anywhere else to catch a nasty disease, and that is in our public hospital system because infection prevention and control has dropped. We had that confirmed last year in Estimates, when we quizzed the data on personal protective equipment. The expenditure on that throughout the pandemic has reduced to about one-fifth of what it was four or five years ago when COVID started. We are going to keep having problems attracting and retaining healthcare workers, unless we get real about this. We are going to continue to have to rely on locums to the tune, in this supplementary appropriation, of \$90 million and agency nurses of \$100 million until we get real about protecting the workplaces of our healthcare workers. But every year the health budget blows out and it is something that government knows will happen.

It is an inevitability. I take on board the member for Rumney's observation about the dishonesty implicit in a state budget that sets out a certain set of numbers and then there is always a supplementary appropriation that comes in afterwards. But if we are realistic about the politics here with any government, not matter the colour, if in the first budget of the newly elected Rockliff minority government we had had honesty about the state of the finances, the level of expenditure just for recurrent operational services that was required for the full financial year, let us be honest, the government - the Premier, the Treasurer - would have copped an absolute pasting for that.

They already copped a pasting for the Budget; they are getting a bit of a tap here. For governments and particularly one which over 11 years has not shown a huge amount of courage in terms of speaking honestly to the Tasmanian people, faced with finances that are failing like ours, it is a political impossibility in some ways. I am not saying that to let them off the hook. I am just acknowledging the political reality we are in that leads to not being transparent and open, because you are fearful of the consequences of telling the truth.

Before calling the state election 13 months early last year, the Liberals in government would have had a very good idea of the state's finances. Yet they came out the other side of the election with, according to Saul Eslake's work, about \$1.4 billion worth of promises. Now, if we lived in a slightly less combative parliamentary system, there is a real opportunity here for some collective ownership of the state's future. It was the member for Nelson yesterday who was talking about the great work undertaken during 2010 and 2014 on the potential for tax reform. Tim Morris, our former member for Lyons, the then-member for Bass and former

shadow treasurer, Peter Gutwein, were on that panel. I cannot quite remember who was the Labor member on the panel. An enormous amount of work in good spirit was undertaken to put forward proposals for potential savings and revenue-generating that had a broad agreement across the parliament so, there would be a collective sense of ownership of any changes, for example, to the tax system.

Now, because we live in a four-year cycle, electoral cycle and budget cycle, all that wonderful work done on tax reform that looked at stamp duty, land tax, payroll tax, it examined equity issues, all of that work as we got closer to the 2014 state election went into the yellow recycling bin ultimately. What a wasted opportunity. When you look at the state of the books and the enormous conundrums we are faced with as representatives of our communities, there is surely some space here for a different way of talking about the financial challenges of the state of Tasmania.

A smart premier who was really thinking things through would want there to be a collective sense of ownership and a collective response to dealing with the state's finances. Perhaps respected economist Saul Eslake, when he hands down his work, will be looking to find some consensus ground, those elements of potential budget remediation measures that we can to a significant extent agree on. Mr Eslake has already reported to government on the state of the state's finances as a result of the agreement the Premier made after the last state election and his work was ignored. I am not as cynical as some people, I generally try to see the best in people, but a cynic would say because Saul Eslake is so highly regarded in the community and something in economic terms of a Tasmanian treasure that he provides to government that respectability in the report he will deliver. He has always been frank and fearless, while being kind in his advice to governments or parliaments or his commentary on what are dry economic matters.

We did hear some information on the terms of reference yesterday, but I hope that in Mr Eslake's examination of the state's finances he does have a look at the glaring opportunity which he has raised before as something that the state could do better. That is how we levy corporations in order to make sure that the people of Tasmania are getting the return they deserve from corporations who make wealth from the wealth of the people of Tasmania.

This is in a state which has a health system needing to ask for an extra \$340 million three months before the end of the financial year, an education system which we know has a terrific minister, but there are still children in public schools learning in terrapins that were built in the 1980s. We still have a housing crisis and a government fudging figures on the 10,000 homes. This was initially to be 10,000 new homes but they are now just 10,000 homes and we know that some of those homes are land. We have Tasmanians out there every day being hammered by the cost of living.

We have a mass mortality event in our waters and the biggest biosecurity crisis in living memory, which will require government resources. I am sure Biosecurity Tasmania and the EPA have been putting a lot of time and resources into this catastrophe since it started. Yet we have no apparent plan from government about how to generate revenue other than selling public assets for which they have no mandate or cutting the public sector, which delivers essential quality services to the people of Tasmania.

The Greens have some ideas for government and I would like to put these on the record. On the numbers, in 2022 the mining industry made more profits than every single industry

outside of finance combined. In the 12 months to May of 2023, the Tasmanian mining industry exported \$2.8 billion worth of mineral products, 62 per cent of the state's mercantile export value. That is according to the Tasmanian minerals paper. 'In high demand amidst electrification shift: Ministry of Resources' and despite \$2.8 billion worth of our mineral wealth being exported from the state, the state only collected \$56 million in mining royalties, which is under 2.2 per cent of Tasmania's own-source revenue. We do not even levy mining companies here to the national average. If we did that, if we levied mining royalties as they should be, in the first year of operation we could take in an extra \$44 million a year. It just creeps up ever so slightly along the forward Estimates. If we levied mining companies at the national average, we could raise \$183 million over four years.

We have a gambling industry here that benefits a small handful of very wealthy people, the Farrell family among them, or the Federal Group. According to the *Australian Financial Review* BRW Rich List, the Farrells are estimated to be worth \$745 million, with the patriarch of the family himself said to be worth \$564 million. As we know, this extreme wealth has come out of the pockets of some of our poorest people, people who can least afford to lose money. It has been a consequence of many decades of a gambling monopoly for which the people of Tasmania received very little return.

The history tells us now - we know this - the licence fees and EGM tax rate for casinos were cut to make them comparable, I think, to a casino in Rockhampton or something. Whatever it was, the gambling industry here sure got a sweet, sweet deal. That comes at the expense of revenue for the people of Tasmania because we did not have a government with the courage to tax gambling, even to a reasonable extent. If we restored licence fees and the EGM tax rates for casinos to pre-2021 levels, we could raise \$9 million a year and over four years raise \$36 million.

Multinational salmon corporations drain the wealth out of our marine environment, have expanded around the state at the behest of the Liberals in government and Labor, who cheer them on endlessly. It is a completely unsustainable industry which has huge stocking level problems and has alienated enormous parts of our community at significant environmental cost. Since January this year, people who live along the southern beaches - particularly the beaches around the Huon, but now the beaches at the Tasman Peninsula because the mass mortality event has reached there - cannot swim on our own beaches.

This is for an industry which pays no company tax, is automating rapidly so it does not have to pay Tasmanians wages, gives the middle finger to regulators, and seeks carve-outs from biosecurity plans like Tassal did for its Okehampton Bay operation. It is interesting that *Piscirickettsia salmonis* somehow made its way from Okehampton Bay down to the Channel some time after Tassal got a carve-out from the biosecurity plan for the salmon industry. They are not going to pay for that. They are not going to pay Huon for that. It was Huon that was ultimately, primarily, hardest hit. The people of Tasmania, again, will pay for that. The environment will pay for that. The marine ecosystem is paying dearly for that.

We have antibiotics through our waterways and our wild fish populations because of this toxic, polluting, leeching industry. This industry plays the politics here very well, and pays sweet buggers-all for their leases. It gets a free ride to reactivate the zombie leases when they want to expand. They do want to expand - all around Storm Bay. They would expand all around the island, and we know we have a Premier that would let them. What is the benefit to the people of Tasmania of this industry?

We have some jobs in the industry. We have some 250 jobs, as I understand it, in Macquarie Harbour. We also pay, as I understand it - the former minister for the Environment might have these numbers off the top of his head - but I understand it is costing about \$30 million a year to oxygenate Macquarie Harbour because we do not have a federal or state government with the guts to get those pens out of there.

We have an industry that is sending a species to extinction, that has both the major parties bending over backwards for it, and that has doubled in size over the last decade. Over 60 per cent of the value of all aquaculture in Australia is coming out of this little island's inshore waters. In 2022 the gross value of the salmon production in Tasmania, according to the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania, was \$1.1 billion. Despite exploiting a natural resource, and the significant cost to ecological systems and to community life, very little of this windfall gain comes back to the state. If the government established a 10 per cent royalty on the gross value of salmonids grown in Tasmanian waters, in the first year they could raise \$95 million. It sits at about that level across the forward Estimates to \$380 million over four years.

Now I can almost hear some Liberal members thinking, 'Well, you would tax the salmon industry out of existence. You would tax the mining industry out of existence'. Well, no. What we have said about the mining industry is that we expect you to pay the national average for your royalties. What we are saying to the salmon industry is that we recognise that you make billions of dollars out of leases in public waters and so we are going to charge you a 10 per cent royalty on the gross value of your salmonids.

I would like to see salmon companies reimburse the state, Biosecurity Tasmania, and the Environment Protection Authority for the catastrophe that is unfolding in our waters right now. I will bet you no effort is made to recoup any of those costs. Let us face it, some of the damage that has been caused by the expansion of the salmon industry in Tasmanian waters will never be remediated.

I have told this story in here before. Rodney Dillon, Aboriginal elder - if you ever get a chance to talk to him about it, get him to describe what it was like diving as a kid in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel and what it is like now after fish farms arrived. That is a loss of our common wealth.

If property developers know one thing, it is how to make big profits. Certainly in this state, they also know - some of them do anyway - that they have a government that will write them bespoke legislation. One of the best tricks is making money for nothing simply by rezoning land. Rezoning land can make a developer millions simply by changing what the land is allowed to be used for to something of higher value. Governments are making decisions on whether developers are allowed to rezone land to high-value use. This comes with the opportunity for corruption at the local and state level particularly.

A rezoning tax as proposed by the Greens, in place in other jurisdictions, is a once-off levy applied to the windfall gain enjoyed by property developers when they are allowed to change what the land they have purchased can be used for. To put this really simply, if an area of land is zoned from industrial to residential, obviously the value of that land increases enormously. It is not because the developer has invested any capital in the land itself. It is simply by virtue of the rezoning. That is a windfall gain. We should be taxing it. Why would we let developers make free money as a result of a rezoning decision? We should not do that.

There is a system in the ACT, a once-off levy that ensures a government decision to award a developer a massive profit will also benefit the community. In the ACT, when a change in the allowable use of land results in an increase in valuation, the ACT government applies a 75 per cent once-off tax on that increase in value. That is a tax on windfall gains caused only by rezoning. We are not saying we tax people after they have done good stuff on the rezoned land, we are just acknowledging they did nothing to earn those windfall gains. That rezoning tax could earn \$640 million over the forward Estimates, more than covering this supplementary appropriation bill.

In Vancouver, for example, they have an empty homes levy. We have Tasmanians who still cannot find a home to rent or buy. There are about 1000 homes around the island that are empty. They will be empty for a whole range of reasons, but some of them will be empty for no particularly good reason. There are around 470 empty homes in the Hobart area and 445 in Launceston. We have people sleeping on the streets. We have mums sleeping with their kids in cars. In other places, levies on empty homes are used to curtail this problem. In Vancouver, such a levy has reduced vacant homes by 36 per cent and raised \$115 million for social housing. If we just put a 1 per cent levy on empty homes, we could raise \$26 million over the forward Estimates.

That would cover some of the extra costs in the Tasmanian prison system caused by a totally stupid tough-on-crime approach, which is not only filling Risdon, it is filling Ashley Youth Detention Centre and our remand centres and bail houses with children. If government had the courage to simply put a 1 per cent levy on vacant properties, there would be an extra \$26 million there, perhaps instead to invest in crime prevention, community safety and wellbeing, and diversion programs for young people.

I might just divert briefly at this point to talk about the government's response to the commission of inquiry and some of the evidence that we have heard come before the parliamentary committee. We have a government here with two very distinct sides to its face on this issue. We have a government that said it is committed to implementing the recommendations of the commission of inquiry and has done a solid job ticking those boxes, although some of the reforms are far too far-off in the never-never. Over on the other side here, we have a Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management who has initiated things like Operation Raven, where they are just scooping up kids from around Launceston and incarcerating them. We are seeing more young people, about 96 per cent of young people who are in Ashley at any given time are in there on remand. They have not even been sentenced.

We are seeing a conflict and collision between the ambitions and the imperatives of the commission of inquiry and this stupid, un-evidence-based approach to children, young people, and youth justice which is undoing the work of the commission of inquiry and of those government agencies that are trying to give effect to that report.

We are in here with a supplementary appropriation bill which needs to give more money to Risdon, more money to Ashley - \$1.6 million of which apparently is for staff who have been suspended and still have not been laid off over historical allegations. We have a government that has to come back in here and beg for money because it is filling our jail, it is filling Ashley, and it is criminalising children and young people at an obscene rate.

Finally, on the racing industry: in 2015, we initiated an inquiry into the greyhound racing industry. I was the chair of that until I was sacked, when I called for a ban on greyhound racing.

We found that the number of deaths in the industry was unacceptable, and likely to be higher than reported. We know every person in this place knows what a dog of an industry greyhound racing is and how unpopular it is. We also know that it is the taxpayer who pays for this cruelty. The subsidy to the racing industry in the last year alone was \$37 million. That is a huge amount of money that could be going into public good rather than torturing animals.

In closing I wanted to go to a matter that came up in the briefing this morning and was raised by the honourable member for McIntyre. That is about the \$10.5 million loan to Group 6 Metals Ltd, which we are now being asked to enable to be repaid because the proponent of the Dolphin Tungsten Mine project on King Island could not repay the loan or even the interest. The honourable member for McIntyre makes a fair point about why this company is having this special treatment. Is it because they are in the Premier's electorate? That is a fair question to ask. That is a substantial bailout for an unproven company which has a lot of nice words and some nice pictures on its website, but to date has not been successful.

So, \$10 million is procured through the *Tasmanian Development Act* that has come through a loan from TASCORP that goes to a mining company that cannot repay it. Remember, this \$10 million here was already borrowed by entities owned by the state of Tasmania. Then the state of Tasmania pays itself back, really, even though the loan was to a company. Then it takes a share in a company which has faced, let us face it, very significant challenges. It is a highly unusual thing for a government to do to purchase equity, presumably on behalf of Tasmanians, in a company which has shown no evidence of being able to deliver. It is sort of emblematic in a way of this government, which invests quite a bit in what we would classify as corporate welfare and handouts to businesses, at the same time as they are telling us that they cannot afford to properly fund some of these services and that they will need to axe public sector jobs and sell off GBEs and state-owned companies.

I am pretty sure Saul Eslake has better things to do than watch the Legislative Council, but I certainly hope he has a look at the level of corporate welfare in successive Liberal budgets. There is some argument at some level for some businesses for start-up funding, particularly for social enterprise ventures. If a business cannot make it within the first few years of attempted operation, it is not the job of taxpayers to give them a bailout and a lifeline. It is that old thing that happens all the time, where companies privatise the profits and socialise the losses. This is a perfect example of losses - inability to make money being socialised. It is disappointing.

There is a lot to talk about in the supplementary appropriation bill. I am sure we will have more interesting contributions from other honourable members, but it is disappointing to be coming back to parliament year-on-year after the state budget has been handed down and deal with the inevitable supplementary appropriation bill. We get a really clear message out of this. The government has no pathway out of the red and into the black. It has locked itself into the bunker. It is threatening to sell the family silver. It is threatening to take the hatchet to public services.

I hope that what we will see from government once the penny starts to drop is the unpopularity of its plans and the difficulty it is going to have getting some of those plans through this parliament, that they are more open to an honest and respectful relationship with the Tasmanian people and with their colleagues in the other place and in here, because if we work together on the big issues, if we can find consensus on some of the tough stuff, then that is us doing our jobs. It does not mean we do not hold government to account and scrutinise their decision-making, but there must be some things that we are able to agree on in order to

take some of the pressure off the state's finances. I would love us to have that conversation in an open and accepting way. I think it could make a real difference.

[12.51 p.m.]

Ms THOMAS (Elwick) - Mr President, I rise to speak briefly on the appropriation bill. Budgets are tough, and this is a tough budget for the government, and we are heading into another one very shortly. We seem to have done budgets a lot in recent times because we had an election unexpectedly last year and things were delayed. So, I look forward to, hopefully, an ordinary budget year, next year. Would it not be nice if we did not have to do this again in the next financial year? Again, my optimism abounds. The member for Launceston took the words right out of my mouth in what she said in her contribution.

The focus of my contribution is going to be on the question of what is the government doing to inquire into why these requests for additional funding repeatedly occur. Does the government analyse department appropriation requests through the lens of why this is continually happening? What can be done to address the causes rather than the symptoms of overspending year after year?

I appreciate the supporting information that was provided to members that provides some details on what the additional money is for and provides a very high-level explanation as to why it is needed.

But, what if we or the government or departments applied the five whys rule? Do they apply the five whys rule? It is a simple and easy-to-use tool for problem-solving. It helps to identify the underlying causes of problems, not just surface-level symptoms. How is it applied? Well, you start with the problem statement, then you ask 'why' to identify the immediate cause. Then you continue asking why, based on the previous answer, digging deeper into the problem. Repeat this process until you reach the root cause, which is the fundamental reason for the problem.

It is not an easy task, but going broke is not easy either.

Everyday Tasmanians struggling with cost-of-living pressures cannot just keep going into debt when times get tough. They have to ask some hard questions, change the way they do some things, and stop doing some other things. It is reasonable that Tasmanians expect our government to do the same.

I note the member for McIntyre's question about the \$500,000 grant to Wine Tasmania that is included in this bill, and I too had some questions about this. My question is - I hope the Leader can answer in her responses - how did this grant come about? How does the government justify an ad hoc grant to Wine Tasmania through a supplementary appropriation bill process when so many community organisations are hanging by a thread waiting on the outcome of the community budget submission process? Community organisations that put significant time and effort into community budget submissions are desperately waiting for an answer, waiting for the budget to be handed down in May.

I have talked to a number of people who work in community organisations, people who head up organisations, who are desperate to be able to tell their staff whether they will have a job beyond the end of the financial year. They are losing staff because of the uncertainty.

I support the work of Wine Tasmania and the allocation of government funding to assist in its activities. That is not the point I am making here. My concern is about fair and equitable allocation of funds. What process was undertaken to make this allocation, and can the government, hand on heart, say that a fair and equitable process was undertaken to allocate these funds?

Like the member for McIntyre, I also had questions about government investment in private business, namely the -

Mrs Hiscutt - Before the member moves on, those questions really are questions for the government, not Treasury. We can give you the allocation of the funds and where it came from and why, but the reasons behind it that you are asking for are not in the advice that I have. It might be something you can find out through another medium.

Ms THOMAS - Okay. Thank you. Like the member for McIntyre, I also had questions about government investment in private business, in the tungsten mine, because what precedent does this set and where does it end? I will support this bill, Mr President, because the State Service needs to keep on functioning. However, I urge the government not to rest on their laurels on the assumption that members will continue to support budgets and supplementary appropriation bills, for this reason. We, as individual elected members representing our community, have an important role to play in good governance of this state and appropriate budget-setting and the appropriate spending of money. It is a role that we all take very seriously.

I urge the government to ask the hard questions of departments. I urge the government to ask the 'five whys', and to encourage their departments to ask the 'five whys' to try to address the problems that continually lead to overspend, rather than continually band-aid fixing the problems with short-term solutions.

Other members, in their contributions, have spoken about some of the specifics that are included in this appropriation bill. A lot of what they have spoken about does go to the point that I raise: why are these things happening? Members have talked about the need for more money for the Advice and Referral Line because they have increased calls - more people are needing advice through this Advice and Referral Line. How do we, together, work to address the root cause of why people are needing that help?

There is an increase in the number of children accessing special care packages through out-of-home care, so there is an amount of \$14.1 million additional required there. Why do we have more children accessing special care packages? Why is there more money required to be spent in out-of-home care, and how do we address some of the wicked problems that are at the root cause of having increasing numbers of children in out-of-home care? How do we be brave and address some of these generational poverty and trauma issues and try to prevent further generations of children being affected by these wicked problems, and that end up seeing children in out-of-home care?

These are some of the questions that, together, all of the members of this place and the other place have knowledge and perspectives to share and to contribute. How can we, collectively, work with the government using those skills and that knowledge, and the perspectives that we bring from our different electorates and experiences, to try to solve some of these wicked problems? I would really like to see the government doing that, and that goes to the point that the member for Hobart made as well. How can we work together,

collaboratively, with the government to really try to address some of these significant, wicked problems?

The member for Rumney talked about additional funding that has been requested here due to the severe weather event that was experienced, and the government's response to the severe weather events across Tasmania in August and September. These severe weather events cannot be predicted, but there ought to perhaps be some consideration -

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

QUESTIONS

Spirits of Tasmania - Public Relations Consultant

Mr EDMUNDS question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, Mr VINCENT

[2.30 p.m.]

Can the minister confirm he engaged a PR consultant to manage stakeholder engagement in relation to the new *Spirits* project?

ANSWER

Mr President, as the TT-Line and the *Spirits* are not my ministry, I can say I know nothing on that and, no, I have not been involved with any discussions like that.

Mount Roland Regional Reserve - *Nature Conservation Act* Proclamation

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for PARKS, Mr DUIGAN

[2.31 p.m.]

The *Nature Conservation Act* proclamation tabled yesterday excises nearly 3.5 hectares of Crown land located in the Mount Roland Regional Reserve and converts it to non-reserved land. Why did this occur?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for the question. The creation of the Mount Roland Regional Reserve is part of an agreement between the Tasmanian and Australian governments to develop a system of comprehensive, adequate and representative forest reserves back in 1997.

The purpose of the proclamation before parliament is to revoke a small section of the Mount Rowland Regional Reserve that was inadvertently included as part of the original proclamation in the year 2000. Revocation of the regional reserve status of the land will revert the land status to unallocated Crown land.

The Mount Roland Regional Reserve is approximately 7145 hectares in size and has complex boundaries along roads and other land tenures. The parcel at the subject of this process

is a small 3.3-hectare parcel of land that was inadvertently included at the time of the proclaiming of that reserve. This was a mistake at the time that is now being rectified.

The small parcel of land proposed for revocation from the reserve is separated, I imagine you would have seen the map, is separated from the rest of the regional reserve by Rysavy Road. The land was offered for sale to the owners of Silver Ridge Retreat back in the late 1990s, prior to the reservation process.

A contract of sale was prepared; however, the parcel was then included in the regional reserve and so the sale lapsed. The land is a site that does not have significant conservation values.

In May 2021, it was confirmed that the land consists of 60 per cent modified land with buildings, fencing, signage, a dam, burn piles and tracks throughout the block. The other 40 per cent is dry eucalypt forest.

The assessment concluded that the land is unlikely to support significant natural values. The assessment also found no recorded Aboriginal heritage sites within the property and concluded that there is a low likelihood of any Aboriginal heritage being present.

Revocation of the reserve status over the parcel of land does not impact the natural values of the area.

However, importantly, it will provide the current owners of Silver Ridge Retreat the opportunity for certainty over their interests in the area with an intention to sell the land to the current occupants, as was originally planned.

For those who are interested in a better view without the opportunity potentially to travel to the site, any of your mapping apps like Google Earth or Apple Maps will give you a good understanding of the block and the kind of look of it.

Supplementary Question

Ms O'CONNOR - I have a supplementary question.

Mr PRESIDENT - The honourable member for Hobart, a supplementary question.

Ms O'CONNOR - Minister, was it the owners of the Silver Ridge Retreat who approached government about the excision of an area of land, regardless of its values? We can take you on trust on that, but once the government starts removing pieces of land from the reserve estate, it is something that parliament should take notice of.

Were you approached by the Silver Ridge Retreat with an offer for that land? Do you recall that in the State of the Environment Report one of the recommendations is to increase the size of Tasmania's reserve estate, not shrink it? Perhaps you could detail to the Council the genesis of this decision because it is not like it was 25 years in understanding a mistake has been made. There has obviously been an approach for some change in recent months for your government to bother tabling a revocation.

Mr DUIGAN - Mr President, as I said in my previous answer, as I understand it, it was a mistake in the original scheduling of the reserve and an agreement of sale was in place prior to the proclaiming of the reserve. I understand it is an opportunity to correct that longstanding mistake.

Mount Roland Regional Reserve - Cable Car

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for PARKS, Mr DUIGAN

[2.36 p.m.]

Minister, can you confirm that the owner of Silver Ridge Retreat is Mr Brian Inder, who is the proponent of the Mount Roland cable car proposal, and that this area of land has been excised from the Mount Roland Regional Reserve in order to facilitate a cable car on Mount Roland?

ANSWER

Mr President, I will just seek some advice.

Recognition of Visitors

[2.37 p.m.]

Mr PRESIDENT - While the minister seeks advice, I would like to welcome the grade 5-6 students from Deloraine Primary School. We are currently in Question Time where members of the Legislative Council get to ask the government questions, and the minister is seeking some advice so that he can give the correct answer. We will go on with some legislation after Question Time. I know that all my fellow colleagues here in the Legislative Council, including the member for McIntyre, who is your local member, welcome you to the Chamber today.

Members - Hear, hear.

Mr DUIGAN - Mr President, as I said in my earlier answer, this was a mistake that we are seeking to correct and I think the owner of the Silver Ridge Retreat is potentially irrelevant in this case.

Basketball Tasmania Facilities Strategy 2025-2035 - Update

Ms THOMAS question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, Ms PALMER

[2.38 p.m.]

In August 2024, I asked you about the Community Liaison - Sport, or CLS, roles established to connect with community sporting clubs and increase the use of school facilities out of hours. In response, you advised that the CLS team and Facility Services are conducting a school sport facility and playground audit to assess the suitability for school, sporting and community requirements.

The Basketball Tasmania Facilities Strategy 2025-2035 notes there are 72 school sites across Tasmania with basketball courts, some of which are assisting to meet the current critical court shortage of 31 courts.

My questions are:

- (1) Has the audit of school facilities been completed?
- (2) Did the review analyse which school basketball courts meet the Basketball Tasmania requirements for training and games?
- (3) If not, can a subsequent audit be undertaken to analyse how many school courts meet Basketball Tasmania training and game requirements, and what is required to bring them all up to standard and what works to bring them up to standard would cost?
- (4) How many partnerships have been achieved by the CLS roles to increase the use of school facilities out of hours?
- (5) Will these roles continue to be funded in the 2025-26 Budget?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the honourable member for the question. I add my welcome as the minister for Education to our students from Deloraine who are here today. It is really lovely to have you here in the Chamber with all of us.

In answer to your questions:

- (1) I can advise that the Community Liaison Sport audit of school facilities has been completed. The data gathered through this process was used to help inform the recently announced sites selected for our \$10 million playground and sports court upgrades program, with 104 school and child and family learning centre playgrounds and sports courts set to receive upgrades through this program. Of the 104 upgrades, 40 are for external courts, six are for internal courts, with the remainder allocated for playgrounds.
- (2) A range of different standards of basketball facilities have been identified within departmental schools. These include facilities that are appropriate for junior training purposes, all the way through to facilities that are suitable for competition basketball.

The department estimates that there are 90 indoor gymnasiums around the state with additional capacity for community use and, of these, 21 could be considered for competition use.

I note Basketball Tasmania has recently released its facility strategy. The department welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with Basketball

Tasmania and explore any potential opportunities to increase community use of school courts.

- (3) Court suitability has been addressed in my response to question (2). As noted in my response to question (1), 46 sites have been approved for internal and external sports courts upgrades. The department is currently working with these sites to finalise the scope and cost of each of these projects.
- (4) I am advised that since the functions of Community Liaison Sport (CLS) officers have been introduced, there has been a 24 per cent increase in community access to indoor school sports facilities. There has also been an increase of 58 per cent in community access to outdoor school sports facilities.

CLS personnel, in collaboration with the Launceston Basketball Association, were successful in a grant application from the 2023-24 round of Tasmanian Active Infrastructure Grants Program. This project aims to upgrade seven school gyms to a standard capable of holding competition basketball. Launceston College, Newstead College and Kings Meadows High School have already benefited with new backboards and shot clocks installed. Prospect High School, Riverside High School and Brooks High School are set to benefit from the same infrastructure in the coming months.

CLS are collaborating with AFL Tasmania on its new funding programs Breaking New Ground Fund and Kicking Goals. That sees Richmond Primary School the first school to benefit from the new Kicking Goals program, after a young student wrote to AFL Tasmania in 2024.

Expressions of Interest are now open for all Tasmanian government schools, with AFL Tasmania and goalpost manufacturer PILA set to roll out goalposts to dozens of schools across 2025.

Kings Meadows High School and Hobart City High School have both submitted applications for the Breaking New Ground Fund, with applications currently undergoing a feasibility study.

In another key partnership and project, CLS are also collaborating with Cricket Tasmania on the installation of compliant cricket pitches to Tasmanian schools. Goodwood Primary School and East Ulverstone Primary School have been identified as potential sites, with Goodwood Primary School progressing forward to usage negotiations.

Beyond the current projects, CLS continues to meet with state sporting bodies, local associations and other community groups with the aim of increasing out-of-hours usage of school sports facilities.

- (5) The CLS positions are currently ongoing positions in the department's budget.

Development Assessment Panels Bill - Public Consultation

Ms WEBB question to MINISTER for LOCAL GOVERNMENT, Mr VINCENT

[2.44 p.m.]

As you would recall, last year during public comment on the government's Land Use Planning and Approvals Amendment (Development Assessment Panels) Bill, it became clear that the state's local government sector opposed that particular bill. Further, on 21 November last year, LGAT issued a media release stating representatives from all 29 councils had voted unanimously to reject last year's bill, stating extreme disappointment with the government's approach, and urging professional consultation and collaboration to occur with the local government sector.

In light of that strong feedback from your key stakeholders, have you ensured the local government sector has been professionally consulted and collaborated with during the current public consultation on the revised DAP bill?

Can you detail the steps you have taken to reassure yourself, as the Minister for Local Government, that all 29 councils are being consulted with appropriately in relation to that bill?

ANSWER

Mr President, since taking on the local government ministry, I have fostered, developed and encouraged a very close working relationship with people who used to be my colleagues for a lot of years. That has been hugely successful, I believe, in discussing many and varied things affecting local government, but mainly along the lines of directly under local government.

I believe they have a general meeting today in Hobart where the DAPs are being discussed. Quite shortly, some of them might be here to chat with me as well. I do not know where their feeling is at the moment. They still have some reservations about it. I have spoken with the minister, Mr Ellis, and his office about the sensible way of discussing that with local government, but I am not directly involved with the DAPs discussions with the Local Government Association or individual councils.

Development Assessment Panels Bill - Public Consultation

Ms WEBB question to MINISTER for LOCAL GOVERNMENT, Mr VINCENT

[2.47 p.m.]

Thank you for that answer. The question was not so much whether you knew what their view was at this time on that bill, but what you had done to reassure yourself that consultation had occurred appropriately with them, given that feedback from last time. Can you clarify whether you have confidence that appropriate consultation has occurred, and how you have gone about ensuring or giving yourself that confidence?

ANSWER

Mr President, I can assure the member that my office has had quite a few conversations about how things should be and could be communicated, but it is up to the individual minister on how they may do that. The local government and the variety of mayors in the position, there are a lot of strong wills in amongst them that will have their own say, and I am sure they are doing that this morning and this afternoon. I will re-examine that when I have a bit more information, for the little bit that I may have influence over. A different minister is looking after it. Thank you.

Gambling - Unregulated Schemes

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

[2.48 p.m.]

Is the government aware of unregulated gambling schemes operating for pure profit purposes, praying on vulnerable Tasmanians, where it is a known fact that the giveaways offered are often selected so as to appeal to those in the lower socioeconomic communities and younger people, with no regulation around their activities? I believe it might be based at Exeter.

If yes, will the minister responsible and the government consider following the South Australian approach and urgently implement regulations to prohibit such schemes?

ANSWER

Mr President, the *Gaming Control Act 1993* provides for some activities to be undertaken without a licence, such as where the activities meet the definition of a trade promotion, or where it is prescribed as an exempt game and complies with any conditions of such exemption.

The act establishes the independent Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission, whose functions include to review and determine complaints relating to the conduct of gaming or other forms of wagering. Where issues are referred to the commission, they are investigated and appropriate action is taken. The minister is unable to comment on any investigations which may currently be underway or on foot by the commission.

If you, member for McIntyre, are aware of potentially illegal or unregulated gaming activities, then these matters should be reported to the commission, and I can help you later, if you wish to do that.

As it is not clear what potentially unregulated gambling schemes are being referred to, it is not possible to respond to the question. However, as the commission is the gaming regulator and the responsible body under the act to investigate such matters, the government will consider the commission's findings of any investigation into unregulated or illegal gambling activities.

What I think the Deputy Premier is trying to say here is that we need more information. I will talk to you about that later.

***Spirits of Tasmania* - Public Relations Consultant**

Mr EDMUNDS question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, Mr VINCENT

[2.51 p.m.]

I might rephrase my earlier question. Can the minister confirm he has engaged a PR consultant to manage stakeholder engagement in relation to the ports infrastructure in Devonport around the *Spirits* project or any other purpose?

ANSWER

Mr President, I will seek some advice.

Thank you for the question. The answer does not change a real lot. Berth 3 is also part of TT-Line's lease of the whole complex. The bit that I am after, TasPorts, I do not know of anything to do with a PR company being appointed with any of those. That would be a matter for the minister in charge of TT-Line.

Mr Edmunds - Certainly not from your office, though?

Mr VINCENT - Definitely not from my office.

Tiger Hut - Sale of Public Land

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for PARKS, Mr DUIGAN

[2.52 p.m.]

What is the future of Tiger Hut at Liawenee? We have been contacted by a number of constituents who are concerned that an approach has been made to government or that it may be on the table for privatisation. We are concerned that you as minister have been asked by government to set aside certain parcels of land or identify them for sale to help fill the budget black hole. That is a conversation we will have another day. Perhaps today you could inform the Council whether or not there have been any approaches to government about the future of Tiger Hut, if there are any negotiations in train, and whether it is your intention to have it solved.

ANSWER

Mr President, I appreciate the question. I have some knowledge of Tiger Hut up there in the highlands. I will take that one on notice. I will investigate that and get back to you.

Ms O'Connor - Tomorrow?

Mr DUIGAN - I will take it on notice.

**APPROPRIATION (SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION FOR 2024-25)
BILL 2025 (No. 1)**

Second Reading

Resumed from above (page 25).

[2.54 p.m.]

Ms THOMAS (Elwick) - Mr President, I was just at the point of saying I could see in the supplementary appropriation bill that there is budget allocated for government assistance to address the consequences of severe weather events. I was going to say: would it not be nice if the government budget could put some money aside for a rainy day? In my optimism, I hope that one day soon we will get to a point where that is possible.

That completes my contribution. Thank you.

[2.54 p.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Mr President, I have a short contribution. I have been listening to the contributions of others and found them very interesting. I will try not to repeat too much of what has been said, although I agree with lots of the comments made. I appreciated the briefing this morning on this bill to clarify some of the points around the spending.

I do accept that at times we will need to have a supplementary appropriation bills come to us, because even with all the best planning, and trying to forecast what is going to be needed, things and conditions can change. Sometimes there will need to be supplementary appropriation. We do also have other methods for that. We have a Premier's reserve, we have RAFs and other things. I think there are always good questions to ask - and others have put this forward too - around why we are utilising this particular method, and also about how warranted the things are that are covered in this bill.

As others have said, and I will briefly agree, it is not always clear whether this is something that has cropped up, if this needs to be addressed in a reasonable way or whether it is just that things were undercooked in the budget in the first place to make the budget look better at the time, knowing full well we were likely to have to appropriate more partway through the financial year, in which case that is fairly poor form. It is really just a political choice to try to make a budget bottom line look better, if you have not put sufficient money in the budget for what can reasonably be expected to be forecast as required.

Again, we can make our own assessments about that. In fact, sometimes it might be that an appropriation bill like this with a whole range of requirements or things being appropriated for different departments and different purposes, there might be some that are from column A and some from column B.

Other members have gone through in some detail about the individual items in this bill. There are just a couple I want to touch on that are of particular interest to me, particularly those that are on the out-of-home care area: the Department for Education, Children and Young People ones and out-of-home care appropriation. The Advice and Referral Line and, of course, the Ashley Youth Detention Centre extra funding. These are all notable because of things that are occurring in those areas.

We are told the out-of-home care appropriation in this bill is for the provision of extra special care packages and that money is required for two reasons.

- (1) The number of children requiring special care packages is increasing faster than anticipated during this year.
- (2) The special care packages themselves are increasing in cost.

Apparently, we are getting a 20 per cent increase in costs in those special care packages, as well as having significantly more children coming into them. They are quite expensive packages in some ways. They are not expensive, though, compared to accommodating a child in the Ashley detention centre.

Again, we will get to AYDC in a moment.

I understand that the special care packages do need to be funded. We do need to ask ourselves why we are having increasing numbers of children requiring special care packages. That indicates to me there are more children coming into our out-of-home care system and that those children are probably in categories more difficult to meet their needs. In terms of their age, they are likely to be potentially older children who cannot necessarily be placed with foster care families. There might be children who have particular kinds of higher needs because of either vulnerabilities they have themselves, potentially impact of trauma they have experienced in their lives, leading to particular challenging behaviours. There are all sorts of reasons a child might need a special care package and we should provide them when needed.

I support the appropriation for that. I think the member for Elwick spoke about this quite effectively. Unless we are also asking ourselves what is driving these increased costs, we are not responsibly managing this budget.

I would be very interested to hear from the government and appreciate we have only Treasury advisers here today, not the policy advisers from these other departments where these appropriations are being made for. No doubt, during budget time there will be an effective questioning happening to dig into this a bit more to see particularly what is forecast in our next state budget given the things that this appropriation is dealing with: increasing numbers and cost.

Special care packages are an important element of our out-of-home care system. They are also probably the way we will end up dealing with or supporting kids who should not be, for example, in AYDC on remand. Unsentenced children in AYDC is absolutely unnecessary. We should be able to support them in our community in much more appropriate home-like settings that would often look something like a special care package.

This is absolutely a model of care for highly vulnerable, high-needs kids who require us to provide support and we are likely to see arrangements in place, as we move, I hope very soon, to close the Ashley Youth Detention Centre, particularly for children who are not yet sentenced, on remand, and should be as close to the community and supported as effectively within the community as we can manage. Because that is what the evidence tells us will assist them to change their trajectory rather than incarcerating them in what we know to be a highly dangerous environment, at high risk of being abused, certainly a criminogenic environment which is much more likely to send them into our adult justice and corrections system. I am

hoping we will see arrangements similar to our special care packages in place soon for children who we would otherwise now be seeing in AYDC.

I note the appropriation for the Advice and Referral Line, and that was another interesting one, because there has been what sounds like a very significant increase in calls to that line. Of course, that is something that we could and should have anticipated, absolutely, because as others have mentioned, we have had the commission of inquiry, which has meant that there is more awareness in this space. There are people behaving and reporting more appropriately than we previously had, and that would increase calls to this line in a positive way. We also brought in our reportable conduct scheme which now requires people to make reports on a range of issues that are much more clearly articulated under that scheme. I am surprised that there would have been such a significant underestimation of what was going to be needed on that line.

Apparently, this appropriation is for 23 additional staff, 10 in the department, 11 in the NGO sector, bringing the total to 115 FTEs. Now, 23 is a really high proportion of what would previously have been 92 FTEs, presumably. So, adding 23 to 92 is a really large proportion of that original number being added. This sounds like a really serious underestimation, which makes me wonder whether it was deliberately an underestimation or slippery numbers in the budget potentially. The call rate to that line is very high. We certainly know that it is a challenging area to work in. These staff will be under the pump by the sound of it in terms of the number of calls they are taking. We want to support them well in that job. It is an important role that they are playing. It is very positive that we are increasing the staffing to a level that is needed. I will be very interested to know whether this will adequately meet the need in that area. Again, that is something we cannot interrogate today, but we will be able to interrogate it during budget Estimates time.

I feel concerned about the out-of-home care system and that starts from the Advice and Referral Line, which then flows through into our child safety system, then flowing through into our out-of-home care system. That side of the commission of inquiry was a little bit less well discussed subsequent to the commission's report coming out. There is a lot of focus on the youth justice side of things and we talked about the health system and the education system. We have talked less about our child safety system and our out-of-home care system and I actually think there is still an entirely inadequate approach there and funding available through the department into that system. We will be looking to see what the state Budget brings with it for those working in that system.

I am interested in the fact that we are still pouring money into the Ashley Youth Detention Centre, another \$4.14 million here in this appropriation on top of what we are already pouring into that system. This is just the additional bit and a whole bunch of this is for staffing costs and many of those are to do with backfilling the people who are on long-term leave because of allegations that have yet to be addressed. This is utterly unacceptable, both for those staff themselves and also for the Tasmanian people in terms of accountability. If those are allegations that are upheld and warranted, then my goodness - we have had some people now on full pay for probably nearly five years, I would not be surprised. Absolutely shocking. What an appalling indictment on us and a ridiculous use of taxpayer money to be in this situation. People need to either be held to account or have things resolved, both for confidence from the community but also for those individuals. The fact that we are having to appropriate more money to keep backfilling - presumably we are having to do this extra appropriation for that purpose because it was anticipated that during this financial year those cases would have been

resolved, of staff on very long-term leave because of allegations. It is clearly still dragging on. Here we are, with millions more pouring into that space. Utterly ridiculous.

For the record, with \$4.14 million, a special care package is about \$750,000, so we could fund probably five special care packages with that. That would probably take a good chunk of the kids on remand out of Ashley right now. We could take them out and put this \$4.14 million into special care packages for them. We could immediately reduce their personal risk of harm, which they are in right now in Ashley, and also reduce the risk that they will become entrenched in our criminal justice system and go on to the adult criminal justice system. This is a saving that is ultimately a huge saving for us as a community, and an incredibly important change of trajectory for those young people and children as individuals.

I would much rather we were spending \$4.14 million on getting unsentenced kids on remand out of Ashley Youth Detention Centre right now and putting them into our community properly supported, instead of having to continue to pay the wages of staff who have been left far too long with allegations hanging over their head, with that potential for lack of accountability or unaccountability there on behalf of the Tasmanian people, if they have in fact done the things that they have been alleged to have done.

That is an area that will always be of interest to me, until we have resolved it and until that centre is closed once and for all. This should have been by the end of last year if we had gone by the initial promise of the premier of the day, who announced it would be closed. We are still pouring millions and millions of dollars into it. Utterly unacceptable. We could be dealing with it in the community right now.

There are not many other areas that I wanted to speak about, other than to make mention, as I have heard other members talking about, of the appropriation for severe weather events and the responses that were needed there. It is interesting to hear people reflect that this is something that we could not have predicted. In fact, we are in a time of climate change crisis. We cannot pretend that we are surprised anymore by severe weather events when they occur. They are actually business as usual now in where we are at with climate change. We should absolutely be expecting to have to deal with severe weather events on a regular basis, on an annual basis in some way, shape or form. If that is not something that we are building into our state budgeting situation every year, what on earth are we doing? How far into the sand have we shoved our heads?

Yes, you cannot necessarily know exactly what severe weather event might crop up each year. We will not be able to predict it 100 per cent, but we can be very sure that we will regularly face such events.

It is going to be interesting to scrutinise what is being budgeted for when state budget time comes around again. If an expectation is not built into our state budget for the next financial year that there will be a necessity to deal with a severe weather event of some sort, then I think that will show not just neglect but absolute wilful ignorance on the part of the state government to accept the climate change situation we are in and the fact that severe weather events are not acts of God and they are not unpredictable things that crop up once in a blue moon or once every 10 years. We do not have 1-in-20-year storms anymore. We have them coming regularly. Some other states are far worse off with this than we are. I think we are actually relatively mild in terms of the impacts we feel here compared to some of our northern states. My goodness, this is not an unusual thing for us to be planning in our bottom line in our

state budget every year, rather than having to appropriate for it in an ad hoc fashion through things like this supplementary appropriation bill.

Those were probably the key things I wanted to pick up on. I was in agreement with many of the comments and the observations made by others in more detail on some of those other areas. I also do not like corporate welfare in this state. It occurs far too much. I actually find it offensive that we might be spending \$10 million on corporate welfare here, \$10 million there. At the same time, that very same quantum of money, \$10 million, let us say, as a round figure, could be something that funds our Integrity Commission to do its statutory role, the job that we intend it to do. It could fund our Tasmanian NPM and our OPCAT role, to do the job it has to do - \$10 million could cover those two quite nicely.

If what we valued in this state was, rather than helping out corporate mates, oversight bodies for human rights in places of detention, or for integrity of our public service and our political landscape, then we would be funding those two entities properly from the get-go, rather than giving nice sweet deals to people who happen to be able to have dinner with us every now and then.

Recognition of Visitors

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, I welcome to the Legislative Council Chamber today some of our local government mayors, who are guests of the Minister for Local Government. Greg Kaiser, Mick Tucker, Mary Knowles, Lou Triffitt and Wayne Johnston are joining us today to check us out and see what we get up to.

We are debating the supplementary appropriation at the moment. You will all have a fairly good understanding of the need for more money to keep things rolling along. I know that all members will welcome you here today. I hope you enjoy your time in this Chamber. I believe you are going to the other place a bit later, where it is bound to be a bit wilder than it is here. Welcome to the Chamber. It is great to see you all.

Members - Hear, hear.

[3.13 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I have quite a lengthy response here. A lot of the conversation has been around the financial difficulties that we have. I have some overarching comments to make before I drill down into a lot of the specific questions, if you will bear with me.

The bill reflects the government's ongoing commitment to ensuring Tasmania remains resilient, responsive and forward-focused in meeting the needs of the people. The supplementary appropriations outlined in this bill are about making responsible adjustments to support critical areas of our economy and essential services. We recognise that challenges arise, but our focus remains on ensuring Tasmania continues to grow and thrive.

The government recognises that we have a challenging budget task. As we shape the upcoming budget, we do so with a deep sense of responsibility, but with optimism. The government is committed to ensuring every dollar spent builds a better future for all Tasmanians, creating opportunities for family, businesses and communities.

We are on a clear and measured pathway to surplus, one that prioritises stability, economic growth, and the wellbeing of every Tasmanian. We are adopting an approach that is thoughtful, ensuring that jobs remain secure, businesses remain confident and strong, and we provide the highest quality essential services. We will continue to grow our economy, deliver intergenerational infrastructure, and meet our responsibilities and challenges. Our finances reflect the investments that we have made to keep Tasmania safe, our economy strong, and Tasmanians in jobs.

It also reflects our commitment of righting the wrongs of the past by implementing the commission of inquiry recommendations in full, and compensating victims of shocking historic abuse in this state for the past 40 years.

We also acknowledge our \$2 billion investment in the people of Tasmania during COVID, which were exceptional circumstances, which we have to pay back over the coming years.

Our investment in intergenerational infrastructure, essential services and economic development are making Tasmania an even better place to live and work and raise a family. Our state is growing and with it we are seeing more opportunities, more innovation and more prosperity.

The government is focused on what matters most to Tasmanians, which of course is the cost of living, health, education and creating the best environment for Tasmanian businesses to invest.

Today, our economy is as strong as it has ever been, with gross state product at \$40.6 billion.

We are proud to report that Tasmania's unemployment rate remains at an extraordinary low of 4 per cent. It is a record run of over three years at or below 4.2 per cent. This demonstrates the success of our economic strategy in creating new job opportunities for Tasmanians. In fact, Tasmania leads the nation in wage growth, recording an impressive 3.9 per cent growth in 2024, far outstripping the national average of 3.2 per cent.

The retail trade is also at an all-time high with January retail figures reaching \$742 million. This is a clear indication our economy is thriving and that Tasmanians are benefitting from the work the government has put in over the years.

I will now turn to the questions of members.

The cost of providing health services is being felt across all Australian jurisdictions. We have seen this with the increasing costs of locums and other agency staff, so the challenges of recruiting permanent staff still exist.

The breakdown of the \$345 million supplementary appropriation for health is estimated to consist of:

- Salaries and wages - medical practitioners - \$51 million
- Salaries and wages for nurses - \$28 million
- Agency nurses - \$104 million

Medical locums - \$94 million
Salaries and wages (that is other - allied health and the like) - \$26 million
Medical, surgical and pharmacy supplies - \$19 million
Externally contracted services - \$20 million
Agency staff and other - \$3 million.

Ms Rattray - There is possibly a large number of those people you have just outlined there who would like a permanent contract position.

Mrs HISCUTT - I do not know. That may be the case, but they get more money if they do not do that. We would encourage it too.

Ms Rattray - My point is we need to work on that.

Mrs HISCUTT - Most of the estimated additional cost for medical practitioners and nurses is for additional positions where there is no recurrent funding. I am also advised the overtime rate for medical practitioners was approximately 6 per cent and for nurses was approximately 3.6 per cent in 2023-24. Assuming the same percentages, the overtime component of the \$51 million for medical practitioners would be estimated at around a maximum of \$3 million. The overtime component for nurses would be estimated at a maximum of \$1 million.

As mentioned, the majority of the cost is for medical staff where there is no recurrent funding. That said, we want healthcare professionals to come to Tasmania and to stay in Tasmania.

Ms Rattray - But not at any cost. If you cannot afford to have something.

Mrs HISCUTT - It might be supply and demand.

Ms Rattray - We all know that. You just cannot pay them willy-nilly.

Mrs HISCUTT - And not have them?

Mr President, I will continue. The Department of Treasury and Finance is working hard with the Department of Health to ensure the 2025-26 Budget reflects the appropriate level of expenditure, recognising the agency must be looking at ways to deliver efficiencies, but also to ensure realistic expenditure that ensures we can deliver health services to our community.

Ms Rattray - Hear, hear.

Mrs HISCUTT - The Dolphin Tungsten mine on King Island is a vital economic driver for the region. In 2020, we approved a \$10 million loan to assist in restarting operations, ensuring jobs and prosperity for the local community. Since then, Group 6 Metals has faced challenges in stabilising operations.

To safeguard this investment and support the company's turnaround plan, the bill converts the loan to an equity stake. That is a stake. Group 6 Metals were paying interest. Group 6 Metals were also paying interest only until mid-2024, at which time they started experiencing financial challenges. No capital repayment has been made. The loan agreement had originally

planned for capital repayments to commence from the 2024-25 financial year, but at this time it was recognised that the loan was unlikely to be paid back unless the mine was open and producing. It has subsequently been agreed that all outstanding capital and interest will convert to equity and give the company a chance to improve the mine, rather than write the debt off straightaway. The equity contribution also recognises the impact the mine has had to the King Island community and that this will support approximately 65 existing direct jobs.

Ms Rattray - What is the extra \$500,000 for if the company has already been paying interest only on the loan?

Mrs HISCUTT - I will seek that advice when I am finished here.

Ms Rattray - It was indicated that was for interest.

Mrs HISCUTT - Yes. It is important to note the \$30 million is expected to be returned to the government in royalties and other payments. The current life of the mine is anticipated until 2036, with significant potential for extension through expansion. This funding ensures a continued commitment to Tasmania's mining sector and King Island's economic future.

Tasmania's tourism and hospitality sectors are also the lifeblood our economy, supporting thousands of jobs and businesses across the state. We know the delays in launching the new *Spirit of Tasmania* vessel has presented challenges, which is why the government is taking strong decisive action to support the industry during this period.

The Premier has announced a comprehensive support package designed to boost visitor numbers and provide relief to businesses impacted by these delays. Over the next two years, this funding will drive demand, stimulate our tourism sector and ensure that when the new vessels arrive, Tasmania is ready to make the most of them. A key part of this package is a \$6 million investment to subsidise passenger fares on the existing *Spirit of Tasmania* vessel. By reducing fares during peak periods and throughout winter, we will make it more affordable for visitors to come and experience all our great state has to offer.

Ms Rattray - So, why is part of that funding not in the next budget? Why is it a supplementary appropriation?

Mrs HISCUTT - I may be able to get a response to that when I am finished here. Additional day sailings will also be introduced for April, September and October in 2025, making it even easier for travellers to visit Tasmania and support local businesses. Our tourism and hospitality sector, particularly in the north and the north-west, is the backbone of our visitor economy. As we look ahead to the to the launch of these state-of-the-art ships, we are taking strong action to ensure businesses and communities are ready to welcome more visitors than ever before. At the same time, local councils will be supported in delivering key infrastructure projects that improve the visitor experience and prepare for increased demand.

Under the \$5 million Spirit Preparedness Fund, businesses can apply for grants between \$50,000 and \$250,000, while local councils will have access to grants of between \$100,000 and \$500,000.

Importantly, these investments will directly contribute to the visitor economy, ensuring Tasmania continues to grow as a premier travel destination. We are also working closely with

the Tourism Industry Council Tasmania, providing additional funding to equip tourism operators with the tools they need to capitalise on the opportunities these new vessels will bring. These initiatives are about more than just getting through this delay, it is about strengthening our position so that when the new *Spirits* are ready to set sail, our tourism and hospitality sectors are primed for success.

Tasmania has always been a destination of choice and we are committed to making sure it stays that way. Through strategic investment and strong leadership, we will continue to support our tourism operators, grow our economy and ensure Tasmania remains one of the most sought-after travel destinations in the country.

Similarly, Tasmania's wine industry is internationally recognised and our government is committed to its ongoing success. During the 2024 election, we pledged two separate funding commitments to Wine Tasmania. Due to an oversight, one of these commitments was not initially built into the Budget. The allocation was not funded from the Treasurer's Reserve, as the expenditure is for a new purpose and therefore it is not a line item to RAF against. With this bill, we ensure that Tasmania's wine industry receives the full support it needs to expand into new export markets and promote our exceptional wines both domestically and internationally.

Tasmania's prison system has seen a steady increase in prisoner numbers, rising by 30 per cent over the past six years. While COVID-19 temporarily affected prisoner management, long-term impacts on staffing and operational costs remain. This bill provides essential funding to support the safe and effective management of our prisons, ensuring we maintain high standards of rehabilitation and security for the community.

The wellbeing of Tasmanian workers is a priority. The bill includes funding to cover the increasing costs of workers compensation, driven by a rise in cases, particularly psychological claims. With psychological claims costing significantly more than other workplace injuries, we are ensuring that injured workers receive the support that they need while maintaining financial responsibility.

The Advice and Referral Line has been under pressure in recent years. We have seen large increases in call rates. Over the past two years, the line has experienced approximately 25 per cent increase in calls opened. The 23 additional FTEs represents an increase of approximately 29 per cent of the total FTEs in the Advice and Referral Line.

Recognition of Visitors

[3.27 p.m.]

Mr PRESIDENT - While the member has a drink, I welcome another group joining us today from Deloraine Primary School. They are joining us to see proceedings in the Legislative Council Chamber. All the members here represent different bits of Tasmania, and your local member is the member for McIntyre - that is the name of the division in the Legislative Council seats. We are currently debating whether to give the government some more money or not. At the moment the Leader of Government Business is answering questions. Welcome to the Legislative Council and we hope you enjoy your day in the parliament.

Members - Hear, hear.

Mrs HISCUTT - Mr President, I was talking about the Advice and Referral Line and the 23 additional FTEs that were there. It is an increase of approximately 29 per cent. This takes the current FTEs to 101. I have been advised that the 12 departmental staff are permanent positions. However, the staffing levels will not always be permanently filled. With this area facing difficulties in recruiting staff, it is not the case that extra staff are recruited on the basis of being fixed-term. Moving forward, the government is committed to ensuring that the services are provided with appropriate ongoing levels of funding to meet the demand.

I have also been advised that the budget amount for special care packages in out-of-home care for 2024-25 is \$58.6 million and, to 28 February 2025, the special care package budget is \$10.6 million overspent, which is being driven by increasing numbers and complexity of cases. The salary saving of \$3.6 million is a high-level estimate across the children and family portfolios extrapolated to 30 June 2025.

As members have highlighted here today and yesterday, TasRail plays a crucial role in our state's transport infrastructure, but financial challenges have emerged. While efforts are underway to enhance operational efficiency, external market forces limit revenue growth. This bill provides \$8 million to ensure TasRail's ongoing financial sustainability, protecting jobs and maintaining reliable rail services across Tasmania.

This supplementary appropriation bill demonstrates our government's commitment to supporting Tasmania's economy, strengthening essential services.

The entire appropriation of \$467,512,000 will be funded from borrowings. At the time of the Revised Estimates Report in February 2025, the Public Account estimated outcome at 30 June 2025 is forecast to be a deficit of \$2.144 billion.

The government remains committed to prudent financial management while ensuring Tasmania continues to be a great place to live, work and to do business. We are confident in Tasmania's future. We have a clear plan, responsible financial management and a vision for long-term success, and we are building a state that is stronger, more prosperous, and full of opportunity.

Ms O'Connor - Leader, I apologise, I missed the first part of that answer. Did that go to whether the supplementary appropriation funds were borrowings?

Mrs HISCUTT - Yes. I shall read the paragraph again.

The entire appropriation of \$467,512,000 will be funded from borrowings. At the time of the Revised Estimates Report in February 2025, the Public Account estimated outcome at 30 June 2025 is forecast to be a deficit of \$2.144 billion.

The rest here that we are talking about, things that we are doing to enable business to continue and to be a good place - the cutting of red tape and the resizing of the State Service is all going to save money, implementing an efficiency and productivity unit, and reforming our government businesses, which we discussed yesterday.

Mr President, I believe I do have some more questions to answer.

Mr Gaffney - You did mention something about intergenerational -

Mrs HISCUTT - Debt?

Mr Gaffney - Yes.

Mrs HISCUTT - Intergenerational infrastructure.

Mr Gaffney - I thought it was debt. Thank you.

Mrs HISCUTT - I will seek those answers.

I will finish up with the two comments from the member for McIntyre.

Ms Rattray - Well, they were questions, not comments.

Mrs HISCUTT - I have some answers for your questions.

The \$500,000 for the Dolphin Tungsten Mine reflects the interest incurred between mid-2024 and now.

The expenditure relating to the Tourism and Hospitality item is required in 2024-25 due to the timing of the expenditure, for example, the additional day sailings in the 2024-25 peak period. The *Spirit* package is for \$6 million in 2024-25, so \$1.5 million has been funded from the 2030 Visitor Economy Strategy but a gap of \$4.5 million remains, which comprises \$3.5 million for State Growth and \$1 million for Tasmanian tourism.

Ms Rattray - You indicated in your contribution that it was August, September and October, from memory, that this money was going to be used for day sailing, so why is it in the forward Estimates?

Mrs HISCUTT - I can get comment on that.

Ms Rattray - Also, why are we using a supplementary appropriation for it?

Mrs HISCUTT - I will get a comment.

Just to clarify, it was part of a package. It was part of the \$6 million package that has been invested to subsidise passenger fares. There was some here at this particular date and some at the next particular date. So, it is part of a package.

Bill read the second time.

APPROPRIATION (SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION FOR 2024-25) BILL 2025 (No. 1)

In Committee

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - While we are getting settled, it is lovely to see another class of the Deloraine Primary School here with us today and I am very proud to be your representative, so enjoy your time.

Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to.

Clause 4 -

Issue, application and appropriation of \$467,512,000

Mrs HISCUTT - I move -

That clause 4 be postponed.

Clause 4 postponed.

Clause 5 -

Purposes of appropriation

Mrs HISCUTT - I move -

That clause 5 be postponed.

Clause 5 postponed.

Clause 6 agreed to.

Schedule 1 -

Item 1: Department for Education, Children and Young People
Minister for Children and Youth Operating Services

Item agreed to.

Item 2: Finance General
Minister for Finance
Operating Services

Item agreed to.

Item 3: Department of Health
Minister for Health
Operating Services

Item agreed to.

Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing
Operating Services

Item agreed to.

Item 4: Department of Justice
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice
Operating Services

Item agreed to.

Minister for Corrections and Rehabilitation

Item agreed to.

Item 5: Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania

Minister for Parks

Operating Services

Item agreed to.

Item 6: Department of Police, Fire & Emergency Management

Minister for Police, Fire & Emergency Management

Operating Services

Item agreed to.

Item 7: Department of Premier and Cabinet

Premier

Operating Services

Item agreed to.

Item 8: Department of State Growth

Minister for Infrastructure

Operating Services

Item agreed to.

Minister for Tourism

Operating Services

Item agreed to.

Minister for Trade and Major Investment

Operating Services

Item agreed to.

Minister for Housing, Planning and Consumer Affairs

Operating Services

Item agreed to.

Item 9: Tourism Tasmania

Minister for Tourism

Operating expenses

Item agreed to.

Schedule 1 agreed to without request.

Clause 4 agreed to.

Clause 5 agreed to.

Title of the bill agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and without request.

[3.42 p.m.]

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

That the third reading of the bill be made an Order of the Day for tomorrow.

Motion agreed to.

**DISABILITY RIGHTS, INCLUSION AND SAFEGUARDING
(TRANSITIONAL AND CONSEQUENTIAL PROVISIONS) BILL 2025 (No. 8)**

Second Reading

[3.43 p.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears - Minister for Disability Services) - Mr President, I move -

That the bill be now read the second time.

Mr President, the purpose of this bill is to amend certain acts and legislation to put in place transitional and consequential arrangements in relation to the *Disability Rights, Inclusion and Safeguarding Act 2024*.

I could not have been prouder to be a member of the Legislative Council than I was last year when we came together in this House to pass the most significant piece of disability legislation our community has seen in over a decade. I sincerely wish to again thank all members for their constructive collaboration.

This bill is the next important step and will commence on the same day as the *Disability Rights, Inclusion and Safeguarding Act 2024*.

The bill makes provision for transition from the *Disability Services Act 2011*, which will be repealed upon commencement of the *Disability Rights, Inclusion and Safeguarding Act 2024*. This includes transitional provisions in relation to:

- transition of approvals, determinations, delegations or directions made by the former Senior Practitioner to the new Senior Practitioner.
- Arrangements for annual reporting by the former Senior Practitioner, the preservation of approvals for restrictive practices so that they can continue

to be enforced after the commencement of the new act on the same terms and conditions.

- The treatment of applications for approval of restrictive practices which are in progress on the day of commencement of the new act.
- The treatment of any reviews by the Secretary, Tribunal and Magistrates Court which are in progress on the day of commencement of the new act.
- The treatment of information provided under the former act.

Part 3 through to Part 11 of the bill provide for consequential amendments to other legislation. In most instances, this is a change from the *Disability Services Act 2011* to the *Disability Rights, Inclusion and Safeguarding Act 2024*.

Changes are also made where the interpretation of certain terms has been updated in the new legislation - for example, disability service provider.

Changes are made to the *Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2020*, which previously referred to restrictive intervention within the meaning of the *Disability Services Act 2011* and is changed to the updated definition of 'restrictive practice' included in the new act.

Part 11 outlines changes to the *Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2020* which reflect the change in pathway for approval of restrictive practices to the new Senior Practitioner established in the *Disability Rights, Inclusion and Safeguarding Act 2024*. These changes also reflect the creation of the external review function within TASCAT.

Mr President, I commend the bill to the House.

[3.46 p.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Mr President, I extend my thanks to the minister for bringing on this very important bill today and know how hard she, her staff, department and those who helped form the policies underpinning this bill have worked.

Following the passing of the *Disability Rights, Inclusion and Safeguarding Act 2024*, we saw in parliament the resounding support for the bill, the policies and thus those in our community who live with disabilities and those who support them. It is not necessary to revisit the sentiments we made then, but it is important to note that people with disabilities should enjoy all human rights, and to that end, to make sure they are treated with dignity, kindness, respect and provided with every opportunity to make their contribution and mark in the world.

As the minister stated, this bill is the next step on the journey. Its purpose is to amend certain acts and legislation to put in place transitional and consequential arrangements in relation to the main bill which was passed last year. Essentially, this bill makes provision for transition from the *Disability Services Act* and includes transitional provisions relating to the duties of the senior practitioner, rules around restrictive practices, the treatment of any reviews by the Secretary, Tribunal and Magistrates Court, and the treatment of information provided under the former act.

These are necessary bits and pieces in need of legislative change, but what is ultimately being done here is the implementation of the *Disability Rights, Inclusion and Safeguarding Act* and the policies of underpinning it. I know how important this bill is to the minister and I want to note I stand behind her 100 per cent on these matters and consequently stand behind every person who has a vested interest in the implementation of this bill.

We see you, we hear you and we want this to make a difference for you. I thank the minister and note my support of the bill.

[3.48 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Hobart) - That was a lovely contribution member for Launceston, and it goes to that old saying, there is no such thing as a bad short speech.

Mr President, the Greens will be proud to support the Disability Rights, Inclusion and Safeguarding (Transitional and Consequential Provisions) Bill 2025. I also warmly commend the best disability minister we have had in at least a decade, Ms Palmer, the member for Rosevears, for her passionate determination, working with the wonderful people who she works with in the agency. These are advisers who have deep knowledge in this area of public policy and it shows in the legislation the House passed last year.

The legislation that is before us today, as the minister and the member for Launceston have pointed out, has consequential amendments that are not particularly substantive, although primarily, through the bill, you will see it is replacing the old act, the *Disability Service Act 2011*, with the *Disability Rights, Inclusion and Safeguarding Act 2024*. There are some extra provisions that have been included in this bill that will strengthen the act we passed last year on the Senior Practitioner role, the making of regulations and the like.

One of the things particularly important to remind ourselves as we debate this bill, mindful of the bill, the principal act, is we here in Tasmania are actually going against a political trend happening in some countries around the world where diversity, equity and inclusion have become dirty words, where there is deliberate government policy, in the United States for example, to make society less inclusive to pretty much everyone except white men. Of course, a society that is genuinely inclusive and protects the rights of all its citizens, no matter their gender, race, religion, beliefs, whether they are employed or not and all of those other attributes under the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998*, is a healthier and happier society.

If your metric is the economy alone, it makes for a stronger economy. When you tap into all the knowledge, skills, capacity and the will of your people, then you are making for a stronger community and economy. That is a foundational principle in the *Disability Rights, Inclusion and Safeguarding Act 2024*. It makes me really proud as a Tasmanian and as a Tasmanian legislator to see that both Houses of this parliament and a conservative government are not only prepared to stand by diversity, equity, and inclusion, but puts its money where its mouth is in relation to people with disability. These are those moments that we have in parliament that are perhaps too rare, when we all agree on the soundness of the approach.

I did want to highlight - it would be negligent if I did not - that there are other outstanding matters in this area. We have commitments we made under the optional protocol against torture and cruel and inhuman treatment. We have a statutory body in the National Preventive Mechanism that is manifestly underfunded to perform its statutory roles to go into places where people are confined or deprived of their liberty to prevent harm. There are people with disability, Tasmanians with disability, who either in their workplace or where they live, can be

deprived of their liberty and have their rights not upheld and protected. No government, no service provider, no system can have its eyes everywhere all the time. We learn that through bitter and tragic experience in child safety.

I implore this good-hearted minister to advocate, as a number of members in this place have and in the other place, and on committees, to make sure the National Preventive Mechanism is properly funded to do the job that parliament requires it to do. Evidence that has come before a parliamentary committee confirms it is not possible on the level of funding that the National Preventive Mechanism has been provided with. As we understand it, that critical entity has not been able to investigate, to go out into places where people may be deprived of their liberty to determine whether or not that person is being subjected to cruel and inhuman treatment or torture. The principles in the *Disability Rights, Inclusion and Safeguarding Act 2024* are absolutely right, rock-solid and necessary. We needed legislation like this that lifted the human rights of people with disability. We now need to match that with a commitment from government to make sure that those statutory entities - which are all part of an interconnected network of protection of marginalised people, protection of young people in Ashley Youth Detention Centre, for example - are enabled to do the work that they need to do. We have a long and sorry history in this state, reaching back more than a century, of putting people out of sight and mind - in places that you know well, like Willow Court at New Norfolk, like Ashley Youth Detention Centre, like Millbrook Rise, all sorts of places where, as a state, it was considered appropriate and at some level necessary to lock people away, deprive them completely of their rights, give them no voice, and provide them with no advocacy and no statutorily protective structures like we have in place now.

We have learned from our history, I hope. Not to the extent, of course, that we need to, to protect the rights of all our citizens. As a state we have been through the traumatic experience of the commission of inquiry, where it became clear to the broad Tasmanian community - and this is on no political party or government - that the state of Tasmania had been responsible for perpetuating harm against children and young people and against people with disability.

We know full well that it is one thing for there to be a piece of legislation that requires we respect and protect children and young people, people with disability, older people, or people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. We have some wonderful pieces of legislation on the statutes here, like the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998*, and like the principal act that we are debating today. We need that protective architecture through the statutory bodies that parliament has given approval to, to be strengthened and properly funded.

In good spirit, I ask the minister to take this up again with her colleagues in Cabinet. It is unacceptable that we would have these obligations under OPCAT and establish a National Preventive Mechanism, and not provide the funding that enables the NPM to do its job on behalf of all Tasmanians, any Tasmanian who may be deprived of their rights and liberty and be unable because of their circumstance to advocate for themselves or to find a way to safety. I hope that the minister takes up that lack of funding.

Ultimately, of course, what we need to see here in our community is a human rights act for Tasmania. We have recognised through the *Disability Rights, Inclusion and Safeguarding Act 2024* that the human rights of our citizens need to be lifted up in legislation. We have an opportunity, particularly in the make-up of the parliament that we have now, to uplift and strengthen the rights of all Tasmanians.

Sitting suspended from 4.00 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.

**DISABILITY RIGHTS, INCLUSION AND SAFEGUARDING
(TRANSITIONAL AND CONSEQUENTIAL PROVISIONS) BILL 2025 (No. 8)**

Second Reading

Resumed from above.

[4.31 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Hobart) - Mr President, I was just about to finish a sentence to say it is really important that we have a human rights act for Tasmania and that we lift up the rights of all our citizens, no matter what their background, because that makes us a stronger and happier community.

[4.31 p.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Mr President, I am really happy to be getting up to speak about this bill and it will be very brief, and I appreciate contribution from other members. I particularly appreciate and concur with the minister's sentiments when she did the second reading speech, that this is a wonderful way to be completing good work that we did last year in this place where we passed the *Disability Rights, Inclusion and Safeguarding Act* and worked in a collegial way, a respectful way and a very inclusive way with stakeholders. As the minister said, I too was really pleased to be part of that process and to see how that worked. I thank the minister again for the briefing and for the work that has been done by her office and the departmental staff to continue to make sure that when we have things come into play with the new act that, as per these transitional consequential arrangements, everything works well and as it should under the new bill.

This bill is quite straightforward. It is making sure that what flows from the changes made under last year's bill will actually occur as planned and to tidy up language and references in various pieces of legislation. There is nothing complex about that. I certainly reached out to stakeholders just to check that there were no concerns or questions or anything about this bill that needed to be raised and heard from everyone. No big tick. Very happy to see it continuing to do this good work.

I really appreciate the member for Hobart's contribution just now making a connection across the idea of rights protections that is picked up on by this work in this space. We do know that while the bill we passed here last year deals with the restrictive practice, in some sense, we have further pieces of work to do in that space. We know that restrictive practices occur not just in relation to disability type situations and services, but also in the mental health space, in the health space, in the aged care space, even in the education space, youth justice space, and certainly any incarceration spaces.

Often people do not think of the restrictive practice or being used in non-detention, not officially detention environments, but health, aged care, mental health care, disability, all those are areas where restrictive practices can occur. I think we do need to be turning our minds to how we manage that in an explicitly rights-based way, a cohesive and consistent way across all those spaces.

We do look ahead to that, and that certainly does link back to then the really important work that there is still to be done in this state around the human rights act, which is something that I speak about here regularly and will always continue to advocate for until we have it. We will end up with a human rights act or similar in this state, and it will be the primary safeguard

of rights that we can draw from, that we can refer to, that we can hold to account against, and that becomes the reference point for any piece of policy or legislative work done by any government of the day that has reference to or a relationship to rights issues. When we have that in place, we will know that we have that anchor there as the guardian of our fellow Tasmanians' human rights. That is a particularly important thing to have for Tasmanians who are our most vulnerable, who are least likely to have a voice, and who are in particular need of those sorts of protections.

Even with important foundational pieces of legislation, like the primary legislation that this bill relates to, but also things like, ultimately, a human rights act, those foundational pieces of legislation are important and good. We also need the oversight bodies and mechanisms to be able to ensure that what happens in practice in our state actually measures up to what is legislated and what we want to see occurring. Oversight bodies such as our Custodial Inspector, Integrity Commission, Ombudsman, and Tasmanian NPM are all important oversight bodies that look at the matter of rights. We need to make sure that they are adequately funded to do their roles. Whenever we have an opportunity to highlight that in this place, we should. Thank you to the member for Hobart for mentioning these already. This is something that needs to be reminded at all times.

We are approaching another state budget next month. If we were to see in this state budget that is coming up another absolute slap in the face to our rights-based oversight bodies in this state, that would be an appalling indictment on this government. That would be an explicit rejection by this Rockliff Liberal government of actually undertaking its responsibilities to ensure that Tasmanian citizens are protected by oversight bodies that are funded to do their job. This is really a line in the sand moment. We have raised it consistently, many in this place and many in the community. The oversight bodies themselves, in these last 12 months, have raised the fact that they are not funded to undertake the roles that they are required to undertake under statute. If that were to continue into our next budgetary period, that is the Rockliff Liberal government and every member of it spitting in the face of appropriate oversight of Tasmanians' rights and of ensuring that we as a state have the right protections in place, particularly for vulnerable Tasmanians.

Let us be very explicit about that. I definitely want to have that on the record today as we look ahead to the state budget next month. Having said that, coming back to this bill and this process, it is good to acknowledge the positive progress we are making. Thank you to the minister. Thank you to the staff. I certainly support the bill.

[4.38 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre) - I have a feeling that the government is on notice from the honourable member for Nelson.

Ms Webb - Absolutely. Always.

Ms RATTRAY - There are plenty of those aspects that the member spoke about that are supported by other members in this place.

Mr President, a brief offering, because it is such an important piece of legislation. I just really wanted to congratulate, as others have, the Minister for Disability Services and her team that have been part of bookending the principal act with this transitional and consequential provisions bill that we had before us. In the briefing this morning, which is very much

appreciated, I made the comment that these are really transitional arrangements. When you go to the supporting information, that is exactly what it is. They are transitional arrangements in relation to the *Disability Rights, Inclusion and Safeguarding Act 2024*. We put so much time and effort into it because it was required.

The one area I asked a couple of questions about was clause 5, on the new Senior Practitioner and the obligations for an annual report. I made a comment that annual reports are always important to this place. The intention is to give us a really clear understanding of what is occurring. That is particularly what we would be interested in here. I was given the information this annual report will be a transition between the current arrangements for annual reporting and the new Senior Practitioner will roll into one or the former Senior Practitioner will get together and have a joint annual report. I made the comment that once that has happened, then this clause is effectively redundant, because it is the transitional arrangement. I found it interesting that it would be in legislation, but there was a very good and clear comment made regarding that.

It would be useful to have that on the public record, why that is the case and why it was in legislation. I do not have a lot more to add. I think most of it has been said, particularly by the member for Hobart, who made an excellent contribution to the bill. I was in and out, but I did hear quite a bit of it. I have no hesitation in supporting this legislation and wish the minister and her team all the best.

[4.42 p.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears - Minister for Disability Services) - Mr President, I thank all the members who made a contribution. We are very aware this is an operational bill, but it has come as part of something very special that we all had a role in and it is lovely to see the affection for this legislation in here. Thank you very much for the lovely comments. Not just the comments to me, but this team of women - as the Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence - an amazing team who have been on this journey and it has been an honour to work alongside them. I probably will not get another opportunity to say that in this place. To each one of you, I cannot actually look at you because we have been on a journey together and we have shed tears and really special moments, and a few stressful moments. Of course, Lucy from my office, who has been incredible. Thank you for your recognition of them and all the work that they have done. They are great women. We are so lucky to have them.

Member for Murchison, sorry, McIntyre. I am so sorry -

Ms Rattray - Look, I try to step up when I can and I perhaps have taken the role of the member for Murchison in a couple of positions, but I am still McIntyre. Thank you.

Ms PALMER - I will put on the record now the reference that you made to clause 5. Why is clause 5 in the annual report necessary? Will it not become null and void after the first year? The transitional provisions in legislation are clauses that regulate how a new law comes into effect, ensuring a smooth shift from the old to the new legal framework. In this case, it is to ensure a smooth transition from the *Disability Services Act 2011* to this new legislation.

Clause 5 is necessary to ensure data from the former Senior Practitioner is included in the annual report of the new Senior Practitioner, meaning that there are no gaps, particularly in the reporting of restrictive practices. Capturing this data is an important element in protecting the rights of people with disability. While these transitional and consequential provisions have

been included in the new act itself, because numerous provisions are required, advice from the Office of Parliamentary Counsel was that they should be included in a standalone bill to avoid cluttering the primary act. That is why it is in this legislation. By definition, transitional provisions included in any legislation become void once the transition has occurred; however, they are still necessary to ensure effective legislative change.

Ms Rattray - Who am I to argue with OPC?

Ms PALMER - Indeed. With that explanation and the comments made previously, thank you very much.

Bill read the second time.

**DISABILITY RIGHTS, INCLUSION AND SAFEGUARDING
(TRANSITIONAL AND CONSEQUENTIAL PROVISIONS) BILL 2025 (No. 8)**

In Committee

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 5 agreed to.

Clauses 6 to 8 agreed to.

Clauses 9 and 10 agreed to.

Clauses 11 and 12 agreed to.

Clauses 13 to 15 agreed to.

Clauses 16 and 17 agreed to.

Clauses 18 to 20 agreed to.

Clauses 21 to 23 agreed to.

Clauses 24 and 25 agreed to.

Clauses 26 to 28 agreed to.

Clauses 29 and 30 agreed to.

Clauses 31 and 32 agreed to.

Clauses 33 to 35 agreed to.

Clauses 36 to 38 agreed to.

Clauses 39 and 40 agreed to.

Title of the bill agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment.

[4.52 p.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears - Minister for Disability Services) - Mr President, I move -

That the third reading of the bill be made an Order of the Day for tomorrow.

Motion agreed to.

**ELECTORAL AMENDMENT (ALTERNATIVE VOTING
PROCEDURES) BILL 2025 (No. 4)**

Second Reading

[4.52 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I will read the second reading speech and then adjourn the debate as we have briefings for this bill tomorrow.

Mr President, I move -

That the bill be now read the second time.

This bill proposes amendments to the *Electoral Act 2004* that will enhance Tasmania's access to voting at parliamentary elections. Importantly, these amendments will help ensure that the Tasmanian Electoral Commission (TEC) is able to provide alternative ways to vote, such as telephone voting, for use by electors who are facing accessibility barriers to voting at a polling place or by post. This includes Tasmanians with a print disability, namely people with vision impairment or blindness, physical dexterity difficulties, learning disabilities, brain injuries, dementia, and those with literacy issues.

The advocacy work from disability advocacy organisations and people within the disability community has been instrumental in the development of this bill. Last year, Mr Barnett met with representatives from Blind Citizens Australia and Disability Voices Tasmania who, on behalf of a coalition of people with disability and disability advocates, raised the need for these amendments with the government. We thank them for their valuable input and insights.

Feedback provided during community consultation that occurred in November and December 2024 was supportive of the legislative reform and informed several changes made to the consultation draft of the bill.

The need for these amendments arises because, for Tasmanians with a print disability, voting at a polling place or by post can be very challenging and sometimes impossible. However, the *Electoral Act 2004* currently limits the commission in its ability to provide alternative voting methods such as telephone voting to electors who are unable to vote at a polling place due to reasons of geographical remoteness.

While section 113 of the *Electoral Act 2004* does provide for the approval of procedures to assist electors who are unable to vote without assistance, this only applies to voting at polling places. The Electoral Commission has approved several procedures under the provision, including VI-Vote, a computerised system providing enhanced audio, visual and printing capabilities to ensure independent voting for people with vision impairment or low vision.

The TEC currently provides a telephone voting service under approvals made under sections 131 and 132 of the act. However, only electors in Antarctica, a declared remote area, or outside Tasmania are eligible to vote under systems approved under these provisions.

In developing these amendments, the government has considered the approaches taken in other jurisdictions. All other states and territories allow for some form of electronically assisted voting reserved for use by specified categories of electors, in particular electors with a vision impairment. The approaches across jurisdiction vary considerably, both in terms of how our system is specified and who is entitled to use it.

The approach taken in the bill aligns with the TEC's functions and responsibilities under the *Electoral Act 2004*, which includes approving a range of administrative forms and procedures within legislatively defined principles. In this way, our *Electoral Act* enables the TEC to be responsive and flexible in providing appropriate and contemporary electoral services for Tasmanian electors.

These amendments also preserve the functional independence of the commission, which is a crucial element of our democratic system.

I will now outline the bill's key reforms.

The bill inserts a new Division 9A into the act. This division is based on Division 10 of Part 5 of the act, which enables the TEC to approve procedures to enable voting by electors in Antarctica, remote areas and outside Australia.

The bill enables the commission to approve alternative voting procedures where satisfied electors do not have reasonable opportunity to vote under other provisions of the act. This provision makes clear that the commission can approve procedures for classes of electors, for example those with a print disability.

The amendments also provide the TEC with flexibility to adjust or expand a procedure or voting system as new needs are identified. To help ensure the integrity of any proposed new system, the bill also specifies that before approving procedures, the TEC must be satisfied that any proposed system is practical and secure and can be appropriately resourced. Importantly, the procedures are, as far as practicable, to provide for the authentication of the vote and preserve the secrecy of the electors.

It became evident during consultation that the bill would benefit from providing mechanisms to enable input from advocates and representatives from the disability community and others in the development of alternative voting procedures. The bill addresses this feedback in two ways.

First, the bill makes it clear that an accessibility and inclusion organisation may make a request to the commission regarding the need for alternative voting procedures. 'Accessibility

and inclusion organisations' are defined as organisations or peak bodies that focus on advocacy, support or service for people with diverse needs, or any other group or body approved by the commission.

The commission may also act on its own motion to approve alternative voting procedures, which covers all other circumstances that may arise.

Following on from this, under the proposed new section 130C, the commission is to, where practicable, consult with appropriate accessibility and inclusion organisations in considering and making alternative voting procedures. In this way, the bill recognises the importance of input by disability advocates and other relevant stakeholders into the development of voting options that are designed for their use. Consultation is to occur as far as practicable to ensure the commission can be flexible and responsive, noting that at times an approval may be required as a matter of urgency.

The bill will enable the commission to approve procedures to ensure that votes cast under any alternative voting method are transmitted or forwarded securely for counting. These votes are to be counted with postal votes, which ensures consistency with processes applying to votes cast by electors in Antarctica, remote areas, interstate and overseas.

The amendments could also help protect Tasmanians' access to voting in the event of an unexpected situation impacting regular voting services, such as a natural disaster.

Ms O'Connor - Good planning. That is good.

Mrs HISCUTT - That is nice to hear. Additionally, they recognise that adjustments to an approval due to operational technical constraints may sometimes be necessary to maintain the integrity of an electoral process.

We are pleased to note the commission supports these changes and has indicated that should the amendments be enacted, it anticipates a priority expansion of telephone voting services for electors with a print disability as the initial step in addressing their barriers to voting.

The government is pleased to take this important step towards ensuring that Tasmanians with disability or who may face other accessibility barriers are able to exercise their democratic franchise. I commend the bill to the House.

I move -

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

[5.01 p.m.]

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

That, at its rising, the Council adjourn until 11.00 a.m. on Thursday 3 April 2025.

Motion agreed to.

Mrs HISCUTT - Mr President, as I have just alluded to, the briefings for this particular bill will occur tomorrow morning at 9.30 a.m. in our usual Committee Room 2, followed by departmental briefing and then onto the charities briefing.

Mr President, I move -

That the Council do now adjourn.

Dorset Council By-Election

[5.02 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre) - Mr President, I will not take a lot of members' time. I rise to let members know that it has been 18 months since the Dorset Council has not had elected representatives in place. As of yesterday, the community finally has a new mayor. An elected councillor and new mayor is Rhys Beattie. He is connected to the former member of parliament, Bill Beattie, the Honourable E.W. Beattie to be precise. Not a direct grandson, but certainly connected through the Beattie family. He gained 58.88 per cent of the vote. He is a young family man with two children and a wife who does health fitness in the area. He works in the agriculture industry. I feel sure all members would want me to send home wishes to Rhys and the Dorset community. I trust that this new leadership in place will deliver what the community needs.

Eighteen months without elected representatives is far too long and I also want to acknowledge the work that the Minister for Local Government and his team, in particular Tim Lovibond, have done in supporting Dorset Council through a very difficult time. They certainly have been supportive and kept me engaged as much as possible, albeit sometimes I was frustrated with the answers, but I know that some of those timeframes were outside of the minister and the government's purview.

I congratulate Rhys and acknowledge the other two candidates, Robin Thompson, a very admirable runner-up, and Edwina Powell, who was already elected to the council and will serve as a deputy mayor. I would suggest that Rhys has a lot of learnings to do. I am happy to support him and be there, and trust the community will get right behind him. I want to congratulate him - 58.88 per cent of the vote, not a bad first effort.

The Council adjourned at 5.05 p.m.