



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Wednesday 15 September 2021

REVISED EDITION

Contents

QUESTIONS.....	1
BUDGET FUNDING OF PROGRAMS.....	1
BUDGET SPENDING COMMITMENTS.....	2
NATIVE FOREST LOGGING.....	4
RISDON PRISON COMPLEX - WORKPLACE SAFETY	6
BUSINESS SUPPORT PACKAGE	8
BUDGET 2021-22 - PROGRAM ALLOCATIONS	9
INFRASTRUCTURE - ROAD AND BRIDGE PROJECTS	13
BUDGET 2021-22 - OPERATING SURPLUS	15
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES - UPDATE.....	17
MERSEY COMMUNITY HOSPITAL - FUNDING AND GST	18
GST DISTRIBUTION	19
TASMANIAN VETERANS - SUPPORT	20
GST DEAL - IMPACT ON TASMANIA	21
LAND (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2021 (NO. 43)	22
FIRST READING	22
FOREST MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT (MINIMUM SAWLOG QUOTA REPEAL) BILL 2021 (NO. 44)	22
FIRST READING	22
MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE	23
FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY	23
APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 1) 2021 (NO. 36).....	34
APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2) 2021 (NO. 37).....	34
REPORTS OF ESTIMATES COMMITTEES	34
IN COMMITTEE	34
RECOGNITION OF VISITORS	49
APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 1) 2021 (NO. 36).....	53
APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2) 2021 (NO. 37).....	53
REPORTS OF ESTIMATES COMMITTEES	53
IN COMMITTEE	53
ADJOURNMENT.....	117
R U OK DAY	117
COMMENTS MADE BY MR ELLIS - CHILDREN AND CLIMATE CHANGE.....	118
MODERN SLAVERY	120
SOUTHERN FOOTBALL LEAGUE GRAND FINAL.....	122
JESSIE SPINKS ROOKE - TRIBUTE	123
BURNIE HIGH SCHOOL - <i>SLEEPING BEAUTY</i>	124
NAKED FARMER EXHIBITION - SMITHTON	125
SPORTING ASSOCIATIONS - FINALS SEASON	126
TAROONA HIGH SCHOOL - OPENING OF THE MUSIC AND C BLOCK	126

Wednesday 15 September 2021

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

QUESTIONS

Budget Funding of Programs

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.01 a.m.]

Your Government will be borrowing \$2 million a day, every day for the next four years, and yet, during budget Estimates, your ministers explicitly committed to hundreds of millions of dollars of additional spending that is not currently in the budget papers.

For example, Mrs Petrusma committed to maintain family violence funding at current levels, despite no funding appearing beyond this year. When asked if she could confirm current annual funding of nearly \$15 million a year would appear in the following three years which currently show zero funding, she said, 'Yes, it won't be getting less'.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Point of order, Mr Speaker. Misleading the House. I said that the \$26 million over three years, that level of funding would be maintained, which is not \$15 million a year.

Mr SPEAKER - As we know, that is not a point of order. If there is an issue, members have the opportunity to raise it now and have a point of personal explanation at the end of question time.

Ms WHITE - That is right, Mr Speaker. This was specific to a line item in the Budget and I will say again: when asked if she could confirm current annual funding of nearly \$15 million a year would appear in the following three years, which currently show zero funding, she said, 'Yes, it won't be getting less'.

Either there is a massive black hole in your budget or these important programs will not actually receive the funding your minister said they would. Which is it?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. I will say the first thing I am going to do is very carefully check the *Hansard* regarding what the member on this side of the House said, but importantly what you have said this morning.

There is a pattern emerging here from the Leader of the Opposition. Yesterday she had to correct the record. That is a demonstration of a pattern emerging in respect of behaviour in this House. I refer to the Leader of the Opposition's budget response speech, yet again riddled with errors, riddled with mistruths -

Ms White - Where?

Mr GUTWEIN - Registration has not gone up. It is lower than it was when we started here. What about electricity prices? Any reading of the Leader's response would demonstrate that she is prepared to come into this place -

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Ms White.

Mr GUTWEIN - and be loose with the truth.

With regard to the Budget, I am very confident as we move forward and move back, next year, to cash operating surpluses. We will see those programs that require funding being funded. Over the course of the budget Estimates, what we have seen from the other side, has been not only one of the poorest budget Estimates processes with regard to scrutiny, but we have seen those on the other side clutching at straws. The shadow treasurer was going back seven or eight years to try to make a point, a point which, to be frank, I am very comfortable with in terms of spending. We have a strong growing economy. Our revenues are growing and so we are spending more.

I only have to go back to when we first came to government in 2014 and Treasury brought down their report of the mess that Labor and the Greens left us with: a billion dollars' worth of net operating deficits, cumulative deficits across the forward Estimates of more than a billion dollars - net debt forecast to rise to \$400 million. They have no record that they can stand on in terms of the budget.

Regarding the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition, I will look very closely at the *Hansard* from last week's Estimates. I will look very closely at the question that was asked because, as I have said, there is a pattern emerging on that side of the House. You simply cannot continue to spread mistruths in this place; you simply cannot. We will have a very close look at that *Hansard*.

Budget Spending Commitments

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.06 a.m.]

Since you handed down the budget, which has us borrowing more than \$2 million a day for the next four years, you have made a series of additional spending commitments, including upgrades to the Royal's ED, new youth justice facilities, an independent EPA, and the renegotiation of the AFL deals. These will all have to be funded with additional borrowings. Can you outline for the House the total four-year cost of all the spending commitments made since budget day?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. First, I make the point that we will document that. The normal forms of the House, the normal forms of what occurs within Treasury is that we will provide a mid-year update, as we do. That will quite

clearly reflect those revenues that have risen and those additional expenditures we have made. That is what occurs in this place and that is what we will do.

What has not occurred in this place is that you have not explained what you would do. I have made the point on many occasions that the Greens bring down an alternative budget every year. I do not agree with it and, as I have said -

Ms O'Connor - At least you pinched some policies out of it.

Mr GUTWEIN - As I have said, Mr Speaker, a lot of what is in it is kooky but at least they had the courage of their convictions to outline to the Tasmanian people what they stand for.

Members interjecting.

Mr GUTWEIN - On that side of the House, yet again no alternative budget.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Mr Speaker. It goes to standing order 45 - relevance. The question was, can the Premier, as the Treasurer, outline how much the additional spending announced since budget day has cost? It is a straightforward question.

Mr SPEAKER - Ms White, you and other people know that point of orders are not an opportunity to re-ask the question. The Premier understands the question. He has answered that and I am sure he has more to say on it.

Mr GUTWEIN - Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have answered it very clearly. In fact, in the first minute that I was on my feet I explained that, yes, any additional spending will be outlined in the mid-year financial report, as is the normal course of things; as is proper.

Coming back to what is proper on that side of the House, again, no alternative budget. It is astounding that Tasmanians still have no idea what that side of the House stands for. It appears to have passed them by that we have been in a pandemic.

Last year the former shadow treasurer, who sits on his own over the other side there, supported the Government's fiscal and economic response - \$1 billion - at a time when revenues were collapsing. He backed us in because it was the right thing to do.

We carry a modest level of debt. I make the point -

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - It does not surprise me that it has passed them by. On this side of the House, we have been fighting a pandemic. On that side of the House they have been fighting themselves.

Native Forest Logging

Ms O'CONNOR question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.10 a.m.]

You know from your own Youth Advisory Council, as well as the Commissioner for Children and Young People statewide consultation, that young Tasmanians overwhelmingly want an end to native forest logging. They want that carbon kept in the ground in order for them to have a safe climate future. Following the release of the IPCC sixth assessment report, Western Australian Premier, Mark McGowan, announced an end to native forest logging in 2024 together with funding for an accelerated transition to plantations, and the reskilling and redeployment of workers. Premier McGowan said, 'This is a gift to our children, our grandchildren and their grandchildren'.

When will your Government give our children, our grandchildren and their grandchildren this same priceless gift, and end native forest logging and burning on this beautiful island of theirs?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Greens for her question. The feedback that I am receiving from children around the state is that a level of climate anxiety is developing. It is in a large part as a result of some of the extreme language that we hear around this matter -

Ms O'Connor - Where was there extreme language in that question?

Mr GUTWEIN - You mentioned children. You said the feedback was that they wanted us to end native forest logging. I have said there are matters they are raising as well, in terms of their anxiety about this, and some of the extreme language that is used is not helping.

I have made a point, Mr Speaker -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Mr Speaker, I feel that if the Premier is going to get up and say that, he needs to point to the extreme language. There is no extreme language in our question.

Mr SPEAKER - That is not a point of order. The Premier is answering the question.

Dr Woodruff - The inference is that we are using extreme language, and we are not.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - Mr Speaker, any reasonable search of *Hansard* over time would demonstrate that a range of extreme things have been said in this place -

Dr WOODRUFF - Point of order, Mr Speaker, relevance, standing order 45. Why is the Premier talking about things that have allegedly happened previously in parliament? It has nothing to do with the question at hand.

Mr SPEAKER - That is not a point of order and you know it. The Premier is answering the question.

Mr GUTWEIN - This is the one place where what you say, which I know at times is unfortunate, is captured word for word.

Dr Woodruff - It has nothing to do with the question.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - The point I made to the member for Franklin, the Leader of the Greens, is that extreme language about climate emergency or climate crisis is not used in that IPCC report - other than to comment on media reports.

Ms O'Connor - Other than code red. What is a code red?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - I make the point that wood is good, and I support the minister responsible. Sustainable forestry management is part of the solution to climate change, not the opposite. You should not be picking and choosing the science on this. The sustainable forest management approach is reinforced by the IPCC -

Ms O'Connor - No, it's not. You are deliberately misrepresenting it.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - Yes, it is. You are cherry-picking the science. Let us put on the record: less than 1 per cent - about 0.27 per cent - of our native forest is harvested. Forestry products from these areas go to the local industry to be manufactured into a range of wood products that we all use in our homes and workplaces. That is important at a time of huge building demand.

I do not agree with the construct of the Leader of the Greens' question -

Ms O'CONNOR - I asked you if you were going to give the kids what they have been asking for.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Mr GUTWEIN - I have it put firmly on the record, that when we speak on the matter of climate especially, in this place, we should be proud of where we stand at the moment.

We are a world leader. As I have said, we have a renewable energy base that others in the world can only dream of, and that no-one in this country will ever be close to. We have a carbon store. It is a carbon store that was being paid for by the jobs of Tasmanians a decade ago, and with enormous pain. We are in a very good position today with our emissions profile. We should be proud of the state's response to climate change, and our kids should be proud of that. The rest of the country - the rest of the world - is looking at Tasmania, which at the last report was 108 per cent below the 1990 baseline. Most jurisdictions in the world can only ever dream about achieving that sort of result.

That is why this side of the House is going to consult with industry about a more ambitious target. We have the opportunity to be far more ambitious, and to ensure our businesses are well placed. We have the opportunity to send the message loud and clear to the rest of the country and to the rest of the world - our emissions profile is something we should be proud of, not something we should talk down at every opportunity.

Risdon Prison Complex - Workplace Safety

Ms JOHNSTON question to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS, Ms ARCHER

[10.17 a.m.]

At the Estimates Committee last Wednesday, in relation to the extraordinary notice issued by the Director of Prisons calling on staff not to sexually and physically abuse each other, I asked what you have done to remedy the workplace culture at the prison, and if you could guarantee a safe workplace for all staff?

Unfortunately, you and the director's answers were short on detail. A guarantee of a safe workplace was not provided. The director would not have issued such a forceful and detailed statement without evidence of sexual abuse or bullying within the prison service.

I ask you again: will you guarantee a safe workplace for staff at Risdon? If you cannot, will you now outline the specific steps you are taking to remedy the workplace culture at Risdon?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. It gives me an opportunity to address the language that she is using from a letter. I will use the correct words, because nowhere does it refer to sexual abuse, nowhere. It is about standards of behaviour. It is a notice to staff.

At the Estimates table I appropriately referred the question to the Director of Prisons because it was a highly operational question. As minister, I do not involve myself in the operational decisions of the prison or staff management. However, I did contribute and backed the director up, as I always would. The director addressed Ms Johnston's question. If she was not satisfied with the level of detail that he, or I, provided, I would have expected to have a subsequent question put during the Estimates process. That is how the Estimates process works, and every member is entitled to do so.

I am happy to address the question that has been put, and to reiterate the statements made by the Director of Prisons. As I said, I also take the opportunity to correct the language that has been used.

The notice from the Director of Prisons to which Ms Johnston refers was hardly extraordinary. I cannot agree with the highly-charged allegation that has been made regarding 'sexual abuse'. The notice to staff never mentioned that. It was about, as I said, the standards of behaviour under the Department of Justice values. To be absolutely clear, what was expected was that it was not acceptable to sexually discriminate against a colleague. It is not acceptable to verbally and physically abuse a colleague. It is not acceptable to discriminate against a colleague due to the colour of their skin, sexuality or gender. It is not acceptable to

target a group of staff and expose them to a perceived greater risk simply because of the work they do and your perception of that work.

It went on to state:

I fully endorse the Department of Justice values and it is my expectation that everyone portray these values in each and every interaction you have with anyone through the course of your work. Anything less is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

He goes on to say:

I want to acknowledge that the majority of the employees at the TPS operate consistently in accordance with our values, treating each other with respect and actively promoting a positive workplace. We see these efforts every day and they are valued contributions to our workplace.

I could not agree more, Mr Speaker, and I thank the hard-working staff at the TPS, in particular across Community Corrections, for the work they do in a very challenging but often very rewarding workplace as well. They have an opportunity to change lives.

The notice was simply a reminder of the appropriate behaviours and responsibilities expected of all staff under the code of conduct in the Tasmania Prison Service as part of the TPS's commitment to being a values-based organisation compliant with workplace health and safety laws.

As Attorney-General, and as minister for Workplace Safety, I fully endorse the director in promoting and reminding staff of the need for appropriate workplace behaviours. The Director of Prisons has an obligation, under workplace health and safety law, to ensure he is promoting those positive workplace behaviours and ensuring a safe workplace.

This is hardly extraordinary. We all have a right to feel safe and respected in the workplace. Any form of bullying is completely unacceptable, and should be called out and appropriately dealt with. All employers have a duty of care and legal obligation to staff working in their workplace to ensure work health and safety standards are upheld. The TPS takes this responsibility very seriously. The safety of staff at the TPS remains a top priority of our Government too.

To answer that question, yes, I am satisfied that staff working in the TPS are working in a safe workplace. Matters of bullying are largely operational and dealt with by our departments.

On culture, the Department of Justice has recently developed and enacted new agency values of integrity, respect, accountability, inclusiveness and collaboration. The Department of Justice has been working with their staff, including staff of the TPS, to ensure they fully enact those values, and understand what they mean and what that behaviour looks like in their workplace. This standards of behaviour notice for staff does that.

They also provide training to staff about appropriate workplace behaviours and ensure all staff are confident to call out inappropriate behaviour if they witness it. These are just some of the things the department is doing in this area, along with other activities.

As in most workplaces, unfortunately, there will be cases where bullying might occur and where staff need to be supported and, indeed, reminded of their obligations. As I stated in Estimates last week, we have a Wellbeing Support Program, which will be commencing any day now, to support our staff, to provide them with further training and anything they require for not only their physical but their mental health and wellbeing.

Business Support Package

Ms OGILVIE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.23 a.m.]

Could you please update the House on the response to the Government's supercharged Business Support Package? Could you also provide any advice about broader business confidence in Tasmania?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank Ms Ogilvie, the member for Clark, for that question. I was very pleased yesterday, in concert with our federal colleagues, to have delivered a significantly expanded and supercharged support package for Tasmanian businesses. Around \$70 million is now available for operators impacted by the border closures we have seen, especially in New South Wales and Victoria.

I was asked what others are saying about it: apart from those opposite, it has been a very positive response. Business and industry leaders have praised it. The Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry CEO, Michael Bailey, called it a lifeline for business and said:

The three-pronged approach of waiving operating costs which was for fees and charges, scaling up cash grants and payroll tax relief will not only help businesses survive the next couple of months, it will help boost confidence across the economy.

The Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania CEO, Luke Martin, described it as 'unprecedented and a life raft for Tasmanian businesses'. He went on to say:

The scale of the investment also reflects the Government's confidence in our visitor economy to bounce out of COVID-19 quickly and strongly, and this should give heart to everyone involved in the industry.

The CEO of the Small Business Council, Robert Mallett, said the increased support package would 'assist thousands of Tasmanian businesses'. Mr Mallett said: 'The package will provide a much-needed lifeline leading into the coming summer months.'

Alex Heroys, CEO of Destination Southern Tasmania, also backed it, saying: 'This package is there to support the workforce and to keep those people employed.'

From the other side of the House, a predictable response - more relentless negativity. I have said on many occasions that whingeing is not a platform, complaining is not a policy, but that is what we hear, day in, day out. The Leader of the Opposition claimed the program was not real support - \$70 million of support is not real support, backed by industry representative leaders, one after another? This demonstrates what a lost and a forlorn lot they are on that side.

I suppose I should not be disappointed by that response from the other side but it builds on what was a very flaccid approach to Budget Estimates, an extraordinarily poor Budget Estimates from those on the other side.

I was asked about confidence. Under this Government, Tasmanians are confident. Yesterday's NAB survey was very welcome news because that told us that Tasmanian businesses are the most confident in the country and that we also have the best business conditions in the country. I do not have to think back too long ago to recall that when we came to government in 2014, what business was saying about those on the other side. Most people would recall that two out of three Tasmanian businesses felt that the policies of their then government, the Labor-Greens government, worked against business.

We will continue to do everything we can on this side of the House to ensure we maintain confidence and support business. We know that if business is confident, if our community is confident, that people will spend and invest and, importantly, employ. That is the difference between this side of the House and that side of the House. We have a plan. That plan is working. Tasmanians are confident and the economy is continuing to grow.

Budget 2021-22 - Program Allocations

Dr BROAD question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.29 a.m.]

Despite handing down a Budget that borrows more than \$2 million a day every day for the next four years, just a fortnight ago you were telling any Tasmanian who would listen that the Budget would be back in the black. Last week, we heard a range of programs which your ministers say will be funded that are not funded in the Budget papers. For example, when questioned about why current funding for agri-growth dropped nearly \$8 million over the forward Estimates, the minister, Mr Barnett said, 'It will appear in the out-years, once we get there'.

Did you cook the books so that you could claim the Budget will be back in the black when in fact, it is getting deeper and deeper in the red?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I welcome Dr Broad's question. I have to say I quite enjoyed Treasury Estimates last week. I did reflect yesterday on dumb and dumber and I should not have done that. I will refer to what I did say on the day. It was like being tag-teamed by Laurel and Hardy, to be honest.

Last week we spent a lot of time exploring the term 'back-in-the-black'. I was surprised that the member opposite does not appear to understand that everything we put out in the Budget is run through Treasury. The words I used in that speech were part of the speech that was prepared by Treasury. It appeared that Dr Broad was doing his best, but perhaps not all that well. He struggled to understand that next year we will have a cash-operating surplus, which means we can pay for the wages of our teachers; we can pay for the ongoing expenses of the Government. The only borrowing that we are doing is for intergenerational infrastructure.

It is as plain as the nose on your face what is in the Budget papers. Importantly, the Budget returns to an operating surplus across the forward Estimates. I quote from Standard & Poor's where they said that:

The state of Tasmania's 2021-22 Budget shows an improving economic outlook that is supporting a return to operating surpluses.

Back in the black but against the -

Dr BROAD - Point of order, Mr Speaker, relevance under standing order 45. It is pretty clear the question directs the Premier to comment on his unfunded spending and what that does to the bottom line.

Mr SPEAKER - Member for Braddon, that is not an opportunity to raise a point of order. The Premier was answering the question. I cannot put words into the Premier's mouth. I am sure he has plenty to say about the Budget.

Mr GUTWEIN - He came out of the blocks then like a Polaris missile. I will try it again - Standard & Poor's. You do not like that, I can see that. You do not like Standard & Poor's confirming exactly what I said and that is that we will return to surplus. We will return to operating surpluses over the last two years of the budget and, importantly, we will return to a cash-operating surplus next year. All of this relentless negativity, I would point out to the shadow treasurer and to the Opposition, and I just refer directly to the Budget.

There is a table in the Budget on page 7 which shows what the budget was in 2021 demonstrates what we were going to have across a range of key economic and fiscal measures and then also what the preliminary outcome was going to be. That demonstrated that in the budget last year we had a \$700 million improvement or thereabouts in the operating surplus. That is a good thing. That is something that, albeit as a new shadow treasurer -

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. The Premier has the call.

Mr GUTWEIN - over time I would hope that even Dr Broad would come to accept that if the numbers are going in the right direction and we are improving our position, that is a good thing. That is a good thing for a treasurer. The other thing, when you look at government financial statistics (GFS) net debt, when you take out the operating leases, we were forecasting \$1.4 billion worth of net debt. You take out the operating leases and deal with GFS net debt, that is forecast to be \$140 million, down by a factor of 10. Again - and I would say to the shadow treasurer -

Ms White - Oh, just take out all the things you do not like.

Mr GUTWEIN - Mr Speaker, the numbers are all heading in the right direction but on that side of the House all we see, all we hear is relentless negativity. This is a good budget. It is a budget which demonstrates that our economy is growing. It demonstrates that we have improved our financial position from where we thought it would be. I come back to the point: on this side of the House, we have been fighting a pandemic; on that side of the House, they have been too busy fighting themselves.

Tasmanian Residential Rental Property Owners Association - Funding

Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for WORKPLACE SAFETY and CONSUMER AFFAIRS, Ms ARCHER

[10.35 a.m.]

As we have highlighted previously, the Tasmanian Residential Rental Property Owners Association spent much of the state election campaigning against the Greens and Independent Kristie Johnston and promoting the Liberal Party and its candidate, Simon Behrakis. In budget Estimates you confirmed to us that the association made a formal request for government funding on 13 May.

On 14 May, association president, Louise Elliot, announced on Twitter that she would be running for election to the Hobart City Council. The Government advised the association its request for \$100 000 of funding had been successful in June. This bogus association, which still lacks a secretary, has a recent history of electioneering in support of your Government's policies. The intention of its president to run for political office was already a matter of public record when this funding decision was made.

What conditions were written into the grant deed to ensure that these funds are used appropriately and not for political purposes?

Ms O'Connor - Did you see the big half-page splash in the *Mercury*? A nice shot of Louise Elliot on the weekend. The council campaign is going beautifully on the taxpayers' dime.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Franklin for her question. These matters were addressed at budget Estimates.

Ms O'Connor - Not to our satisfaction.

Ms ARCHER - I addressed the purpose for which the funding was provided, the detail in relation to the date the request was made, and that this is nothing extraordinary because we provide funding to a number of different organisations including the Tenants' Union of Tasmania -

Dr Woodruff - That's the problem, it's casual.

Ms ARCHER - It is not casual -

Dr Woodruff - You do it without thinking about it. Hand out money without any questions asked.

Mr SPEAKER - Member for Franklin, order. You have asked the question. Allow the minister to answer it.

Ms ARCHER - Mr Speaker, I note that the Greens would defund the Tasmanian Residential Rental Property Owners Association. In a recent *Mercury* article, Ms O'Connor was quoted as saying that her alternative budget was a fully-costed vision for the future. The figure in the Greens alternative budget - and at least they did bother to prepare an alternative budget as we acknowledged - listed the funding at \$500 000 per year.

Ms O'Connor - No, \$50 000 a year.

Ms ARCHER - You added a zero and then they would defund it, so I hardly think the Greens are on top of this issue when they cannot even, in their own alternative budget, defund something appropriately. They have added an additional zero.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Mr Speaker, standing order 45, relevance. Perhaps in the interests of taxpayers, the minister could tell us what conditions were written into the grant deed to ensure these funds are used appropriately?

Mr SPEAKER - It is not a point of order to repeat the question, Ms O'Connor. You know that. Sit down, Ms O'Connor.

Ms ARCHER - Mr Speaker, because this organisation was new it was to establish and set up the group. The membership tends to have less experience in managing rental properties. It was not made up of people who were represented by a real estate agent, for example. They are managing their own properties. They have less knowledge of their obligations under the Residential Tenancy Act 1997 and therefore, inadvertently, there can be disputes. It is to largely assist with that.

I went through the conditions and, if I need to come in with the exact wording of what I did say at Estimates, there was correspondence back from the Premier, in his role as Treasurer, identifying what it was to be used for. I read that out at budget Estimates -

Dr Woodruff - You did not say what they were.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Ms ARCHER - I read that out at budget Estimates, Mr Speaker. I don't have the *Hansard* in front of me but the members know that I answered that question at budget Estimates.

Dr Woodruff - You did not answer that question.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Ms ARCHER - If I need to come in with further information to repeat what I said at budget Estimates, I am very willing to so. As members know, I answered that question. They know that the request came specifically as a budget submission and that was looked at in the ordinary course of all budget submissions. A response was provided with the funding that they would get, \$50 000 per annum, only for two years for the set-up costs to familiarise their members with their obligations under the Residential Tenancy Act 1997, so we can help resolve disputes - or even prevent disputes between landlords and tenants from occurring in the first place.

Infrastructure - Road and Bridge Projects

Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr FERGUSON

[10.40 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the majority Liberal Government is delivering on a clear plan to secure Tasmania's future through the pipeline of road and bridge projects about to commence in the upcoming construction season?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for his question. As spring is now in the air, shortly the smell of newly laid bitumen, blue metal and tar will also be wafting in the regions. On this side of the House, we love the smell of jobs out in the regions in every part of Tasmania, supporting our valuable building and construction sector and our civil construction sector.

The Budget that has been agreed by the House contains \$5.7 billion in infrastructure investments over four years, including \$2 billion in our roads and bridges program alone - which are not, it would seem, supported by the Opposition. This will build on our record investment in the state roads program, with \$317 million spent last year. For context, that is 245 per cent more delivered on our roads program than under the former Labor-Greens government in its last full year in office. The context is useful - that figure was \$129 million. With such a poor record of program delivery, it is little wonder the voters threw them out the following year.

I am very pleased to tell the House about major construction programs that are continuing across the state. The south-east traffic solution is a hive of activity. We brought forward the Midway Point intersection, and that is due now for completion in the middle of next year. The Hobart Airport Interchange and the new Sorell Bypass are scheduled for completion later next year. In November, I expect to release the tender to duplicate the highway between the Hobart Airport and the first causeway, subject, of course, to regulatory approvals including environmental.

The final stages of the Midland Highway 10 Year Action Plan will get underway, with our contractors now already engaged. They are on the design improvements for both south and north of Campbell Town - a vital piece of work - and also between Jericho and St Peters Pass.

In the south, construction of the second Huntingfield Park and Ride facility at Huntingfield will start later this year, as part of our integrated suite of projects to ease

congestion between Kingston and Hobart. On this side of the House we are for that - dealing with congestion between Kingston and the Hobart CBD. That is also supported by an extra 70 daily bus services. That is a proper integrated solution. The Firthside Park and Ride is already under construction.

Consultation is now open on the Great Eastern Drive. We are very proud of this upgrade south of Bicheno, as well as the first stage of the Sidling upgrades; and I know there is a big appetite for that in the north east. Work is currently scheduled to start in December.

The Bass Highway is a key target for our investment of \$280 million. That is a phenomenal outcome that we have negotiated with the federal government. The Bass Highway needs that investment and we are going to deliver it. That funding will be spent on the key route all the way from Marrawah to Launceston.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr FERGUSON - Listen to them, Mr Speaker - the cynics over there. They neglected this highway.

Eight projects have been awarded between Wynyard and Marrawah, and work has started.

Did I hear them say 'when', Mr Speaker? Work has started this week on two of these projects - the Gates Road junction and the realignment of the junction at Myalla Road. I know they will be disappointed; but we love the smell of bitumen. These are safety treatments - and jobs. The Tollymore Road junction project will be tendered next month, with construction to begin in January next year.

At Somerset, a tender to replace the Cam River Bridge will be released later this year, with work to start early 2022. Work on the realignment of the Bass Highway between Somerset and Wynyard and the creation of overtaking opportunities is due to commence in November.

Works are well underway on the strengthening of the Meander River bridge to ensure it continues to allow for heavy vehicles, and we expect to complete the works in November.

I share the public concern about the condition of some of the road surfaces on the Bass Highway - they are not good enough. Our contractor has been instructed on what they need to do. They have additional crews out there right now, and patching is underway and longer-term repairs can be conducted in the warmer weather.

At Railton in the north-west, the final stage of the \$11 million Railton Road upgrade has started. A key connection between the Midland and Bass Highways is Illawarra Road, joining the beautiful Perth Links Road bypass. Tenders have opened for construction to start this season.

Mr SPEAKER - If you could wind up please, minister.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Mr Speaker. Standing Order 48, sufficient time. This is a Dorothy Dixier. The minister has been at it for five and a half minutes.

Mr SPEAKER - I have already asked the minister to wind up. Please, sit down so we do not waste any more time.

Mr FERGUSON - Somebody who does not love the perfume of bitumen.

Ms O'Connor - Someone who doesn't like all the hot air coming out of your mouth.

Mr FERGUSON - It is a vital connector. She has the gag. Nothing in the alternative budget. She cut the growth program - not with a scalpel, with a machete.

In conclusion, our investment in roads and bridges is an investment in human lives; safety for the travelling public; jobs; and transport efficiency. I thank the members opposite for supporting our budget. Their alternative reply adopted all the commitments in our budget over the next four years.

They have no plan, they sit in three groups, they have no leader and the bloke who is about to jump in is going to criticise us for borrowing to make some of these investments which will save lives.

Budget 2021-22 - Operating Surplus

Dr BROAD question to **PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.47 a.m.]

During the election campaign, you promised the budget would return to an operating surplus in two years' time. After the election, you handed down a budget that borrows \$2 million a day, every day, for the next four years and you pushed out the return to an operating surplus by another year to 2023-24. Given the budget black hole that was revealed during Estimates, will the return to an operating surplus be pushed back even further to 2024-25 or beyond?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, we will return to an operating surplus when we said we would.

I thank Dr Broad for his question. I was very clear about the reason for delaying the return to surplus by one year. It is because we are investing more into health; we made a conscious decision to put more money into health. I believe that was a sensible and responsible decision, and not one that would be criticised by that side of the House.

That side of the House seems to be very muddled. It was evident last week in Estimates. I will share with the House this short piece of Estimates when Dr Broad and Mr Winter - joined together at the hip - attempted to have a full-frontal attack on the secretary of Treasury. I will read this verbatim. I had actually said, 'We have a transaction-based tax system. The better our economy does ...' -

Dr BROAD - Point of order, Mr Speaker. Standing order 45, the Premier has completely gone off the track. Is he going to push out his operating surplus another year? It is a simple question and he does not want to go anywhere near it.

Mr SPEAKER - That is not a point of order. You know you do not get an opportunity to re-ask the question. The Premier had already answered that question. There was a substantial amount of preamble. The Premier is allowed to answer the question how he likes.

Mr GUTWEIN - I answered that question. I said we will return to surplus when we said we would -

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Franklin.

Mr GUTWEIN - That demonstrates the very muddled, confused situation the shadow treasurer and his sidekick, Mr Winter, find themselves in. Let me provide context as to why they are muddled and confused, Mr Speaker. Listen to this:

With a transaction-based tax system, the better our economy does, the more tax we receive because the more people we will employ or purchase things.

That makes sense. That is the way it works. Dr Broad then went on, 'It's the opposite to what your Treasury secretary told the Finance committee earlier today.'

Dr Broad - That was Mr Winter, wasn't it?

Mr GUTWEIN - No, Dr Broad, it is here. The Chair said: 'Excuse me, please don't verbal department staff.'

Dr Broad said: 'We can put that as a question. Apologies.'

Mr Ferrall then jumped in and said: 'Sorry, what did I say today?'

Mr Winter went on to say:

You were asked a very similar question and there is a difference in answers. Earlier today, you were talking with the Finance portfolio about the GST revenue being quite detached from the economic performance of Tasmania, if I am not mistaken.

Mr Ferrall then went on very correctly to say: 'No, we didn't. I didn't make any comment at all.'

Mr Winter said: 'Okay, my apologies then.'

I jumped in to say: 'I didn't think that Dr Broad was asking me about GST. He was asking me about the state taxation as a percentage of GSP.'

Dr Broad said: 'Yes.'

I asked: 'How did that get to GST and Mr Ferrall?'

Mr Winter then threw himself on his sword and said: 'You're quite right, I shouldn't have said anything, Treasurer.'

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - If their front bench does not understand the difference between the growth in our economy and gross state product, and GST, which is a revenue line, then God help them.

Mental Health Services - Update

Mr STREET question to MINISTER for MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.52 a.m.]

Can you please update the House on how our majority Liberal Government plans to roll out a contemporary and integrated model of mental health care across the state?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank Mr Street, the member for Franklin, for his question and his considerable interest in this matter. The Government is delivering on our plan to continue our transformation of the mental health system so people can get more holistic support. It is vital that we take a preventative and early-intervention approach.

With this in mind, we are making a \$300 000 investment over three years to improve the mental health and wellbeing of our young people in Circular Head. Life Without Barriers will provide a new service in the region by November this year, offering intake and assessment, brief interventions, psycho-social support and group programs to promote resilience. The initial focus will be on establishing a service for 12- to 18-year-olds, extending up to 25 years within the first year. The service will be run three days a week, comprising one day based in Smithton Hospital and the other two days with outreach workers travelling around the region.

This outcome has involved close consultation with local stakeholders, including the Circular Head Council, Smithton Hospital, Relationships Australia Tasmania and Primary Health North West.

The Budget also includes \$41.2 million to fully fund phases 1 and 2 of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Review recommendations. Professor Brett McDermott has commenced as Statewide Specialty Clinical Director for CAMHS to lead our reforms. Professor McDermott is progressing a number of priorities including: reviewing the current workload and model of care for the Perinatal Mental Health Service; project planning for the service for Out of Home Care children; project planning for the service for youth; and working with the University of Tasmania to create a centre for mental health service innovation.

The Government has already implemented a number of recommendations from the CAMHS review, including employing project officers to begin the implementation of the service for Out of Home Care children and youth mental health services. The statewide CAMHS group director position has been advertised, and a new child and adolescent psychiatrist has been recruited.

We are also investing in mental health services for older Tasmanians. Last week, we released an implementation plan for the recommendations of the review of the Roy Fagan Centre older person's mental health services. The plan focuses on adequate resourcing, robust clinical governance processes and linkages with broader mental health reform activity underway. The plan includes the establishment of a project advisory group, including representation from the Council on the Ageing, Mental Health Council of Tasmania, Flourish, Mental Health Family and Friends, and the University of Tasmania.

An initial \$1 million has been allocated to develop a model of care for older persons' mental health that meets the needs of the Tasmanian community.

While much has already been done, there is still more to do and the Tasmanian Government is committed to building a best-practice integrated model of mental health services across the state.

Mersey Community Hospital - Funding and GST

Ms DOW question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.55 a.m.]

Estimates hearings revealed yet another black hole in your Budget with the Mersey Community Fund due to contain a significant shortfall in its final year. This will be around the same time the No Worse Off guarantee with the GST creates another massive revenue shortfall in the state Budget. What is going to happen when the money runs out?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank Ms Dow, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, for that question. As has been explained on many occasions at Estimates, this side of the House saved the Mersey. You wanted to shut it. In the future, that could be a position that you might gravitate back to, but on this side of the House, we will keep the Mersey open.

We have consistently said that the Mersey will return to activity-based funding post the guarantee period. It will return to ABF funding, which at the moment the Mersey does not get; it is completely funded out of the fund that is held by TasCORP. That is on the record and we have said that on many occasions: the Mersey will not shut under us and it will return to the standard funding arrangements that exist between the state and Commonwealth when that fund is exhausted.

In terms of the GST guarantee, I welcome the guarantee we have for our GST payments. The result we have seen in Western Australia recently, which is worse than what Treasury forecast a number of years ago when the changes to GST were first being proposed, is proof-positive that the current system of GST is not in the nation's best interest. We have made

that point ad nauseum. While the guarantee provides us with the security of ensuring that we do not fall below what we would have had in the past, in 2026-27, when that ends, the state will be disadvantaged. It will be disadvantaged for the very point that we made to the Productivity Commission, and I have made on many occasions publicly: that the new system of GST would afford a state, in this case Western Australia, the opportunity to provide more benefits, more services and lower taxes to the people of Western Australia. That is not fair.

The guarantee is in place and I welcome the Opposition joining with us on a unity ticket with regard to getting a better outcome for the GST in future years.

GST Distribution

Dr BROAD question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[11.58 a.m.]

Your own Budget papers reveal your GST for the rip-off that Labor has long warned it was. Your Budget papers say:

... the new GST distribution will direct a large share of GST to Western Australia at the expense of all other states and territories, including Tasmania.

It goes on to say:

Under the new arrangements, Western Australia will have a permanent, and growing, advantage over the other states that will allow it to provide a higher standard of services and infrastructure than the other states, or to offer lower taxes to its businesses and residents,

as you have highlighted.

Treasury has revealed that your terrible deal, designed solely to help Scott Morrison win votes in Western Australia, will cost Tasmania \$83 million a year. You are now trying to claim that you have been opposed to it from day one. Yet, in 2018, while attacking Labor for sounding the alarm about this absurd gift to Western Australia, you said, and I quote:

Make no mistake, the Tasmanian government pushed hard to get this deal.

How is pushing hard for something the same as being opposed to it from day one?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, for a while there it sounded like I was writing the questions for the shadow treasurer, but I thank Dr Broad for that question.

I welcome the guarantee. I welcome it. We fought hard for it and I fought hard alongside Tim Pallas from Victoria, another Labor treasurer at the time. We got the guarantee in place.

The South Australia Treasurer has made exactly the same points that I am making today, that the guarantee provides us with an underpinning of our GST moving forward to the end of 2026-27. However, the arrangements that were entered into at that time are not in the best interests of the state. They are not in the best interests of the nation in terms of the broader changes to GST.

The guarantee provides us with some surety. We fought hard for that and I will not back away from that. However, the outcome of the changes that were made to the GST system, as has been seen recently by what has occurred in Western Australia, are not in the nation's best interests. We did not agree to the broader deal. We fought hard for the guarantee, we got the guarantee and I welcome that.

There will need to be changes and there needs to be a review. We are going to work hard and we are going to work closely with treasurers from other jurisdictions to ensure that those states that are now being disadvantaged by Western Australia that we get a deal post-2026-27 that is in the state's best interests.

Tasmanian Veterans - Support

Mr ELLIS question to MINISTER for VETERANS' AFFAIRS, Mr BARNETT

[11.02 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the majority Liberal Government is supporting Tasmania's more than 10 500 veterans and ex-service personnel?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his strong support for our veterans, particularly in the Braddon electorate. Tasmania has been at the forefront in serving our nation for more than 100 years and, despite having just 2 per cent of our national population, our enlistment rates in Tasmania are amongst the highest in Australia. We can be proud of those who have served and who are serving in our defence forces - army, navy and airforce. Of the 101 Australians who have been granted the nation's highest award for gallantry, the Victoria Cross, Tasmania has 15 - quite a remarkable record - and, more recently, Teddy Sheean, an extraordinary record.

For the more than 10 500 Tasmanian veterans and ex-serving personnel who call our state home, health and wellbeing are an area of national focus. Our Government is playing its part with the Australian Government in supporting our veterans in this space. In our budget we are investing a record \$1.4 million to support our veterans.

It includes \$100 000 for the training centre and additional facilities at the Veterans' Retreat Project at Lake Sorell and another \$100 000 previously provided to the Vietnam Veterans Association for the upgrade of a disused Parks and Wildlife shack. This is going to provide positive mental health and wellbeing; a wonderful opportunity for veterans and their families to use that facility. I thank the community for the wonderful support that has been provided through businesses, community groups, and in-kind support to help make that happen.

Congratulations to the Vietnam Veterans Association and the president, Terry Roe, for the work that he has done with all of those volunteers to help make that fantastic result happen. In addition to that, we are providing ongoing peak body support, the ongoing support for the Teddy Sheean VC Memorial Grants and the 200 000 health and wellbeing vouchers that will support veterans and their families in the time of need, with the support that is required.

The Teddy Sheean VC Grants are now open until 11 October this year. It is just another example of the way in which our Government, a majority Gutwein Liberal Government, is working harder to deliver for our veterans. We are united in that approach. That is in stark contrast to those on the other side. They are pulling apart. They are still ripped between the left and the right and the brawling between the two factions is continuing.

That is unfortunate and I hope that they will turn the corner and join a united approach from this side to continue our efforts to support our veterans.

GST Deal - Impact on Tasmania

Dr BROAD question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[11.05 a.m.]

When asked about the GST in Estimates in 2018, you said Tasmania's revenues will be secure and it will be business as usual moving forward. They were your words. This is simply not true now and it was not back then. In your own words, the Tasmanian Government pushed hard to get this deal - again, your words - Tasmania will be effectively sending nearly \$100 million every year straight to Western Australia.

Western Australia has just delivered the biggest budget surplus in its history, a surplus big enough to cover Tasmania's entire health, education, housing and police budgets combined while you, Premier, borrow \$2 million every single day for four years and our health system lurches from crisis to crisis.

Why did you sign us up to this deal that is so clearly not in Tasmania's interest and what actions are you going to take to fix it?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank Dr Broad, the shadow treasurer, for that question. I will largely repeat what I have said on this issue today. Regarding the transitional arrangements, which I welcome, we had fought hard to get a guarantee in this system. It is a system which we never agreed with from day one, and which Treasury has written a number of papers on which I presented to the Productivity Commission and in other forums about what was being proposed. The outcome is that we received a guarantee, which I welcomed, because it meant that with the transitional arrangements we would be no worse off and in fact would be better off.

In terms of 2026-27 when the guarantee finishes, I have grave concerns. Regarding the process up to then, we either need to return to the HFE system that was in place before the new arrangements were put in place, or the guarantee needs to be extended. That largely is the position of every state and territory treasurer across the country. What we can see, writ large,

as a result of Western Australia's budget outcome with soaring mining receipts plus a flaw in a guarantee bill is that that state should be embarrassed about the revenue it is receiving at the moment.

We are no worse off. In fact, we are better than where we were forecasting we would be right now today. The guarantee finishes in 2026-27 and it is incumbent upon the federal government to review that situation well before then and to ensure that we either return back to the HFE calculations of old or the guarantee continues.

TABLED PAPERS

Joint Standing Committee on Subordinate Legislation - Report No. 16

Ms Finlay presented the Joint Standing Committee on Subordinate Legislation, Report No. 16, Scrutiny of Notice issued under Section 20 of the COVID-19 Disease Emergency (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020 (Supreme Court of Tasmania).

Mr Speaker, I move -

That the report be received.

Report received.

Estimates Committee B - Additional Information

Mr Ellis presented additional information provided to Estimates Committee B in respect of the Minister for Small Business and Minister for Women.

Ms O'Connor - Where are the responses to the other departments like Mr Barnett's and Mr Jaench's? Where are they? Bet they are not done before we respond.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

LAND (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2021 (No. 43)

First Reading

Bill presented by **Mrs Petrusma** and read the first time.

FOREST MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT (MINIMUM SAWLOG QUOTA REPEAL) BILL 2021 (No. 44)

First Reading

Bill presented by **Ms O'Connor** and read the first time.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Fiscal Sustainability

[11.12 a.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: fiscal sustainability.

Fiscal sustainability is a matter of importance because we have heard today that not only is this Government planning to borrow \$2 million every day for four years, now there is an unfunded black hole built into the Budget. Not only do we have the Premier with expenditure growth going out of control, we have a budget black hole. We have unfunded spending for very important issues such as family violence funding - not in the Budget in the forward Estimates. Other promises, such as upgrades to the Royal Hobart Hospital Emergency Department, new Youth Justice Services facilities, an independent Environment Protection Authority (EPA), the AFL deal renegotiation, all not funded.

The Minister for Primary Industries, Mr Barnett, always talks up agriculture, and yet we hear that AgriGrowth funding is going down by \$8 million across the forward Estimates. His only rationale for that is: 'The money will appear in the forward Estimates when it is due'. That is unfunded spending, and that is what we see across this budget. A fiscal gap is opening up because we see that total expenses are growing much faster than total revenue; so much so that now there is a fiscal gap because expenses are well and truly out of control and we do not have enough revenue to cover it. On top of that, there is unfunded budget expenditure.

I have previously said in this place and I will say it again: the Premier showed some fiscal discipline when he was Treasurer back in 2014 and 2015, in those two budgets. His spending was 2.7 per cent growth and then 3.1 per cent growth. However, he let it all go after that, in the budget for the 2016-17 year. All fiscal discipline went out the window and he started spending. Expenditure growth was 5.6 per cent, 5.2 per cent, 5.8 per cent - and this was all before COVID-19.

We have heard the Premier today say: 'We don't believe that COVID-19 happened'. Of course we believe COVID-19 happened, and we supported the extra funding that the Premier put in place to deal with COVID-19. However, we are now talking about what happened before COVID-19.

If you remember the budget before COVID-19 - the 2018-19 Budget - there was a massive surprise in store for everybody, because over \$1 billion of debt was budgeted when there had been no debt in the state since 2004.

This all happened before COVID-19, and now we see spending well and truly out of control. Spending growth for this year alone is 9.4 per cent, but the big shock - and this is where this unfunded black hole comes to - is that the Premier is suggesting in his budget that his spending is going to decrease by 4 per cent next year. If you look at past performance, that is not going to happen. Spending growth, even before COVID-19, was growing at the rate of 5 per cent a year, and now he is saying that is going to turn around to be minus 4 per cent next year.

How is he going to do that? He says things that he just cannot deliver. He is running this strategy of the one year of pork and three years of pain. He says there has been a boost to health funding. What he is not saying is that he is cutting health next year. Health expenditure next year will be less than it is this year. He cannot do that. We know he cannot do that. Spending in health has to grow every year. That is the way it works with health inflation. There should be an increase every year. It should not be a one-off sugar hit because that just does not work.

Yet the Premier has baked into his budget a 4 per cent decline in expenditure growth next year. How is he going to do that? He is going to do that because he fiddled the books. A bunch of things that he has to fund in his budget are not funded and we know he has to fund them. We know he has to fund family violence but it is not in his budget - because he is cooking the books. He is a tax-and-spend Treasurer. He is talking about it all being COVID-19, yet we see in the 2024-25 year - when COVID-19 is hopefully well and truly behind us - his plan is to borrow \$420 million in that year. That is not budget discipline.

Treasury put out their Fiscal Sustainability Report and out of the four scenarios that Treasury modelled, we are tracking the high expenditure scenario. That means \$30 billion in debt by 2035. That is a massive problem. Treasury has sounded an alarm. There is a big red flashing light going on top of the Treasury building that says things need to change. They say in their own report that you have to take action early, because the actions you take later on have to be more drastic.

In this Budget, across the forward Estimates, we are seeing \$300 million going just in interest payments. If he keeps going down this track of massive expenditure growth, we are going to be paying interest on interest - and we all know how that ends. That goes down the wrong way. Once again, it looks like it is going to be up to a Labor government to pay off Liberal debt. We saw Robin Gray run the state into the ground. We saw the Groom and Rundle governments run the state into the ground, so much so that the comment was that the state was basically going broke. It took a Labor government, under Jim Bacon, to bring things under control and all that debt was paid off in 2004.

This Government's plan, baked into the Budget, is to borrow \$2 million every day for the next four years. It is going to be more than that; we know it will be more, because there are massive funding gaps built into the Budget. They have cooked the books. We heard today in Question Time, the Premier has signed us up to a dud deal on GST. He is trying to rewrite history. He is trying to say this is something he did not support. Well, he did. He was absolutely taken for a ride on this one, and it is going to deliver rivers of gold to Western Australia. There will be gold-plated taps in Treasury in Western Australia and, in the meantime, we will not be able to cover our own budget.

He has a growing fiscal gap; we see it in his own charts. If you look at chart 3.1 from the Budget, you can see there is a growing fiscal gap between total expenses and total revenue. The Premier is in complete denial about this. He has to start taking action, because actions speak louder than words.

Time expired.

[11.19 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Finance) - Mr Speaker, we have had a fair exercise of these matters during question time. The Premier has thoroughly cleaned up Dr Broad in response to his questions. It is fair to say the Leader of the Opposition asked a couple of questions, tested the temperature of the water and then backed off and left the rest of the questions to Dr Broad.

Mr Winter - They are actually printed out before we get here.

Mr FERGUSON - Yes, I am aware of that. It feels like Dr Broad was set up today to try to tackle the Premier and Treasurer on financial and economic management of our state, which is going gangbusters.

Dr Broad must be living in another universe when he is talking down Tasmania the way he does and trying to frighten people the way he has just tried. It is clear the Leader of the Opposition has left him to his own devices. Indeed, as I look across the Chamber, only the Right faction is in the room with Dr Broad,. That is interesting; I will just make that point. Also -

Ms White - You do not know what you are talking about.

Mr FERGUSON - I have a good idea. The other thing is that Mr Winter has dropped the comment that the questions were pre-prepared and pre-printed. That was fairly evident because you could not change your strategy midway through question time when you had been cleaned up. You were still committed to your questions and asked the Premier to more or less answer the question he had just addressed.

We have issues here from the Labor Party. They are all over the place. Their alternative budget does not exist. What does exist is that while we have delivered on the commitments we made at the recent election - every single one of them, including ones that go beyond the forward Estimates because industry want longer-term plans -

Dr Broad - No.

Mr FERGUSON - Yes, we have, Dr Broad.

Dr Broad - No, you have not.

Mr FERGUSON - What also exists is Labor's policies, still somewhere out there in the marketplace. They could have told Tasmanians how they would fund their commitments. They could have done it in one of two ways. They could have submitted their policies to Treasury before the election, as is expected of a mainstream political party, but they did not do that. There was nearly \$3 billion of commitments -

Dr Broad - You just keep making stuff up on the floor.

Mr FERGUSON - Yes, \$3 billion of commitments. I think it was \$3.4 billion. I would have to go back and check. They submitted \$7 million of promises for grants to Treasury before the election. They squibbed it. I think they were ashamed.

Having squibbed it and been rejected by the voters, they could have done it a different way: you could have developed an alternative budget. Did you do that, Dr Broad? No, you did not, Dr Broad. I will answer the question for you.

Dr Broad - You are not even defending it.

Mr FERGUSON - As at December 2019, just before the pandemic, we held \$788 million in net cash deposits and investments, in stark contrast to net debt like every other government in this country. We were in a very sound position prior to that and we continue to be so.

You only need to look at what the official commentary has to say about this. I refer again to Standard & Poor's Global Ratings Agency. Every time they get mentioned, Dr Broad gets very grumpy because they reflect on the relative low net debt of Tasmania compared to peer jurisdictions. It also bells the cat and confirms again what Treasury has stated: that the state is on its pathway back to operational surplus.

Dr Broad can whinge and moan all he likes, but the simple fact is the state is in a very good position. When you look forward, Mr Speaker, we will have a modest net operating surplus of \$39 million in 2023-24 and \$126 million in 2024-25. That is something Dr Broad wants to gloss over.

Importantly, we are borrowing in order to double down on our infrastructure investment across government. It seems to me that Dr Broad wants us to walk away from that and to not invest in infrastructure. It seems to me, from his comments yesterday, in the Budget discussion on *Hansard*, that he wants us to cut expenditure. I wonder if he would like to nominate where that expenditure should be cut. I wonder if he would like to nominate which infrastructure projects he would like to cast aside. He is not prepared to do that.

Dr Broad - You do not deliver.

Mr FERGUSON - We do deliver - 250 per cent of Labor.

Dr Broad - You do not. You miss your targets every year.

Mr FERGUSON - Dr Broad, you are in a losing argument here. I say again, I think you have been set up. Before we came to office, the books were left in a terrible state by the Labor-Greens government, the same government that locked up all of that productive forest when they did that Labor-Greens deal.

Dr Broad - Record debt - the Premier is claiming credit for it.

Mr FERGUSON - You have had your turn, you failed and I am responding.

Not only did Labor leave behind operational expenditure which would have, on advice from Treasury, added up to a cumulative deficit of \$1.1 billion which we had to deal with, Labor came into this House with big red stickers on their lapel 'Bust the Budget'.

That was because in our budget repair task in our first couple of years, Labor were totally opposed to getting our budget back under control. Not only did they leave the books in such a

terrible state, they spent the public servants' superannuation. The account that was set up by the previous Liberal Government to put away for unfunded superannuation liability, Labor spent it. Lara Giddings and David Bartlett spent that money. Dr Broad, you did not mention that.

The Premier and Treasurer has a difficult job. We have reduced the net debt prediction from last year's budget by about a billion dollars. No mention of that by Dr Broad. The Budget has been widely lauded by the business community and by experts including Standard & Poor's. There is a big task in front of us as well as we continue to chart our way through a COVID-19 recovery but it is a strong recovery with the most generous business support of any state in the country as a share of our GST.

The Budget needs to be supported and Labor, if they have an alternative, should share it.

Time expired.

[11.26 a.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, it is telling that the minister for Finance did not spend a lot of time defending his own budget. In fact, he wanted to talk about anything but his own budget. The Treasurer decided not to stay for this important matter, to defend his own budget so he left it with the Finance minister who did not see fit to defend it either. He wants to talk about everything else except the state of Tasmania's finances and I can understand exactly why.

The only piece of budget management that the Treasurer has been good at is making people believe that everything is okay, and that is starting to unravel over time. The first piece of the puzzle that started to unravel is the release of the Tasmanian Government Fiscal Sustainability Report. The executive summary cannot be disputed. The conclusion is, for all scenarios analysed: the results show projected fiscal outcomes that are manageable in the short to medium term. However, the size of corrective action required to maintain sustainability increases over the projection period.

The scenarios are shown on page seven. The worst scenario shows \$30 billion of debt but even the best scenario, which is the forward Estimates scenario, is about \$16 billion in debt by 2035. That shows you exactly what is happening here. The claim that we are going back to operating surplus by the Treasurer simply is not believable because we have seen his history. He spends more than he receives. That is the history and that is the record.

The expenditure of the Treasurer, particularly over the last few years, and Dr Broad is quite right, in the first couple of years, average expenditure annually was relatively low but over time it has continually grown to about 7 per cent last year.

This is the highest taxing, biggest spending Treasurer in history. That is a fact.

Ms O'Connor - In Tasmanian history?

Mr WINTER - In Tasmanian history this Treasurer spends more and his expenditure growth is growing every year.

Mr Ferguson - Health has gone to \$10 billion.

Mr WINTER - When he was the shadow treasurer, he talked about the record operating deficit during the Global Financial Crisis or a little after it. But the fact is, in 2020 his net operating deficit was \$338 million, the predicted outcome from last year was \$412 million and this year he is aiming at \$690 million. He will go record after record. That is the reality. The claim we are going to get back in black is simply not believable because of the history. We know exactly what this Treasurer has been doing and you cannot hide the debt.

Treasury explains very clearly what the projections are: four scenarios of debt between \$16 billion and \$30 billion on every scenario. How many times did the Treasurer and Premier reference it over the last few weeks? I cannot remember at all. He is pretending it is not happening and that will not cut it.

The black hole issue was uncovered through various Estimates hearings last week, sometimes comically from ministers when they were not quite sure what we were getting at. This is particularly so when you look at page 169 of Budget Paper No. 1 where you can see spending going up this year, but the forward Estimates showing the Government plans to cut the Budget.

You talk about spending more in health. What the Government is saying in the forward Estimates is that it will cut health spending. On page 169 of Budget Paper No. 1, you can see the health budget declining from 2021-22 to 2022-23. That is not believable. It has never happened before and it will not happen next year. The reason this is happening is because funding the ministers tell us will occur is not actually in the Budget, and that is the black hole. That is what they are doing to try to create this idea there will be a surplus in a few years' time.

The Treasurer has done all sorts of things in the past, using GBEs to bring additional money in to show in the revenue; but I suspect there will not be a real surplus because the spending will continue. They will not be able to cut the health budget in that year; it is highly unlikely. Nor will some of the other numbers go down.

In that same table in Budget Paper No. 1 - in Economic Affairs, it is claimed there will be \$394 million spent this year and there will only be \$282 million next year. The following year there will be \$236.7 million and \$213.1 million the year after. It drops every single year under the Treasurer's forward Estimates. It simply cannot happen because we know the history of this Treasurer over many years now. Unfortunately for him, you cannot hide the debt - \$3.5 billion in the Estimates by 2025.

Mr Ferguson - What was it last year?

Mr WINTER - Debt last year? I do not have it in front of me.

Mr Ferguson - It was forecast at \$4.5 billion.

Dr Broad - You had budgeted for Armageddon. You got a terrible result and you are patting yourself on the back -

Mr Ferguson - And your party supported that Budget last November.

Mr WINTER - Minister for Finance, Labor has already repaid the Liberals' debt once. The task this time around, if the projections hold, will be much harder. This Treasurer will

take us to more than twice the amount of debt Jim Bacon inherited from the Liberals in 1998. This is going to be a tough task for Labor to again repay the Liberals' debt. That will be a challenge. The longer this Government is in the more they spend and the harder the task - and that is Treasury's prediction. Treasury says you need to take action in the short- to medium-term to avoid a bigger challenge in the long-term.

The simple fact is that the Treasurer is ignoring the report. There is no reference to it and, unless he takes corrective action very shortly as Treasury is urging him to do, the task is going to be very difficult.

Time expired.

[11.33 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - This has not been a particularly edifying debate so far, but I have quite enjoyed, and been somewhat informed, by Mr Winter's contribution. I was reflecting on a conversation I had on behalf of Dr Woodruff and I with Treasury and Finance towards the end of last year. It was quite a frank conversation with the Secretary of Treasury, Tony Ferrall, who I have a lot of time for. It was relating to the state's need to borrow to get us through the pandemic.

I do not want to verbal Mr Ferrall but the conversation centred around capital funding needs and it was observed that it was very cheap to borrow money at the time of the borrowing. The Greens were arguing that Government should go into more debt to be able to provide a recovery out of COVID-19 that leaves Tasmania much more climate-resilient while looking after its people and making sure everyone who needs a home has a home.

Unfortunately, in this Budget we see a delay in expending those capital funds in providing homes for people; but we are not going to argue against the state going into debt for the right reasons.

The question for the House is, what is the Government's plan to chart us through this? We are not ever reassured by bland statements from the Treasurer or the Minister for Finance that everything will be okay.

I make the observation that it is always a problem when the Premier holds the Treasury portfolio. This has been a problem for us in the past and it is a problem for us now. You need to have that creative tension between the Premier and the Treasurer. However, Mr Gutwein has chosen to retain the Treasury portfolio so this debt will be his at the same time as he is trying to win hearts and minds across the Tasmanian community.

Young people today are not talking about fiscal sustainability. It does not enter their thinking. What young people are talking about is their future in a climate constrained world where they can see the natural environment being degraded day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year. We have raised this with the Premier who falsely accuses us of trying to scare children when we use terms like 'climate emergency'. Eleven thousand scientists signed onto a statement to declare a climate emergency. This is not alarmist language; these are the facts. If the Premier and the climate deniers on his side of the House do not want to hear the facts, that is a matter for them.

What really scares young people is a lack of leadership on climate. Young people are not scared by government going into debt for a period of time in order to be able to deliver services. Young people are scared by what they see as older people, who will die well before them, leaving them a planet which is in a state of distress.

I get these emails from kids quite often. I got one from a 10-year-old in Campbell Town last week who basically said, 'I am desperately worried. I have read the reports of what the scientists are saying. I don't want to ask an adult for help because I think you are part of the problem but I am asking for your help in what I can do, as a 10-year-old, living in Campbell Town'. They are the kind of emails that break my heart. It is what motivates Dr Woodruff and I in here every single day. This is a 10-year-old who is scared, not by the truth; who is scared by adults not listening and acting on her concerns.

What did young people tell the Commissioner for Children and Young People? I will again remind the House. The third rule that they want implemented now is an 'end to native forest logging'. Number four: they want 'emissions limits for big companies'.

This is the true sustainability debate we need to be having in this place - the sustainability of government policy for young people's future. They want no more coal, and they want more awareness about climate change such as ads on television. There is one thing I agree about: we need to be very careful in the language we use when we are talking to young people about the state of the world's climate. We need to be talking about the actions we can take to mitigate global heating. Action equals hope; lack of action equals fear and anger. It is very straightforward.

The biggest issue raised through the consultation by Commissioner for Children and Young People ambassadors was that we need more action on climate change; and that the decisions we make today will determine our future. That is the sustainability matter we need to be addressing as a parliament. For all its talk of taking climate seriously, we do not believe this Government is really listening to the science. If you are really paying attention, if you read the IPCC report summary for policy makers and the detail around forests, you will understand it is the most perverse distortion of the science, for a premier to get up in here, like minister Barnett last week in Estimates, and pretend that logging, chipping and burning an old forest and then planting a new forest is somehow a climate positive.

There was a letter to the editor in the paper about it today. The science is very clear: if you log a coupe of old trees, it takes at least a century for the carbon that was stored in that patch of forest to be restored. We do not have a century; we have about 10 years. A scientist who came to brief us last week - and I certainly hope Dr Broad attended one of these briefings from the Climate Extremes Cooperative Research Centre - told us that temperatures will change in Tasmania. By 2050 Tasmania is projected to experience an increase of at least 1.5 degrees compared to historical temperatures even if a low-emissions scenario is followed. In rainfall terms, we know from the science that the Spring rains will diminish and there will be more rain in the winter time. We need to talk about sustainability in a much more focused and systemic way for young people who are crying out for leadership.

Time expired.

[11.40 a.m.]

Mr STREET (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I want to take the time I have to put some facts on the record and then to speak about the hypocrisy of Labor having the cheek to even bring this topic in here as a matter of public importance.

The Budget papers clearly show that in 2022-23, the budget returns to a cash operating surplus of \$368.8 million and, in 2023-24, the budget returns to a net operating surplus of \$39.4 million, increasing to \$126.8 million in 2024-25. The ratings agency S&P stated in its media release on 26 August:

Tasmania is on the path to operating surplus and it is also clear that Tasmania's net debt is forecast to be the lowest in the country and on a per capita basis.

For my sins, I am member of the Standing Committee of Public Accounts. On 28 July the Treasury secretary, Mr Ferrall, appeared in front of the committee in response to the Fiscal Sustainability Report to give his interpretation of it. It was a public hearing and I have a couple of quotes I want to put in the record. It is important that people understand that, unlike the alarmist language that has been used by those opposite, Mr Ferrall has a far more balanced view of the world. What he said was that simply having a level of net debt, which is a stock, provided that you can support that level of debt and the costs of that debt with your revenues, the absolute point of having debt does not mean that you are unsustainable. Tasmania, we have a \$7 billion to \$8 billion budget. There is no reason why, in terms of our budget, we cannot support a level of debt. He also said:

One of the important conclusions of the report, which, again, is similar to what has occurred around the country, is the significant impact of health expenditure costs on the long-term projections of the states and the Commonwealth.

We understand that and there are challenges that are going to have to be met. Mr Ferrall also said:

The report makes it quite clear from a Treasury perspective we are not sitting here now saying you need to panic. We are not sitting here with a fiscal crisis that there needs to be an immediate major reaction.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. The member should be heard in silence.

Mr STREET - Mr Speaker, I started by talking about the hypocrisy of Labor even bringing this particular topic in here. Really, the hypocrisy goes back to the fact that there is no alternative budget from the Opposition.

Dr Broad interjecting.

Mr STREET - Dr Broad can groan at the -

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr STREET - What you cannot do is come in here and complain about the level of debt that we are carrying if -

Mr SPEAKER - Through the Chair, please.

Mr STREET - Mr Speaker, I beg your pardon. Sorry, I was addressing Waldorf and Statler over there. I should have been directing the comments through you.

Mr SPEAKER - Thank you.

A member - What did he call you?

Dr Broad - Waldorf and -

Mr STREET - Statler. They are the two grumpy old men from *The Muppets*. You know who I am talking about.

Dr Broad - So personal reflections are okay now. Are they okay, Mr Speaker?

Mr STREET - During the election campaign -

Dr Broad - Shall we call you Beaker?

Mr SPEAKER - It depends whether you object. I will remind the member that personal reflections are inappropriate.

Mr STREET - Understood. I thought, seeing as they were interjecting, perhaps it was only fair that I interject back.

Ms O'Connor - A different set of rules you have when you are not in the chair, Mr Street.

Mr STREET - Listen, Ms O'Connor, if we are talking about interjections in this place, you are the last person who should be putting her hand up to want to contribute to the conversation that we are having, let me tell you.

Ms O'Connor - I never deny it. I was doing my job.

Mr STREET - Mr Speaker, I had to sit there for four days and listen to the interjections of Ms O'Connor and try to temper her kindergarten-like behaviour.

Ms O'Connor - Yes, right, kindergarten-like. I just get sick of lies being told at an Estimates table.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, order.

Mr STREET - The point I was trying to make, before I was so rudely interrupted, is that during the election campaign, the Labor Party committed to \$2 billion worth of expenditure items above and beyond what we committed to.

Ms Connor, I have to say, with one of her more thoughtful interjections yesterday, made the point when I raised this yesterday that the Labor Party knew during the election campaign that they were never going to be elected and they would never be held accountable for delivering the promises that they made. The fact is they did make those particular promises and the question has to be asked: if you are not happy with the level of debt that we are carrying, which of the \$2 billion worth of extra expenditure items that you committed to during the election campaign would you not have funded once you came into government?

A budget is made up of two items: expenditure and income. Either come in here with an alternate budget that indicates -

Dr Broad - Our job is to scrutinise your budget.

Mr STREET - Okay. You get to scrutinise the budget. What you do not get to do is criticise the level of debt we are carrying, if you are not going to indicate to the Government what expenditure you would cut to reduce the level of debt we are carrying, or what income -

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. Members on the left have both spoken. Allow the member to answer.

Mr STREET - Mr Speaker, they need to explain what revenue they would increase. Are there tax increases that you would propose to reduce the level of debt, or is there expenditure that you would cut to reduce the level of debt? We do not know. Ms O'Connor and Dr Woodruff get to come in here and talk about the level of debt -

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. The conversation across the Chamber should cease.

Mr STREET - that we have because they produced an alternate budget.

Ms O'Connor - Yes, we racked up even more debt.

Mr STREET - That is fine if you are prepared to put it on paper and defend it, Ms O'Connor. You can do whatever you like in this place. What you cannot do is be hypocritical and lazy. That is exactly what Labor is: they are hypocrites and they are lazy. You will not put the work into an alternative budget; you will not detail for this place what expenditure items you would cut; you will not detail for this place what revenues you would increase to reduce the level of debt. Like I said, lazy and hypocritical.

The gig is up. Either come in here with an alternative budget that sets out what you would do in terms of debt and future expenditures and revenues or try to maintain a dignified silence over on that side of the Chamber. That is probably your best bet at this stage.

Time expired.

Matter noted.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2021 (No. 36)

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2021 (No. 37)

Reports of Estimates Committees

In Committee

Continued from 14 September 2021, page 117.

DIVISIONS 2, 10 and 11

(Minister for Resources, Minister for Primary Industries and Water, Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction, Minister for Trade and Minister for Veterans' Affairs)

[11.48 a.m.]

Dr BROAD - Mr Deputy Chair, I rise to give comment on my Estimates reply. I sat most of the day in Estimates Committee A when the Resources minister, Guy Barnett, amongst other portfolios, gave a series of non-answers and I will go through those in a list.

We hear a lot of things from this minister, probably the most noteworthy is some little catchcry, some little catchphrases, that he likes to use.

A member - Come on.

Dr BROAD - I dare not repeat them. The issue for this minister is that is all he has.

Across the Estimates and across his answers we see his complete lack of answers in pretty much everything that at least I put to him and everyone else. We see it in question time, we see it all the time; this minister is probably the worst at simply repeating the same talking points and throwing in a catchphrase. That is his stock and trade. We started off with the minister who is a 'lion in parliament' apparently but a little pussy cat when it comes to actually standing up for something.

The first place I went to - and there is no doubt that the member for Clark will have something to say about this in about two seconds - was about the minister's comments when he rushed in to the adjournment debate when I raised the issue about the state Government funding *Wild Things* which, by any measure, is a protester recruitment film. He knew it was coming and he was obviously annoyed; he came into the Chamber without his tie on. He made some comments that he was going to make sure it never happened again.

What has he done since then? He asked for a review and, in Estimates, the Minister for the Arts, Ms Archer, outlined that the review was undertaken and the advice was that no further action should be taken. It remains an opportunity for somebody to be funded to produce another film like *Wild Things* which is, in effect, a protester recruitment film.

The minister's only retort was about prosecuting the anti-protester legislation, which he is pretty keen on. I suggested that it seemed the minister has a recruit and arrest strategy. He asked if I was going to be funny. The minister said he wanted Screen Tasmania's eligibility guidelines reviewed to make sure dangerous and illegal activities cannot be promoted or endorsed. That is what Mr Barnett said. He would not stand up. He basically said that is up to the Minister for the Arts. He has walked away from that one, and from his comments.

The only trick the minister has is to resuscitate his failed legislation that Bob Brown took all the way to the High Court and the state lost. His legislation was defeated in the High Court, yet the minister has not taken this on board. His only strategy to deal with the problems in mining and forestry is to re-prosecute the same legislation instead of working with us. We are actually willing to sit down and work on something together.

The minister says this is the same legislation as the rest of Australia. It is not. The rest of Australia has elements of area restrictions, like timber harvesting safety zones, and aggravated trespass. Other legislation around Australia does not ban protests on footpaths, roads, in cars, on cars and so on.

The minister now seems pretty keen to extend that to waterways. The thing he is doing, which is an absolute disservice, I think the member for Clark, Ms O'Connor, the Leader for the Greens, belled the cat on this one a little bit when I said, when you were talking about this anti-protest legislation - and you did it a minute ago - I am reading from *Hansard* now, you mentioned how it was designed to stop protest and protesters.

Every time you mention it, you say protesters and protests and protesters and protests. The only thing is that this will be evidence that Bob Brown will, once again, clip out all your public comments and all your comments from *Hansard* in this place and he will use that as evidence when he, no doubt, gets arrested and ends up in front of the court. He will take it to the High Court and he will regurgitate your own words from *Hansard*, minister, when you continually talk about protesters, because that was how he won the first case.

You have not learned, minister. You are putting up the same legislation with the same flaws, which goes way too far. You are doing it again. It has been defeated and defeated and defeated and it is becoming so cynical, minister. Last time, you rushed it through this place and it sat on the books in the upper House for a whole year. When did you bring it on? Literally, days before the last election was called, and it was simply a stunt. Instead of fixing a problem you are going to regurgitate the same legislation with the same inherent problems. It is just not good enough.

The other massive issue is timber supply. I have been talking to the big and small players in all parts of the timber industry and they are worried about timber supply. I went through my due diligence and asked a series of questions of the minister about the timber supply. There is a legislative guarantee for 137 000 cubic metres of category one sawlogs to be delivered every year until at least 2027. What I am hearing is there are significant concerns about the ability of Sustainable Timber Tasmania to deliver that volume.

What is the minister going to do about it? I asked him time and again, would he guarantee the timber would be delivered? Is the timber there? What about delivery? All the minister would say was that he supports the legislation. He would not reconfirm his own words when, from his ministerial statement back in 2016, he said that it would be guaranteed. Now he is saying something completely different. He is saying that is an operational matter for Sustainable Timber Tasmania. No, it is not. It is legislated supply. Is the Government's policy changing? Are they crab-walking away from the commitment he said in his ministerial statement on 26 October 2016? This minister, Mr Barnett, said:

The Government is not prepared to impose a reduction in wood supply to industry and give rise to a wider sovereign risk concerns for the Tasmanian economy.

I asked him, 'Do you stand by that comment?', and he would not. I asked time and time again:

Minister, can you confirm that you will not impose a reduction in wood supply to the industry?

What did he say? He did not say, 'No, I won't impose a reduction in wood supply'. He said:

That's a decision for Sustainable Timbers Tasmania. It's an operational matter.

That has sent shockwaves through the industry, minister. You could have cleared it up there, but it is obvious that you are crab-walking away from that commitment. We know you have been on the record on this issue for years, and it appears that you are now backing away.

The fig leaf that this minister is using is the Sustainable Yield Report. It seems like everything is building up to this Sustainable Yield Report that STT is currently in the process of assessing, which is due in about another year's time. The minister said:

The bottom line is that the Sustainable Yield Report is due out mid-next year and that's a very important report.

What is also important, minister, is what are you going to do? Are you going to guarantee delivery? If you cannot deliver the timber that you have promised and have promised time and time again, what are you going to do? I said:

You're not being clear, minister. Will those obligations for 137 000 cubic metres be met?

The minister said:

That obligation is in the law so it's clearly a matter for STT.

You are washing your hands of this issue - crab-walking away.

It is not just the bigger sawmillers that rely on the category one logs. I believe the country sawmillers are also in the gun. I know a number of these country sawmillers have had their contracts extended for only two years, so that will run out roughly in time for when the Sustainable Yield Report comes out. I believe that raises some suspicions amongst the country sawmillers, Mr Deputy Chair. They did not extend these contracts until 2027; they only extended them for a couple of years. I suspect they are going to do over the country sawmillers, in one way or another, to make up for those supply gaps in the 137 000 cubic metres for the contracts that are out to 2027.

You have contracts that end in 2023. You have an extra four years on those other contracts - it seems like you are lining up the country sawmillers. I asked the question:

Many sawmillers rely on category two sawlogs for their operations and they only have contracts for another two years.

I was seeking for the minister to rule out that these category two sawlogs that the country sawmillers largely rely on are going to be offered to the bigger sawmillers. Instead of giving them category one sawlogs - the higher quality sawlogs - are they going to do over the country sawmillers and hand those category two sawlogs to the bigger players that do have contracts out to 2027. What did the minister say? 'The resource security is very important'. Hello? I asked again:

Can you rule out offering category two saw logs to other sawmillers to make up for category one shortfalls?

What did he say?

We keep having questions about operational matters relevant to Sustainable Timbers Tasmania.

What does that mean? Is he washing his hands of commitments to country sawmillers? What are country sawmillers supposed to think when they read this?

There are also concerns in the industry that STT is selling logs to Victoria. Tasmanian industry is concerned that the logs they want - from native forest, but also from STT plantations - are going to Victoria. I tried to clear that up. Did I get an answer? Not really. I asked from a policy perspective:

Would you be concerned if STT was selling native logs to Victoria?

What did the minister say?

STT has a job to do and part of that job is to operate in a sustainable way.

He did not say, 'No logs are not going to Victoria, that is not true'. He would not clear that up. By omission, minister. You may get an opportunity today - can you clarify: is Sustainable Timbers Tasmania sending plantation logs, from the pruned and thinned resources especially, and native timber to Victoria? Is that big mill in Heyfield getting a leg-up from the Tasmanian industry? The sawmillers want these questions answered and these are things that have not been cleared up.

I have been very concerned about the future of the timber industry, given that the minister will not commit to the 137 000 cubic metres, and given that the country sawmillers seem to be getting the rough end of the pineapple, or he is lining them up.

I asked 'can you guarantee that Tasmanian sawmillers will get first go at the pruned and thinned plantations that basically the public has paid for?', and again, he would not answer that. That also shows concerns there are some big issues building up in the timber industry.

I asked 'should the Tasmanian sawmillers get first priority to the pruned and thinned plantation resource; should they take a policy position?' and he would not answer that. He talked about value adding and everything else.

Also, the minister is not standing up for the mining industry. I asked him about the legal threats from the Bob Brown Foundation, and whether he would step in and become a party to any legal challenge, whether he would defend Tasmania's own exploration approvals and our own mining approvals; and he would not. I sought to clear this matter up, and again in Estimates I did not receive an answer. I asked:

MMG have exploration approvals to do drilling at the South Marion oak site. The Bob Brown Foundation has threatened to bring legal action if they proceed. Are you confident that your approvals would withstand a legal challenge?

This is not only a question about the approvals at South Marion oak; this is about mining approvals in the whole state. For example, if Mount Lindsay mining approvals are on the offing, if the exploration of Mount Lindsay goes ahead with extra drilling, will our approvals that the mining industry relies on, withstand a legal challenge? This is a vital question for the confidence in the mining industry.

Ms O'Connor - The law is the law. If they can't withstand it, then they maybe not lawful.

Dr BROAD - The thing is, it is uncertain and uncertainty impacts investment. You have these legal threats from the Bob Brown Foundation -

Ms O'Connor - Where is the uncertainty?

Dr BROAD - that are going unchallenged. This minister will not help clear up this issue. It is about confidence in the industry. I have talked in this place about the Fraser Institute, and Tasmania's worst result when it comes to that scorecard from the industry itself. It was this minister; it is our worst ever result, and has us ranked lower than some countries in Africa and South America for a place to invest. That is one issue.

The other issue that he would not go into detail about is the Australian Bureau of Statistics mineral exploration data, which was out a few days ago, or possibly a week now. That report showed that exploration expenditure in the last two years has fallen by about two-thirds compared to the two years before the Liberals came into office in 2014.

Mineral exploration has fallen off a cliff. The figures also show that exploration expenditure fell by 30 per cent over the last quarter, down by almost a third, whereas the corresponding national figures from the other states show a 5 per cent increase over the same period. Why has exploration expenditure fallen off a cliff? The minister will not answer this.

We welcome the exploration incentives, but it is clear from these ABS figures that it is not enough. Mineral exploration is vital because without resources that the industry can prove they have in front of them, they cannot get investors on board. They cannot get investments, borrow money and get their operations off the ground, and existing mines struggle to keep operating. Exploration is a key measure of what is in front of the industry.

There are other things we did not get an answer about. We did not get an answer about deer. My colleague, member for Bass Ms Finlay asked about deer and especially the deer report. The last census data show that deer numbers are increasing at 5.6 per cent a year. That does not sound a lot but when you do the maths, the population will double every 13 years -

Ms O'Connor - Dr Broad has it all under control.

Dr BROAD - He has a report, too. Ms Finlay asked, 'Do you have the report?' The minister said, 'No, it is not with me at the moment'. I am not sure what that means because, from what I have heard, it has been handed to him. Now is an opportunity to clear that up - it is with him, or is it with him now? Has he waited until after Estimates and that report has suddenly appeared? I suspect it is sitting on his desk gathering dust. This is one of those tricky issues. We know this minister will not make tough decisions. He will kick the can down the road. He will come up with, 'no need to fear, dear', or some other catchcry like that. That will be all we will ever hear from the him.

Ms Finlay - That's going to come up now.

Dr BROAD - No, I have copyrighted that one, so he might have to come up with his own. You have to wonder with this minister. All he has are these catchphrases and no action.

It was very good to hear there has been some progress in an issue I raised in the past about the import of potatoes from South Australia, and the import risk assessment that needs to be updated. We have had COVID-19 intervene in that period, but it is great to hear the public consultation is happening. These risk assessments have to be up to date because they have to take into account current disease pressures, and not old ones. In South Australia there are new diseases that would put our industry at risk.

It seems the heat has gone out of the issue because when I asked how many kilograms of fresh potatoes had been imported from South Australia, I was pleased to hear there had been none. That is good for Tasmania's industry because no potatoes coming in means our industry is not at risk. We need that import risk assessment updated as a priority and it appears to be happening.

We also heard about fish stocks. It was depressing to hear the stock status of both sand flathead and calamari are listed as depleting. That is something we definitely should keep an eye on because sand flathead, especially, are a vital resource for our recreational fishers. We support our recreational fishers and we want them to be able to catch a feed. We are keen to see that any programs and processes put in place will work, including the changes in the size limits and so on. Calamari was also listed as depleting. These are two fish species we would like to see more of, so we will be keeping an eye on that.

It was shocking to see the report from TasNetworks staff about their mental health. Seventy per cent of respondents said their mental health was worse than when they started in TasNetworks; 85 per cent felt less valued and over 65 per cent said their mental health was impacting their ability to work. This was a shocking survey result. I was trying to urge the minister to address this as a matter of urgency and not simply push the questions out until the GBEs at the end of the year. This is urgent and it needs to be addressed. This mental health survey was so damning.

I would also like to mention that trade is very important.

Time expired.

[12.08 p.m.]

Mr STREET - Well, Chair, day four and we are almost done. There are only a couple of issues I briefly want to touch on. During the Veterans' Affairs portfolio there was mention of the Headstone Project, which Ms Butler has talked about a couple of times in this place. The Premier asked me to represent him at the unveiling of one of the stages of the Headstone Project at Cornelian Bay. It was the very first function I went to as an MP. I went, not knowing a massive amount about it, to be honest, but I met Andrea Gerrard -

Ms O'Connor - An incredible woman.

Mr STREET - A remarkable Tasmanian. The headstones and their production is important because we need to recognise our past service people. There are many unmarked graves out there. What most people do not understand is the amount of research and time that goes into the background work on the soldiers, and engagement with Work for the Dole participants to do that work and engage them in meaningful work.

I am happy to see that the Budget contains ongoing funding for that project. It is an important and special project. Andrea and her team should be incredibly proud, and it is something that Tasmania should be proud of, that we have somebody doing that work for us.

In Energy and Emissions Reduction, there was a lot of talk about hydrogen production, methods of production, green hydrogen versus blue versus brown hydrogen. The production of hydrogen is the great opportunity for the state of Tasmania in the next decade. I believe we can be a world leader in the production of green hydrogen, which is exactly what the world is going to be looking for. We are relying on coal-fired power stations to make hydrogen. It is a bit of a zero-sum game, is it not? What we are going to be able to produce in this state is what the world is going to be looking for and it is an industry that is going to be incredibly important for the future viability of the Tasmanian economy.

Speaking of which, another industry that is incredibly important to the entire Tasmanian economy but also to employment in my electorate of Franklin is the salmon industry. The salmon industry in Tasmania is not perfect and nobody who works or operates within it would say that it is perfect. However, to see the billboards that are currently on display on the mainland basically rubbishing the industry and rubbishing Tasmania's reputation is very distressing to me as a member of this place. I cannot imagine what it is like for the people who pour their blood, sweat and tears into those businesses, day in, day out, and are proud of the work they are doing. I hope the people who pay for those billboards reflect on what they are doing. It is counter-productive to everything that they are looking for -

Ms O'Connor - If your Government properly regulated the industry, we might not be having this conversation.

Mr STREET - Mr Deputy Chair, I am not even going to respond to that interjection except to say that the salmon industry is going to be important for the Tasmanian economy for decades to come. I believe that it has a bright future in Tasmania. The last thing we need is for the Greens and the anti-development brigade to turn it into another forest industry war, another war site for protesters, and for funding opportunities for groups like the Bob Brown Foundation.

I probably will not need my whole 10 minutes but I want to finish on one of the items that Dr Broad raised and that was the funding of the *Wild Things* video. To be perfectly honest, Dr Broad, I would have thought that it was better left alone after your couple of attempts in this place last year, or it might have been earlier this year, to have a crack. Dr Broad is advocating for the Resources minister to interfere in the independent funding process that sits within Arts Tasmania. Let us be very clear about that. That process sits independent of the Arts minister. It sits independent of Cabinet. We provide funding to Arts Tasmania, they run funding rounds -

Dr Broad - The minister said he was going to stop it. He said it.

Mr STREET - Dr Broad, you advocated in this place for him intervening in this. You did.

Dr Broad - He said he was going to.

Mr STREET - I am talking about what you said in this place, Dr Broad. You said that the minister should intervene.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR - Mr Street, I remind you to direct your comments through the Chair.

Mr STREET - I beg your pardon, Deputy Chair. What Dr Broad did was advocate for the minister interfering in that funding process. The Government does not get to decide what Arts Tasmania funds. Arts Tasmania and the independent process that they set up, it is for them to decide, and the Arts minister then signs off on those grant deeds. What you are talking about is government-controlled propaganda funding.

Dr Broad - Not really.

Mr STREET - No, it absolutely is, Dr Broad. You are effectively saying that the Government should be able to decide what they fund, that they should only fund things that have a positive view of the Government.

Dr Broad - I didn't say that at all.

Mr STREET - That is exactly the implication you made with the contributions that you made in this place: anything we disagree with as members of the Government, that is critical of something we are doing or is critical of something that we support, we should not provide funding to it. That is what you are saying. The arts community and anyone else who applies for government funding in Tasmania should be very worried that if you were in government, Dr Broad, you would be interfering in Arts Tasmania's funding.

Ms O'Connor - He'd be the culture police.

Mr STREET - Exactly, the culture police to make sure that the only things that were funded were the things that you agreed with. There was a bloke back in Nazi Germany, Dr Broad, who would be incredibly proud of the position you have taken on this.

Dr Broad - You know how that works. As soon as you bring that in, you have lost the argument.

Mr STREET - No, I have not. It is the exact correlation with what I am talking about and that is the government controlling what is produced by independent sectors of the economy, Dr Broad. Next time you come in here asking the minister to interfere in an independent process, actually reflect -

Dr Broad - He said he would.

Mr STREET - actually reflect on what you -

Dr Broad - He said he would.

Mr STREET - Actually reflect on what you are asking him to do. Mr Deputy Chair, during the MPI there was a comment made that the Labor government is going to have to pay off the Liberal Party's debt. We will have bigger issues because I think hell will have frozen over when that happens.

In saying that, the next time you direct a member of the government to do something, reflect on the fact that one day you might actually be a minister in this place and have the power to do exactly what you are asking Mr Barnett to do. Do you really want to be known as the minister who directed Arts Tasmania on what it can and cannot fund?

[12.16 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR - Mr Deputy Chair, in the brief amount of time that we are given to respond to a whole range of portfolio issues, I am going to talk about a tale of four reports relating to the mismanagement of the Water portfolio under Mr Barnett.

The first report that we asked a series of questions about to no avail, I must say, was a report that the Government tried to hide for more than a year and a half where a decision was made internally by someone - whether it was the secretary or the minister or somebody else - not to release the temporal and spatial patterns in river health across Tasmania and the influence of environmental factors.

This report was one of a series of water ecology reports that the department has been undertaking for many years. Every report prior to this one was publicly released. Why was this report not released? We could not get a straight answer from the minister about that. The secretary of the department told us that this incredibly scientific and detailed report was superseded by another report, the Rural Water Use Strategy, which is a policy document. I will get to that one in a moment.

The temporal and spatial patterns report found that river health across Tasmania in most of our major river systems is in decline and this decline has accelerated from 2014. I refer any member who is interested to pages 97 and 98 of the report that the Government tried to conceal, which we obtained in the caretaker period through right to information. It makes for alarming reading. It is also very much in the public interest.

Tasmanians should know what state their rivers are in and this was produced by scientists in the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and the Environment in good faith in the public interest. One of those scientists who, for 25 years, had dedicated his life to the health of Tasmania's rivers, water ecologist, Chris Bobbi, was so dismayed by the department's attempt to conceal the information on river health that he resigned from DPIPWE. He told a

national audience that he believed the department was failing in its duty of care to protect Tasmania's rivers.

When we tried to get the answer about why this incredibly important scientific report was not made public, we were told by the secretary that it had been superseded by the Rural Water Use Strategy. The Rural Water Use Strategy is a policy document. It makes no mention of the temporal and spatial patterns report on river health. It also explicitly excludes examination of urban water supplies and it says that is outside the scope of the Rural Water Use Strategy. It gives passing mention to river health, making no mention of the most important report on river health - the one that was finalised a year beforehand.

This Rural Water Use Strategy props up the Government's plan, the AgriVision plan to increase by 10 times the farmgate value of agricultural production in Tasmania. What we know is that in order to do that, the Government would have to suck the rivers dry.

The third report I want to talk about is the Tasmanian Freshwater Project Report, freshwater condition, by the highly-regarded Dr Christine Coughanowr, which was released in August of this year. Her findings are incredibly alarming. She says:

Tasmania's freshwater resources can no longer be considered clean, green and abundant. The recent Monitoring River Health reviews (2018, 2020) indicated that up to 43 per cent of sites were classified as impaired, and that nearly 70 per cent of sites have declined - often significantly - during the final five years of the program.

River flows have declined in many rivers across the state. ... This decline in river condition is playing out within the context of poor information about existing water use, due to limited metering together with ambitious growth targets for agriculture, salmon farming and renewable energy ...

What I forgot to mention is that the Rural Water Use Strategy, which excludes river health and urban water supplies, makes provision for hydrogen. How that fits into a rural water use strategy, I cannot understand.

We raised Dr Coughanowr's report with the minister and he made some glib reference to Dr Coughanowr being invited to the round table on rural water use. When you go back and have a look at the *Hansard*, the impression you gain is that Dr Coughanowr will be an integral part of that river health round table. No, we have checked. Dr Coughanowr, highly respected, who used to run the Derwent Estuary Program, has only been offered an opportunity to brief the round table. Another example of the minister being utterly misleading.

What we do know from Estimates - and I will get to the fourth report in a moment - is that there is extremely limited understanding of water quality in Tasmania. We believe there is no nutrient sampling. We are still waiting for a question on notice about what level of sampling there is of nitrogen and phosphorus in Tasmania's rivers.

We are really concerned about the state of Tasmania's rivers, together with people like the Anglers Alliance of Tasmania, oyster growers and, of course, TasWater, which wrote a damning reply to the Rural Water Use Strategy which, again, was dismissed out of hand by the minister.

I sat down with my 21-year-old daughter the other night to have a look at Mr Barnett's Estimates and I took some pleasure from the look on her face, which reflected how many of us felt at that table. It was utter disbelief that a minister of the Crown could dissemble, obfuscate, conceal, and refuse to answer in the way that Mr Barnett does. That is one thing I would have to agree with Dr Broad about: at the Estimates table the minister you are least able to get a straight answer out of is Mr Barnett.

The fourth report was the national *7.30 Report*, which went to air last week talking about the declining state of Tasmania's rivers, the attempts to conceal the critical scientific river health report, and the testimony of anglers like Rick Lohrey who has been fishing the rivers of north eastern Tasmania for more than 40 years. He says of the South Esk:

You could catch fish pretty much any time, anywhere on any stretch of the river. It was just a magnificent river. Now, long stretches of the stream just appear to be barren.

The *7.30 Report* told a national audience that our minister responsible for water, Mr Barnett, did not read the most critical scientific report on the state of Tasmania's rivers, the one his department, or he, tried to hide for more than a year, the *Temporal and Spatial Patterns in River Health* report.

We also saw on *7.30*, reports from the waterbug program which shows that life in the rivers is in decline, particularly in areas of intensifying agricultural production. Why is this important, Mr Deputy Chair? Because water is life.

We constantly hear catchphrases from the minister like 'water is liquid gold'. That tells you a lot about his state of mind. It is all about the making of money. It is not about the fact that without clean, fresh water, we are lost socially and economically. The evidence is mounting that under this Government our rivers are under increasing pressure.

This issue first came to my attention in a really deep way about two or three years ago when I started talking to people. I was talking to a fellow who installs dams and pumping systems on rural properties who had been working in the water space for many years, and he was alarmed. That set off an alarm bell in me, and the more our office investigates this issue, the more worried we are about the state of Tasmania's rivers.

We do not believe the department is fulfilling its duty of care to Tasmania's river systems. We believe Chris Bobbi. We are deeply concerned about this minister's mismanagement of water in Tasmania, bending over backward for irrigators, going hell for leather for an agrivision policy that will not only see our surface water supplies depleted but now we know irrigators are after groundwater.

We are in a drying climate. We know water is life and we need to get on top of this. We are prepared to work in a constructive way with Government and across the parliament to make sure we have the best possible water management regime in place, that we have monitoring of water quality, that we are testing for nutrients and that there is an equitable allocation of water resources in Tasmania.

This is a very important task for the parliament. The climate is drying. Water will change. Rainfall patterns are changing. We cannot just take it as a given that we will continue to have access to clean, fresh and abundant water. The science confirms this.

Time expired.

[12.26 p.m.]

Mr WINTER - Mr Deputy Chair, I will talk predominantly about Energy as that was the component I was there for. We heard a lot about hydrogen and we asked a lot of questions about hydrogen. At various times, the minister helpfully tried to explain how hydrogen is made. It did not answer my question.

The idea we can produce green hydrogen here in Tasmania is an exciting opportunity, but it is not an idea that is exclusive to Tasmania. Last week, in the Western Australian budget, for example, the minister there announced a new fund to drive renewable energy investment, presumably using some of Tasmania's GST money. The McGowan Government will invest an additional \$61.5 million to supercharge Western Australian growth in renewable hydrogen. We are in a race. We know the EU is putting about half-a-trillion dollars into this work as well. We have other states trying to develop their own industries but, helpfully, we have a lot of interest here in Tasmania, which is very good. Tasmania has to do everything it can to try to ensure its own hydrogen production is active as soon as possible.

I was pleased when the first question I asked the minister in relation to this, he gave me a very clear answer. I asked if he was committed to the commencement of hydrogen production between next year and 2024, as outlined in his action plan, and the minister said, 'Yes', and I thought we were off to a good start. I thought the minister is in the mood to answer some questions and we are going to make some good progress here. Sadly, that was where the clear answers dried up, about 10 seconds in. The rest of it, I was quite frustrated by the minister either not knowing the answer or being unwilling to give answers to questions he either should know the answer to or could have found out.

We have a problem with our hydrogen action strategy and the Tasmanian Government's plan to produce green hydrogen. It is with Hydro Tasmania, and whether it can provide the power required to support such an industry. In his answers, Mr Barnett said:

I am trying to explain to the member, when the wind is blowing really hard you get low-cost electricity and when the wind is not, you need hydro. You need that dispatchable energy, which is why it is so important.

Hydro Tasmania's position on this matter is important. We know that Andrew Forrest asked for 250 megawatts of power to support the green hydrogen project he wants to get up and running in this state. We know, from his answers, that he was told he could not get access to that power at any price. We have also learned since then that it appears Hydro Tasmania's position may have changed. As I said, I am going on answers that were not exactly direct. I asked the minister:

What is the change in position from Hydro Tasmania from a few weeks ago until today, where now it can provide 250 megawatts of power to Fortescue Future Industries?

Mr Barnett proceeded to try to explain how hydrogen is made for the next little bit, which as I said, was a bit frustrating, to be fair.

What is clear is, since Andrew Forrest asked for 250 megawatts of power to now, it appears as though the position from Hydro Tasmania has changed. What also has changed is the CEO of Hydro Tasmania. We asked questions about Mr Albertini and whether he was asked to resign. It is clear from the answers - and the minister would be more than welcome to clear this up - I asked 'Are you aware or not, whether he was asked to resign?'. Mr Barnett said, 'What I am aware of is that I am very grateful to Evangelista Albertini for his contribution and his service'.

I asked for clarification. I asked 'Is the minister saying that he is not aware of Mr Albertini being asked to resign? I am asking about your awareness, you are the minister for Energy'. Again, I was told that this is a matter for Hydro Tasmania's scrutiny.

It is a matter for the minister for Energy to know who is the CEO for Hydro Tasmania and for what reason he is no longer the CEO. Is it to do with his position or Hydro Tasmania's former position on Fortescue Future Industries on hydrogen production? Is it telling a proponent that it cannot provide 250 megawatts? Now the position is not quite clear but could be clarified very simply by the minister for Energy. I think it is now saying it can provide 250 megawatts of power. What is the situation when it comes to Hydro Tasmania's very important contribution to hydrogen production in Tasmania? It is a critical component of this.

Speaking to proponents of wind across Tasmania over the last few months, there are a number of projects coming online but the interest I have in this is when these projects are going to be coming online. We have heard during the Estimates about Whaleback Ridge and its concerns about the length of time that it is taking for them to get through the process. We heard that the Coordinator-General's office has had some problems recruiting that has led to some delays in appointing the appropriate people to assist. It is clear that the business is frustrated and they have a contribution to make, not only potentially to hydrogen but to renewable energy production in Tasmania. These are the sorts of projects that will make projects like Marinus potentially stack up, projects like hydrogen stack up, and we need to have those renewable projects coming on line.

We need to have those projects coming online as quickly as possible for hydrogen but for other projects as well. We also need to have a clear idea of who is running the portfolio. It is quite clear that between the minister and the Premier, there is a lot of interest in the way Hydro Tasmania is looking after its hydrogen dealings. Mr Gutwein said that, 'The Hydro will always deal with the commercial aspects of new developments. As shareholder ministers we can influence those outcomes regarding where I want to see the state go with hydrogen'. I do not agree with Hydro's statement a couple of weeks ago that there was no energy available. If that question were asked now, 100 per cent of the needs can be sourced from renewable sources.

Ms O'Connor - So what's up?

Mr WINTER - What is up, what is going on with this project? It would be very easy for the minister to clarify these questions but he has not.

The other question I have is about his action plan. Hydro Tasmania is referenced quite a few times in the Hydrogen Action Plan, but what is not referenced is whether it can actually provide power to hydrogen projects in Tasmania.

I asked if Hydro Tasmania was consulted about this very specific issue. Was Hydro asked if they can provide power to new projects? Again, I did not get a clear answer.

I said, specifically in relation to its capacity to actually provide power to a new venture - this is Hydro Tasmania - and I quoted a draft released in 2019, and the final version was released on 2 March. Hydro Tasmania issued a release to say that it supported the plan but no answer to the specific question if Hydro Tasmania was ever asked whether it can provide power to the hydrogen projects.

This is quite symbolic of the Government: we have a plan in place; we can see it, we can understand and we can see the targets. But these are very real questions about the ability of Tasmania for the ambitious goals within it to be achieved.

As I said at the start, the only question that Mr Barnett clearly answered was:

Are you committed to the commencement of hydrogen production between next year, 2022, and 2024, as outlined in your action plan?

The answer was, yes. I do not know how that is going to happen. I am not sure if the minister is just kicking the can down the road and we might see an announcement later on. For now, at least, the Government says it is committed to getting these projects up and running between next year and 2024. I sincerely hope it happens but I have my doubts.

[12.36 p.m.]

Mr TUCKER - Mr Deputy Chair, first, I have to question Dr Broad. The first thing he talks about is the protester laws. He is all words and no action. Our minister stands up, shoulder to shoulder, with our agricultural workers, with our forestry workers and Dr Broad gets up here and gives us lip-service. When it comes to the crunch, where is he? Lock-step with the Greens. We know where he votes.

This Gutwein Liberal Government 2021-22 Budget backs in our plan to secure Tasmania's future. Our primary industries including agriculture, fisheries, energy, mining and forestry are the backbone of our economy. These are the areas I would like to focus my remarks on today.

In Tasmania, we are privileged to enjoy a state that has been built on the back of these productive industries matched by strong and sustainable environmental practices. We have built our economy on these industries and our sustainable approach to these industries has resulted in the proud fishers, farmers, foresters, miners and dam builders we see across the state today. We are backing in these industries in this year's Budget of which I am proud as a member of Lyons, an area that represents many of these industries.

I want to touch on a few key areas today and how the Government is supporting them into the future. Firstly, in agriculture, we are backing in Tassie farmers. As a farmer myself, I am passionate about supporting our hard-working farmers. Only this party truly recognises

the importance of agriculture. It is putting food on the table and supporting jobs and sustainable growth in our regional communities.

Our Government is delivering a suite of initiatives that will accelerate our agricultural sector and create more jobs and sustainable growth as we continue to grow our annual farm gate value of agriculture to \$10 billion by 2050. To do this, the Government is investing \$10.2 million in a new ag-protection package to futureproof Tasmania's agriculture and manage risks to primary industries. We are also investing \$3 million in a new Agriculture Development Fund, supporting agricultural research development and extension in Tasmanian agriculture.

We are investing \$5.6 million in a new Community Farming Partnership Program to support farming communities, local farming issues and improvements to farm safety. Notably, we are also delivering on our agreement with the University of Tasmania to establish a new Tasmanian agricultural precinct at Newnham with an investment of \$15 million in the state-of-the-art research facility at the new precinct, a real boon for the north of this state.

Second, when it comes to water and water security, we are investing almost \$50 million including \$30.2 million to support water resources and irrigation across the state, something that is crucial for the sector. We are bolstering tranche three of pipeline of the Pipeline to Prosperity irrigation plan with \$23.7 million for the Don, Sassafras, Tamar, Northern Midlands and Fingal, and we are funding \$5 million for Tasmanian irrigation to develop a business case for the south-east extension.

We have also invested \$1.5 million for the Rural Water Use Strategy alongside the \$10.2 million in our new Ag-Protection package, to future-proof industries and manage risks.

Mr Deputy Chair, recreational fishing is a vital part of the Tasmanian way of life and the economy, including in my electorate. That is why the government is investing \$350 000 to support Tasmania's first ever 10-year Recreational Sea Fishing Strategy. Importantly, this includes for greater sustainability of the flathead resource, which is the most popular fish for most Tasmanian fishers in terms of take and accessibility.

Among many measures in fisheries and support for our seafood sector in the Budget, we are also investing \$3 million in our Wild Fisheries Action Plan. This includes funding to support processing, product development and new market development as well as supporting skills development and fleet innovation.

I will now turn to our sustainable forestry industry. In this Budget, we have created a new \$10 million fund to support more on-island processing projects, meaning more value-adding here in the state and more jobs. I note that the program opened last week.

It was also fantastic to note that nearly 400 people from the sector came together last Friday to celebrate the Tasmanian timber award, including the minister in his Huon Pine bow tie; and I must also mention his dancing skills. We are also supporting the Tasmanian Timber Promotions Board with \$1.15 million to help sell Tasmanian timber products domestically and across the world, through the nearly-\$2 million marketing campaign.

This will also include a Wood Encouragement Officer for 2022 to help drive the supply chain demand. To support skills in the future workforce of the sector, we have invested \$300 000 to support the establishment of a new Forestry Diversity Action Plan to help increase

gender and culture diversity in the forestry sector; as well as \$150 000 to help drive skills for the next generation of workers, in partnership with Arbre Forest Industries.

We are also taking mining to the next level, with our measures of support in the Budget. This includes funding of more than \$3.5 million, with \$1.5 million to extend our popular current funded exploration drilling grant initiative to 2025; \$2 million towards a new geoscience initiative, which will be supplemented by up to \$3 million by the Australian Government; and \$150 000 to TMEC to establish a Diversity Action Plan for the sector.

Importantly, for jobs and industry in the state, the mining and minerals processing sector has again proven its importance to the Tasmanian economy. The sector accounts for more than 60 per cent of our exports and provides approximately 5000 jobs across the state, many in regional areas. All the while, in their alternative budget, the Greens propose to tax all our productive industries out of existence, including our mining industry, by increasing royalties by 150 per cent and raping and pillaging our environment to fund their budget. We are seeing calls from the Bob Brown Foundation and the Greens to shut mining down and destroy hundreds of jobs. We support a balanced and more sustainable future that balances appropriately protecting the environment while ensuring jobs into the future.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government believes in protecting our productive industries. We believe that Tasmanians should be able to go to work and run their businesses, Dr Broad, in a safe manner, free from threats and disruptions. This is why we are committed to our workplace protection legislation that has been endorsed by the Tasmanian people three times, and now must pass parliament. We ask Labor to support us. We know that the anti-everything Tasmanian Greens will oppose this legislation simply because that is what they do. Don't they, Dr Broad? We now need Labor to support the workers they say they represent, by supporting our workplace protection bill.

We also need to back our productive industries and our exporters to make sure the world knows what is on offer. This Budget includes an additional \$6 million to back our export businesses. More trade ultimately means more jobs for our state. This includes delivery of our final three years of Tasmania's trade strategy and supports our trade advocates in the US, Japan and Singapore, further to our presence in China, to help get our products into new and existing markets.

It also supports our integrated trade strategy with New Zealand, with the recent announcement by PFG for its new contract for three vessels to the New Zealand navy. We are already seeing the benefits of closer collaboration across the Tasman. With exports now at record levels at \$3.98 billion in July 2021, we are well on the way to reaching our \$15 billion goal by 2050. I will finish with a quick comment on the economy. The good news is the Tasmanian economy continues to charge ahead, according to positive ABS data recently released, with confident locals fuelling our state economic growth.

Time expired.

Recognition of Visitors

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR - Honourable members, I welcome members of the Break O'Day Liberal Party branch.

Members - Hear, hear.

[12.46 p.m]

Ms FINLAY - Mr Deputy Chair, I rise today to give my contribution and reflections on the Estimates for former senator, Mr Barnett. I believe that it is important to start on a positive note, and I put on record my acknowledgement and my respect for the team at Biosecurity. I know it has been a particularly tough time in a number of the Estimates sessions over the last week.

Concerns were raised for their welfare and the pressure of the work that they have undertaken. I know everybody who is working really hard to protect the interests of Tasmania right now deserves our respect and our support because it has been a very tough time.

I accept that members on the other side of the House talk about the importance of our lead industries, and their contribution. My concern, however, relates to passive support versus active support. Particularly in agriculture, fisheries, and aquaculture, we know that many tensions exist within the industries and sectors - between large agriculture and small agriculture; between recreational and commercial fisheries; between aquaculture operators and the community seeking social licence.

It is all very well and good to respond to questions or to raise support in this place or in the community; however, support is not action. Where we are finding challenges right now, we need to step up. I suggest we need to step up together, across both sides of the House and in the community, to ensure that important and significant industries in Tasmania are not at risk.

Mr Street spoke earlier about the salmon industry. There is no doubt that the salmon industry in Tasmania is significant and important. There is no doubt that it is world-class. However, members of the industry and people across this House recognise that there is always work to be done, and improvements that need to happen. There is no doubt that it will play an important part in the Tasmanian economy for decades to come.

Making a statement that says, 'We support the industry' is different from acting to protect the industry. I urge the minister to stand with the Premier to invite action and support from this side of the House to bring the industry to his attention. The risk of losing social licence risks the potential and the benefit of that investment to Tasmania. More needs to be done. Passive support is not enough. Genuine action is required here to protect what is important to Tasmania. When things are difficult we cannot just put our head in the sand and not worry.

There are many complex issues within this ministerial portfolio. One that may be seen to be small but, for the members of the community that it impacts is large, is the complex tension between, say, recreational and commercial fisheries. There was a question raised in Estimates last week about a complex set of endorsements that we know have a number of people seeking clarity from the minister and his department around the ability for intergenerational fisheries to continue.

The response we were provided, particularly regarding an endorsement that operates at the head of the Tamar River, is that work is going on to review that; and the review will seek to ensure that if fisheries are seen to be sustainable - and there are protections for both the

commercial and the recreational fisheries - that an outcome will be provided. The clock is ticking, the work is said to be undertaken and there are expectations in the community of a conclusion in the next couple of months. In addition to those tensions, there are also tensions between me and the minister over what has been raised on the other side of the House as very important, which is irrigation.

If this place seeks to support these important industries and deliver the infrastructure necessary to meet the big aims of the industry and the minister in his leadership, then support needs to be given at all times to all people.

I want to touch on irrigation first in terms of the tranche 3 projects, and reflect on past conversations. I am new in this place and the minister has sought, perhaps, to suggest that because I am new, I may not understand good governance or good process exactly. I can assure this place that governance and process has been something not only important to me for many years, but something I have a good grasp of.

I want to read into the *Hansard* some statements taken from Estimates last week regarding the minister's attempt to present to the community as real action what was, in fact, fleeting activity in an election campaign period seeking to demonstrate work that really was not going on.

There has been increased demand in terms of the tranche 3 irrigation projects, which is fantastic and should be met, which will require further investment. But it is well known that as schemes are developed, and I quote, 'they start at a concept stage and then go through a well-understood and well-trodden path to develop a business case' because, as it was said at Estimates last week, 'money just doesn't come out of thin air, it needs to be based on a business case'.

I understand that and the minister would understand that. Good governance requires hard work. It requires quality work and quality business cases, based on real data and information - that when you are going to seek money to invest in essential infrastructure in Tasmania, you have done the work before you make light-hearted or light-touch approaches in order to just promote that through an election campaign.

I quote: 'You don't just write a letter and expect \$100 million; a business case needs to be put together.' The minister suggested, when we brought it to his attention, that we would be embarrassed. Although the minister might say we are misunderstanding the process here and should be embarrassed because of that, if the minister is not embarrassed by his efforts to flag the need for a further \$100 million, he might share the letter he wrote to the then deputy prime minister and the reply provided, which indicated to the minister that: 'Additional funding requests for a project will not be considered until further details on demand, scope, benefit and cost are available.'

See, minister? You cannot just write a letter on the 26 March, the day an election is called, then work with your colleagues to ensure that a response does not come back until the 6 May, only days after the election has concluded, to ask for important funds. I trust you will do the work to ensure that you can secure it, so that further demand is provided for. That is what our important sector deserves.

In the last few minutes I have, I will speak about another irrigation matter, not one of the Tasmanian irrigation projects, but irrigation 'surety' is a word I hear a lot. I hear a lot about certainty and about confidence, but surety for the irrigators who draw from Meadowbank Dam. In Estimates last week, the minister was fully aware from pressure from this community in understanding the importance of this community, their access to water over a period that Hydro were doing maintenance on the Meadowbank Dam, that time is of the essence. The opportunity to do works in 2022 has already passed because these irrigators that need to retool and restructure themselves, and move their pumps significantly in some circumstances, will not be able to get that work done now before February 2022. If work is not done and the negotiations are not concluded, we are also putting at risk any ability to deliver in 2023.

Last week it was suggested that a conversation would happen on Friday or earlier this week. Not everyone works around the clock and not everyone works super hard, but I understand that close to midnight last night, a message was sent to one of the irrigators to say that follow-up will occur.

Minister, it is essential that you, through your department and in negotiations with Hydro and the irrigators, confirm access to water before any future maintenance occurs, and that those irrigators who, on behalf of our Tasmanian community, produce tens of millions of dollars' worth of value in the various works they provide, are given that surety and certainty that nothing will happen that will impact their ability to draw on the water. They need to continue to operate the things they have invested in for tens of years. When we talk about big irrigation projects or small irrigation projects, when we talk about surety and certainty, they deserve a response if not today, this week to ensure that they know what they can be assured of for their production into the future.

Time expired.

[12.56 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER - Mr Deputy Chair, I rise to speak to Committee A and Mr Barnett. I will be talking about the Veterans' Affairs portfolio but there is another matter. It reminded me when Ms O'Connor previously spoke about river health in this debate.

I wrote to the minister about the dumping of debris just outside the Longford area on the South Esk River. This was prior to the election. During the election I received a response from the Environment Protection Authority, not from the minister. That was a bit alarming because in my correspondence, I was talking about the South Esk River and the response I received from the EPA was to do with the Upper Esk River, which is a completely different part of the Esk. We had documented photographs with a time line of many months of what looks like a landowner dumping debris along the actual bank of the South Esk River which, as most people in the Chamber would be aware, is a flood-prone area.

A Pitt & Sherry report was commissioned in 2012 about Longford's growth and it was a good report. One of the things the report specified was for there never to be any dumping or any blockage of any kind placed in that part of the South Esk River because of the danger of that to the people of Longford and that whole area because it is a flood-prone area. There was also the fact that we were not quite sure what was being dumped there. It looked like landfill of sorts but the actual pollutants and whether that would leak down into the Launceston water supply was another issue raised.

What was concerning was the response from the EPA that it was not even worthy of investigating. We will keep pursuing it. I have been in contact with the local council because most of the responsibility was put onto the local council, but they were not involved in that at all. I am making sure that the minister is aware of the issue and the importance of river health, not only to ensure that it is not polluted but to also make sure that it can flow freely to protect our communities. There is prime agricultural land around there and the last thing you would want to do is put debris in the middle of a flood-prone area.

I will move on to talk about the Veterans' Affairs portfolio.

The Committee suspended from 1 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2021 (No. 36)

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2021 (No. 37)

Reports of Estimates Committees

In Committee

Resumed from above.

Ms BUTLER - Mr Chair, the Veterans' Affairs portfolio, as far as we could tell from the Estimates hearing, showed that it has significantly reduced over the forward budget. In 2020-21 there was \$776 000 allocated; in 2021-22 it is a significant boost to \$1.2 million but then over 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 the amount allocated for Veterans' Affairs funding actually reduces by, on estimate, around \$200 000 per year. This shortfall is not made up over the forward Estimates.

A clear answer as to why there is a \$200 000 shortfall in the forward Estimates for Veterans' Affairs was explained in a convoluted fashion by the minister with other one-off payments apparently making up for that shortfall. According to the budget Estimates, there is a shortfall in Veterans' Affairs funding by \$200 000 a year. It is certainly not record funding, as the minister has stated.

I talked about the Headstone Project during our Estimates hearing. I would like to go back to talking about the privilege that I had in providing the closing address at the recent Headstone Project, a ceremonial service in Oatlands and Woodsdale for Private Sydney Palmer and Private George Hardwick. According to the Headstone Project team - and I raised this in Estimates with the minister - the costs for their work comes down to about \$600 per soldier. They are doing an amazing job. They use quite a lot of volunteer assistance. Andrea Gerrard does a terrific job looking after the Headstone Project. We know that the state Government has provided the funding to the Headstone Project. There is a one-off payment in this budget for \$30 000. During Estimates, we asked the minister whether they would consider making that \$30 000 a recurrent payment for the Headstone Project team. We know that the work that they do is extremely important and we would ask the minister to consider that.

Another aspect which we raised during our hearing was to do with concessions for veterans. During that hearing we noted that some states offer a lot more to veterans for concessions than we do here in Tasmania. Today in this parliament, I thought I would run

through some of the differentiations between us and other states. We do not offer free entry to national parks; some other states in Australia do provide free entry to veterans as part of their concessions programs.

Also, many more concessions are available to interstate veterans. For example, in Victoria there is a concession on stamp duty. They also have a concession for excess electricity. They have a controlled load electricity concession. In Victoria there is an electricity transfer fee waiver - many of the other states do that as well. There is a medical cooling concession; there is a winter gas concession - and do not get me started on gas concessions because we really do need to start thinking about how we can provide gas concessions in Tasmania. There is an excess gas concession as well as the normal winter gas concession.

They actually have a fire services property levy concession as well in Victoria and a water and sewerage connection scheme. Many states also offer pet registration concessions to veterans as well. I do not believe that we do that here but I would love to be proven incorrect. It would be a wonderful thing for us to provide that to veterans.

There is also a service to property charge connection but very little from what I can see about mental health concessions for veterans which would be a really important aspect, especially considering some of the effects of the trauma that they have endured through some of their service. Having a concession for veterans for mental health services would be something that we should be thinking about.

We know that nationally the Veterans' Affairs department has reached out to more than 200 000 ex-servicemen and women offering support in the wake of the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan. I talked to the minister about this during our Estimates hearing. We know that unfortunately 66 000 Afghan military and police who fought hard against the Taliban have lost their lives. We know that the withdrawal of the US and allied forces has reminded many Vietnam veterans of the withdrawal of Saigon in April 1975 so that trauma for a lot of those veterans is quite acute at the moment. I spoke to the minister about that and we know in both situations soldiers were left in those countries. In Saigon and in Kabul there have been huge difficulties for those communities and we saw images of chaotic evacuations.

Time expired.

[2.37 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT - Mr Chair, I am very pleased to make a contribution on the Budget Estimate Committee's report. I note that it is all about stimulating our economy, supporting our community, tracking investment and supporting more jobs. It is delivering one of the highest levels of confidence in Australia in our community and in business, all of this during a very challenging period during COVID-19. It is a great tribute to our Premier and Treasurer for his leadership during this time and the team across government, a united team.

I often use the words 'Team Tasmania' to describe the work that is going on in this state, together with the challenges that we have. It is fantastic working shoulder to shoulder with the key stakeholders in our community to support our community, to deliver more jobs, grow our economy and respond in a positive way to COVID-19. In all my portfolio areas - farming, forestry, fishing, agriculture, seafood, aquaculture, trade, energy and emissions reduction - it is a real honour and a privilege to share a few remarks this afternoon with respect to the importance of those portfolios and what we are doing as a government.

I cannot go past today's fantastic news about agriculture. The Rabobank report, the survey that came out, has just advised that Tasmania is leading Australia when it comes to confidence in agriculture: 100 per cent of those surveyed indicated that they were expecting much improved conditions or the same improved conditions going forward. It is a fantastic result across the country. There are very high levels of confidence as well but Tasmania topped the box. It is a great credit to agriculture and we are backing agriculture very strongly. I will have more to say about that shortly.

We have just hit record exports of \$3.98 billion. Exports means jobs, jobs, jobs. We are delivering a \$6 million support package for our trade integration strategy over the coming years, then with regard to the mining and mineral processing sector, royalties doubled in that 12-month period.

We have just come off another high with 100 per cent fully self-sufficient in renewable energy and we have passed that legislation to go to 150 per cent by 2030 then 200 per cent by 2040. We have a lot of plans in store and I will share a few more remarks about that shortly.

I indicated that we are totally united; the other side is divided, fractured and paralysed by the infighting. It is disappointing. No budget response in the form of an alternative budget, and no policies or plans for the Labor Party. That is where they are at. I will share some more reflections with respect to those who have made contributions and respond where I can to that.

What a wonderful package of support for small and medium-size businesses, and business over the last couple of days, with the announcement from the Premier/Treasurer and the Minister for Small Business Jane Howlett. We are pleased and proud of that contribution, and the feedback has been very positive.

Regarding agriculture, the life blood of our rural and regional communities, we had an excellent summary at budget Estimates, highlighting the \$50 million budget initiative - one of the most comprehensive and visionary budget initiatives for agriculture in recent years.

Water is liquid gold and it is backed with \$30 million of support, with \$23.7 million of that for irrigation. Water has been a topic of discussion during budget Estimates. I point out that we hit a record high 921 000 megalitres of high-surety irrigation water for the 2020-21 year - a 5.5 per cent increase on last year's record levels. More water means more crops, more value-adding premium products, more wine grapes, leafy greens, vegetables, berries, blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, and the like. You have seen the poly-tunnels -

Ms O'Connor - Yum.

Mr BARNETT - Yum, that is right. Tasmanian fruit and vegetables. I was in the supermarket two nights ago and it is there for all to see, putting food on the table of Tasmanians, not just delivering jobs in rural and regional Tasmania. Thank you to those in the agricultural sector, the farmers, the businesses and those who work in this space.

I will respond to the Leader of the Greens with respect to the river health report. I have perused that internal deliberative report and been briefed on it. It provided a range of data and information which has been used to inform the Rural Water Use Strategy. The major recommendations from the report were covered in the Rural Water Use Strategy and are already being proactively addressed.

To make it very clear, we take it seriously and that is why we backed it with \$1.5 million to implement the Rural Water Use Strategy. We have established the Rural Water Roundtable with the best brains in Tasmania around that table: key stakeholders, conservation organisations, my department. Thank you, Deidre Wilson, for chairing that round table.

With regard to Ms Coughanowr who is an author of one of those reports, she has been invited to that round table to contribute -

Dr Woodruff - Not according to her, she hasn't. She is not a member of the round table. She is providing some scientific evidence.

Mr BARNETT - That is what I have advised previously and will confirm on the record: she has been invited to make a contribution to the round table -

Dr Woodruff - She is not part of it, though.

Mr BARNETT - As I said, we take it seriously and that report is also being made available to members of the round table. We are also funding two new officers in my department in terms of the river health project, so there is a lot going on.

With respect to the rural water strategy, that took nearly two years. It was released in March this year. I thank all those who were involved in that. There will be a lot more said and done with respect to that strategy in the months and years ahead. I thank the Government for the opportunity to establish that round table and to get the best brains in Tasmania looking at the strategy and delivering solutions because we do take it very seriously.

Thank you to my shadow, Ms Finlay, the member for Bass, for your contribution and your broadly positive remarks with respect to the Budget initiatives. As I have indicated in Estimates with respect to the federal funding support, \$100 million is already locked in, as you know. Regarding the correspondence, some other minister, perhaps, would have done nothing. I was proactive. I wrote a letter, followed up a meeting I had with the Deputy Prime Minister to encourage positive consideration and give them a heads-up of the process to come, which is good governance. This is a process, as I said in Estimates, and I am happy to offer a briefing to my shadow of the process and how the system works, and get a briefing with Tas Irrigation because bipartisan support with respect to getting funds from Canberra for our irrigation projects is definitely of great merit.

Ms Finlay - Is that an offer to meet with Andrew Kneebone?

Mr BARNETT - Absolutely.

Ms Finlay - Great. I've had trouble to date. If that's ministerial approval, I will act on that.

Mr BARNETT - If you send an email to my office, we can organise a briefing with Tas Irrigation and/or my department. I would be delighted to do so.

Ms Finlay - Not and/or, with Mr Kneebone, that would be wonderful. Thank you, minister.

Mr BARNETT - As I have said, we would be delighted to assist in offering that briefing.

Ms Finlay - The meeting with Mr Kneebone sounds great.

Mr BARNETT - In terms of seafood, we are the big backers of that. You have seen the response from the Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council. Julian Harrington said:

I need to thank the Government for understanding the state of our industry and already implementing a \$700 000 seafood processors grant scheme to support seafood.

I appreciate that. We work shoulder to shoulder with those in the industry. It has been tough during the time of COVID-19.

Regarding the aquaculture sector, the Greens want to shut down the industry. We do not have that policy position. That would be a retrograde step. Sustainability is absolutely important.

With respect to the banners that have been put up in certain mainland locations, this is the vandalism of the Tasmanian brand. The Premier has made it very clear in his statements just a few days ago that it is not on. It is un-Tasmanian. As the responsible minister, I call on those involved to cease and desist with respect to that vandalising of the Tasmanian brand. I call them 'brandals'. That is what they are up to. They are causing much damage. They are impacting on our jobs in the salmon industry. I see at least some nodding on the other side, and I appreciate that.

In terms of the Greens and their support for this brand vandalism, it is not on. It is not appreciated. There are different ways to express your views, if you have them. We have that right in Tasmania. In regard to this retrograde derogatory, defamatory, vandalistic approach, it is not on. It is not appreciated.

On behalf of all those thousands of Tasmanians working in the salmon industry, which is sustainable and aiming for best practice, always continuously improving, as is our aim, I say, we will stand for you.

The work we have ahead of us is very significant. I have many things to share with respect to other portfolios. Before I do, the 10-year recreational sea-fishing strategy has been really well funded - \$350 000. The feedback has been great. Thank you to all those who have been consulted and had input, who have written in, who have commented to me or the department during this process. It highlights how important we see this part of Tasmania. It is part of the Tasmanian way of life.

With respect to trade, I mentioned the 11.3 per cent record number of exports and \$3.98 billion in exports, a record high.

In terms of renewable energy, we are backing that in. I have mentioned the 100 per cent getting to 200 per cent. Mr Winter, my counterpart in the energy and emissions reduction space, spoke at some length about hydrogen. During Estimates I explained to him how to make hydrogen; he still has his trainer wheels on, but we are happy to help. We introduced and delivered the \$50 million Renewable Hydrogen Industry Support package, the largest at the

time of any state or territory. We take this very seriously. This is a new industry, and because of our 100 per cent renewable energy that can deliver low-cost, reliable and clean electricity, we are delivering and we will continue to do so. Referring to the concerns that Mr Winter raised about Hydro Tasmania, I read into the *Hansard* a statement from Hydro Tasmania about their involvement, and I quote:

Hydro Tasmania is ready to support new industrial customers. As Australia's largest producer of renewable energy, we stand ready to help businesses capitalise on the opportunities provided by our clean energy. We continue to work with current and potential new major industrial customers on commercial arrangements for their projects. Detail of the contracts and negotiations with major industrial customers are commercial-in-confidence.

Of course they are. Mr Winter asked many times about my views and regarding the CEO. I said many times in Budget Estimates that Ange Albertini resigned for personal reasons. That was made public; there are no questions about that. I thanked Ange for his service to our community and particularly for progressing renewable hydrogen.

More than 90 000 Tasmanians have benefited from the \$125 winter energy supplement we provided for eligible concession card holders. Electricity prices have gone down - as opposed to the Leader of the Opposition in her Budget reply, who talked about costs going up. They went up under Labor - 65 per cent over that seven-year period. Costs have gone down under a majority Liberal Government, and we will continue to deliver. We will not give up.

I will share a few remarks about mining and forestry. We have doubled the royalties. We are proud of the mining and mineral processing sector delivering thousands of jobs. During an interchange with Ms O'Connor about the role of the Tasmanian Greens and the Bob Brown Foundation, recorded on *Hansard*, I said:

There we go, we have a concession and an agreement that they are the parliamentary wing of the Bob Brown Foundation.

Ms O'Connor said:

Oh no, we support them always.

Then I said:

I appreciate that and that is now on the *Hansard* for all to see.

Of course, it is the parliamentary wing of the Bob Brown Foundation. I am just putting it on the record.

Ms O'Connor - And the Conservation Trust, and the Wilderness Society, and Environment Tas; every organisation your people don't listen to.

Mr BARNETT - I am putting it on the record. Now we know if they ask you to jump, you just ask 'how high?'. That is your response.

With respect to the Tarkine, there has been 150 years of multiple use - mining, forestry, farming and fishing. The Tarkine contains Savage River, Tasmania's largest mine. It is 440 000 hectares of Tasmania that the Greens want locked up in the Tarkine National Park. We do not support that. We support the mining industry, and we support the Rosebery mine and its right to continue.

Dr Broad asked about the level of support from this Government. We are rock solid; as opposed to the Labor Party, which is split. The federal Labor candidate in Braddon is not sure about whether he is supportive. He says it is a tricky question as to whether he supports the mine and the 500 jobs there at Rosebery, or the Bob Brown Foundation. He is not sure. He was asked whether he would fight for those jobs and replied it was an inappropriate word and he did not think fighting was the way to go.

We will fight, and I know the members for Braddon will fight. I know that Felix Ellis will fight. I know that Gavin Pearce will fight for those jobs and we will continue to do what is required. Dr Broad talked about forestry and asked about wood supply. That is the height of hypocrisy coming from Labor, when it showed a lack of understanding of the importance of this critical sector as part of a Labor-Greens government. He recently admitted - 'I wasn't a member of that government'; well, you are a Labor Party member, Dr Broad. It was a Labor-Greens government that locked up those forests, and locked up Tasmania with two out of three forestry jobs lost. That was a shameful affair.

The question about 137 000 cubic metres of high-quality sawlogs being made available to the sector: it is in legislation. I have made it very clear - I said during Estimates, as I am saying today; it is in legislation. We support abiding by the law, there is no question about that. You cannot trust Labor because what did they do in WA? They have just closed down the native forestry industry. The Labor Western Australia government just closed it down - 500 jobs gone.

Ms O'Connor - No, they are not. They are not gone. You are being dishonest.

Mr BARNETT - That is 500 jobs in native forestry - disappeared. The native forest industry is disappearing in Western Australia.

Ms O'Connor - Yay. Those people are being redeployed.

Mr BARNETT - Of course, the Greens are cheering it on, but this is a Labor government. You cannot trust Labor when it comes to forestry jobs. As the Premier made clear in response to the Greens' question this morning, forestry is the way to go in order to have a balanced approach. It is sustainable, it is renewable; it is the ultimate renewable and, yes, wood is good.

I appreciate the observations of the member for Lyons in his contribution. It was an excellent night at the Timber awards and I was proud to wear a Tasmanian Huon Pine timber bow tie to highlight the importance of our speciality timbers.

Finally, I refer to veterans - 10 500 across Tasmania. They are so important. We really appreciate them and their families. We say thank you for your service, and we are providing \$1.4 million for veterans. That is really important and we are backing them to the hilt.

Time expired.

[2.57 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF - The minister talked a whole bunch of mistruths about one of the things I wanted to raise from Estimates, which is Tasmania's brand. The minister has a delusion that he and this Liberal government can continue to flog our brand, utterly debase its authenticity, and think they can continue to get away with it.

Chair, it is very clear that consumers and people around Australia and in Tasmania - and, presumably global markets - are looking at authenticity and brands now more than ever. Unfortunately for Tasmania and Tasmania's trade exports, and for our clean and green brand, this government is trashing it and consumers are working it out. They are not stupid. They will not put up with fake brands which are based on regulations that this government continues to uphold as world's best, when they are actually the world's worst.

There is a reason for why JBS is hovering around looking to Hoover up one of our salmon farm industries. They know that Tasmania is open to plunder our oceans, to make a doubling of an industry, with essentially no oversight of the environmental impacts and the impacts on communities and on other businesses. There is no attempt by this government to do that and so what we are finding -

Ms Ogilvie - It is regulated. That is what regulation is.

Mr Tucker - We know you are a Twiggy Forrest supporter.

Ms Ogilvie - You are making no sense.

Dr WOODRUFF - What we are finding, Chair, is that this is -

Ms O'Connor - Do not lecture Dr Woodruff on the regulations. She actually understands them.

Dr WOODRUFF - This is in the papers. This is in -

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Dr WOODRUFF - This is in the papers, in the *Australian*. Ms Ogilvie might like to open the newspaper and find out what Australians are saying about Tasmania. It is abundantly clear that not only is -

Ms Ogilvie - You just said there was no regulation and there is.

Dr WOODRUFF - Not only has the World Wildlife Foundation dumped the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) certification process because it has failed to protect Tasmania's environment, it has an obvious flow-on effect which we have been warning this Government about for years. It will catch up with you. You cannot pretend. You might keep saying it but you cannot pretend to people that it is not having an effect and they are seeing it. They are seeing it and consumers are seeing through the rubbish and the spin and will not buy a pretence of an independent EPA which this Government is putting up. They will not buy it. They will not buy another Trojan horse.

When Woolworths is reviewing the stocking of Tasmanian salmon on the basis of the World Wildlife Fund pulling out of an ASC certification process, we should be concerned because of what it says about our environment. Fundamentally, we should be concerned about what it says about sustainable industries in Tasmania.

We can have a sustainable salmon industry in Tasmania. It has a whole lot of hoops to jump through and the Government just has to put them in place. We have to do that because it is the only way that we can protect our marine environment, protect the beautiful natural values that exist in Tasmania and nowhere else, and look after the future of people who are working in rural and regional Tasmania in an industry which could be sustainable.

The other area that I want to mention, of course, is that this Estimates showed that despite all the big talk and the chest beating, this Government does not have answers to some of the biggest questions in our future renewable energy planning. Under questioning, I uncovered from Mr Barnett that despite this big talk about 200 per cent renewable energy targets, planning to 2040, he could not give an answer to whether there was any planning for the lifetime of the end date for Basslink 1 and whether there would be a replacement Basslink 1 in line at the end of that. It has been estimated we have 10 to 15 years for Basslink 1. We just do not know. Concerningly, Mr Barnett does not know what the plan would be beyond that. Meanwhile, apparently, we have plans out to 2040 of how much renewable energy we have been producing but no conversation about whether or not we need a Basslink and if we need Basslink, how it is going to be refinanced and who will pay for it. These are huge questions that the minister either genuinely is not putting his mind to or quite more possibly has put his mind to and is not prepared to share that with Tasmanians.

We also confirmed that Hydro made a statement saying that they were not prepared under any terms to provide 250 megawatts of power to Fortescue Future Industries' 'Twiggy' Forrest in relation to green hydrogen. It is very uncertain exactly why they would say that because 250 megawatts, as I found out through Mr Barnett and Mr Terry who is on staff, is much smaller than the possible 650 or 1000 megawatts that might be used or required for a substantially-sized green hydrogen plant. On the one hand we have Hydro saying that they cannot provide 250 megawatts and on the other hand we have the possibility that green hydrogen might require 650 or 1000 megawatts to produce.

We have some big questions here about the role of Hydro and why the Government has set up the new Renewables Climate and Future Industries Tasmania and where the tensions are between these two bodies, one which is a GBE and the other which is under Treasury and the Office of the Coordinator-General. We have to have clarity about the sort of negotiations that we are doing with corporations in Tasmania's interest for the long-term and, if not the actual contract that has been struck between bodies for power purchase agreements, we must have the criteria on which those contracts are based.

In the ACT, they have been lucky enough to have forward-thinking governments that have put in place reverse auctions for power purchase agreements. We need to have this in Tasmania because it will drive the best price for Tasmanians and drive the best price for people. For those who have bills to pay it will drive those bills down. It is the only way to do it.

If we continue to have the secret deals that we have got, we have governments trying to attract industries, they are wandering around the state, trying to stitch up deals with landowners for wind farms here and wind farms there. There is no plan, no openness and no accountability.

There is no structure that involves public conversations about where large pieces of infrastructure should exist in Tasmania and the criteria for how we are going to establish power purchase agreements which will go into the 30-, 40- and 50-year future horizons.

I raise Tas Gas and Tasmanian Gas Pipeline. It is pretty clear that although the Government says it wants to look at a green hydrogen certification process - and I think that was genuine - the fact is they are terribly inconsistent. They are in a difficult situation when they want to retain Tas Gas and Tasmanian Gas Pipeline and throw a lifeline to them for financial viability, while at the same time having a genuine, authentic green hydrogen brand for Tasmania.

It comes back to authenticity; it comes back to putting your money where your mouth is. We cannot sell green hydrogen and at the same time be importing fossil fuel powers. We must resolve that conundrum. At the moment we import fossil fuel powers; we are only 95 per cent renewable. The Government is utterly conflicted on this and they need to be straight with Tasmanians about what is going on.

Time expired.

[3.07 p.m.]

Ms DOW - Mr Chair, I had the pleasure of sitting in on the Estimates hearings around Veterans' Affairs and Trade, with the minister, Mr Barnett. I begin my contribution this afternoon by talking about Veterans' Affairs and to put on the record, my thanks to the 10 500 veterans across Tasmania who have served our country. They have given much of their life to our wellbeing as a country. Despite Veterans' Affairs being a predominantly federally funded initiative across the country, there has been a particular focus here in Tasmania supporting veterans.

I enjoyed the role of being shadow minister for veterans' affairs when I first came to the parliament and getting to know our veterans' community that little bit better. I still meet regularly with our veterans' community on the north-west coast. During a recent meeting, the issue of concessions in Tasmania was raised with me and Ms Butler touched on this in her contribution. The point was made to me by a veteran who lives locally in my community about the need for concessions across a number of areas, for example, recreational fishing licences, national park entrance fees and other activities that we could be providing for free to our veterans, as occurs in other states.

I acknowledge that we do currently provide some level of discount but it makes perfect sense that we would be looking at providing those activities and entrance to national parks for free in recognition of the service that our veterans have given to us. Each of those activities also are important for an individual's mental health and wellbeing.

Fishing in particular can be a wonderful relaxing pastime and very enjoyable. It can be quite social in that you meet other people as you are fishing at the lake or the river. There are a number of anglers groups and others in local communities that would be great community organisations for veterans to be part of.

My colleague, Ms Butler, listed a number of initiatives across other jurisdictions. I am not going to do that on the record today but I will put on the record to the minister that I know that during Estimates you did not give any commitment to looking at doing that. It is something

that I think our veterans would benefit from tremendously. Given it has come directly from them, they are best placed to understand their needs. The particular veteran who I met with is involved in setting up a centre for wellbeing in Burnie and does a lot of work in the local community for mental health and wellbeing for veterans. He would be very well placed to understand the difference that that type of initiative from government could make to people's lives. I ask that you consider that.

I move on now to the Trade portfolio. It was interesting during trade Estimates that we discussed the diversification of our trade relationships with different countries, given our more recent strong relationship with China. Given now that there is uncertainty around that, not only for us but us as a country, it is important that we look to diversify our trading relationships and partnerships across the world. There has been considerable decline predominantly in exports, particularly in woodchips where I come from in Burnie. It is a very strong industry on the north-west coast.

I put on the record the need for the Government to be working cooperatively with our forest industry in looking at more opportunities for downstream processing in Tasmania, given the significant impact that the downturn in trade has had on that sector. I also put on the record my disappointment under this Government about the progress that has been made on the Hermal mill at Highclere that was proudly promoted and supported by the state Government in the lead up to the 2018 election. A lot of media announcements were made about that, and the importance of that project to the region, to the forest industry and the tremendous opportunity that it offered for employment right across the north-west region.

I asked the minister for State Growth about this and I understand this was raised during Estimates with the minister for Resources as well. It would be good to have some direction from the Government. The Coordinator-General was not able to provide me with time frames for some milestones for that project. I understand that \$4.5 million of a forestry grant that was committed at the 2018 election has been provided to the Hermal Group. I understand that there is still the opportunity for them to draw down on some loan facilities with the state Government but that has not occurred to date.

Minister, it is a very important project for our region and my understanding is that the parameters have changed somewhat, that there is going to be a change in location for that mill. I think that was what was suggested during Estimates. It would be really great for you and your local Braddon members to be upfront with the Braddon community about what the future holds for that mill and for the 300 jobs that you committed to creating at the 2018 election. Give people an update on what is happening with the mill and why those jobs have not been delivered for our region.

Ms O'Connor - Upfront is not his specialty.

Ms DOW - No, it is not, but it does not hurt to reiterate it.

The other aspect of trade which is important and vital to access to trade markets is investment in our poor infrastructure across the state. That has been significantly neglected under this Liberal Government. There have been lots of commitments made; there was a commitment made regarding the shiploader facility at the Burnie Port. A number of other commitments were made at the state election and there have since been announcements from the Government about this. It has taken you far too long to address the issues at the Burnie

Port. There are significant issues. It is a bottleneck. I know my colleague, Shane Broad, has referred to it as that many a time.

Our key industries that you so proudly promote, Mr Barnett - forestry, mining - rely on access to good infrastructure at our ports to enable them to get their product to market. Through our work with industry and stakeholders, we know that the current level of investment at the Burnie Port has been significantly inadequate. Work needs to be done there to ensure that we can get bigger ships into the Burnie Port to enable more product to go to market but also to give confidence - confidence for regional jobs and confidence for regional industries to expand and to put on more people.

There are a number of mining projects that are coming online in the north-west coast and they need that certainty, as well as of being able to get their product to market. The Government needs to do much more in this area and it has been disappointing.

The last point I want to make in relation to trade is about our relationship with India, which I raised with the minister during Estimates. I think it offers Tasmania some opportunities when it comes to exports and diversifying our trading relationships. We asked about the appointment of a trade advocate for India and I would like to see that followed up by the Government.

I understand a number of trade advocates have been appointed right across the world, particularly in the ASEAN and other areas which are looking at promoting what Tasmania has to offer and growing our trade across the world. I think there is a unique opportunity with India also, given the population base and their need for goods. These are markets that we could be looking at as a state as well and I would strongly encourage the minister to do so.

Estimates of the Minister for Resources, Minister for Primary Industries and Water, Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction, Minister for Trade and Minister for Veterans' Affairs agreed to.

DIVISIONS 2, 5 and 11

Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries and Minister for Community Services and Development

[3.16 p.m.]

Ms DOW - Chair, I begin my contribution in relation to the Health Estimates which we attended for six hours last Monday, which was a long time. It was a good opportunity to ask a number of important questions and access important information, and not only that, to learn more about things that have not been delivered by this Government.

In Estimates, I was pleased to hear, minister, that you are very serious about your Health portfolio given that when you were asked about it post the election, you laughed. It was reassuring to hear that you want to hold this portfolio, that you are serious about it and that you are serious and committed to seeing out your term in the parliament, which I also asked you during Estimates. Maybe time will tell with that but we will see.

I put on the record today that this Government has had seven years to address the breaking point that our health system finds itself in right now. You only have to look at the current budget papers to see the burden of health across our community and across our Budget because

32.5 per cent of government expenditure is on health. That is roughly a third of Tasmania's budget. This is only set to grow and the budget paper outlines our ongoing health expenditure in the list of budget risks and sensitivities.

There remains an underlying risk to the budget and forward Estimates that additional state funding provided to meet the demand for health services in Tasmania may grow at a faster rate than growth in the Australian Government's capped funding contribution. This is a concern, given our poor socioeconomic indicators across Tasmania and our health outcomes. It really does beg the question of whether this Government has directed health funding in the right areas across Tasmania.

Here are some of the facts and I take these from Primary Health Tasmania's needs assessment which was released in November 2020. I want to share a few of those statistics because I think they are important.

Life expectancy in Tasmania for males is 79.3 years; in Australia it is 80.7 years. In females in Tasmania it is 83.2 and across the country it is 84.9. Although Tasmania's rate of potentially avoidable deaths has been decreasing over time we still have the second highest rate of any state or territory, 133 deaths per 100 000 people compared with the Australian average of 104 deaths per 100 000 people. I want to talk about our chronic health conditions because there is no doubt that they have an impact on the budget and a lot of the questions that we asked related to the current pressures and stress on our health system across the state. There is a direct linkage to the chronic health conditions experienced by many Tasmanians.

More than half of Tasmanians, that is 54.1 per cent - Mr Tucker, I see you laughing and it is not a laughing matter -

Mr Tucker - I was laughing about something else.

Ms DOW - have at least one chronic condition plus 11.2 per cent report three or more. They are musculoskeletal conditions, mental health problems and cardiovascular diseases with diabetes and asthma also rating very high. Over a quarter of Tasmanians live with disability, that is 26.8 per cent, higher than anywhere else in Australia. Cancer screening could be improved across Tasmania. The statistics from 2017-18 showed that just over half the number of eligible Tasmanians have taken up bowel screening; about two in five for breast screening; and just over two in five for cervical cancer screening. We know that during COVID-19, screening numbers also significantly decreased throughout the state. As I said, all of these - which you might say are pre-existing conditions and that many Tasmanians live with each and every day - have impacts on hospital waiting lists, elective surgery waiting lists, emergency departments and our acute care sector and, ultimately, the preventable deaths of many Tasmanians.

We have all this existing burden without the implications of COVID-19 outbreaks across Tasmania, and that is concerning. Our population is growing and ageing and there are increases in numbers of Tasmanians over 65 years of age. The next 10 to 30 years will need to see services grow as more older members of our community need access to better services. It is no wonder that the minister has given up on his own goal of Tasmania being the healthiest state in the country by 2025. I recall you set that goal, minister, when you were shadow health minister back in 2012.

During Estimates, minister, you indicated that you have almost given up, and that is sad. It is sad, because the future productivity of Tasmania depends on the health and wellbeing of our people and their ability to get a job, to have a roof over their head, to have good mental health and wellbeing, and contribute fully to society. This is the utmost responsibility of government and should be a primary responsibility of government.

We know that our economy benefits from having more regional health practitioners and professionals available across regional Tasmania; not only from the wages they put back into our rural and regional communities, but also from making sure that people have access to better services across those regional communities.

That brings me to health recruitment, which we discussed at length during Estimates. We saw that the health recruitment strategy is not funded ongoing and we asked why, particularly when there is an ageing health care workforce across Tasmania. There has not been a lot of workforce planning done across the state. We have had an over-reliance on locums and fly-in and fly-out staff. That has had implications during COVID-19 and will have implications again if we have an outbreak here in Tasmania.

Until recently, if you had a Bachelor of Nursing degree, if you had not met the required hours for your accreditation, you could not do a re-entry to practice course in Tasmania. That is simply ridiculous when we have such high shortages of nursing staff across the state. During estimates we heard Dorothy Dixers on how many staff were employed, but not a lot on how many have left the health system over the last 12 months. We also know that housing affordability and wages from stakeholders are significant barriers to recruitment. These issues were also discussed, but not elaborated on very much during Estimates.

The minister had previously said in media statements that there would be incentives provided to try to improve the attraction and retention of health professionals across the state. However, when asked about what those incentives were, not a lot of answers were forthcoming.

I put on the record my thanks to our entire health system, staff and health professionals across Tasmania for the wonderful work they do under very trying conditions. I acknowledge the demands they face every single day when they turn up to work. Our state could not function without them and I thank them very much.

We talked a lot about pandemic preparedness because it is front of mind, given what has happened interstate and the reality that we could have an outbreak here or a case of COVID-19 at any given time. We talked about escalation plans across each of the major hospital centres. I am fairly sure the minister ruled out establishing an exclusive COVID-19 hospital if there was a COVID-19 outbreak.

We also talked about the capacity of rural and regional hospitals to stand up and to have ICU beds available, and whether they had qualified staff to monitor patients and provide care to patients. Mr Lawler made it fairly clear during Estimates, that at this point in time rural and regional hospitals would not be utilised to treat COVID-19 patients, and that they would be transferred. Then we had some discussion about the safe transfer of patients with COVID-19 from those rural and regional areas back to the main hospital centres.

We had an update on PPE, masks and auditing of those and whether there was adequate stock across the state. Some reassurances were provided about that by both the minister and

the secretary of the department. We also had some discussion about the ICU beds at the North West Regional Hospital and why they were not being used to their capacity; with the understanding that a number of beds are currently not in use but could be used if required.

We talked a lot about having enough qualified staff to provide care to patients across ICUs, the number of ventilators and so on. We also reflected on what was happening interstate when a lot of staff have to be furloughed when there were outbreaks in hospitals, and what that would mean in Tasmania. When we had the closure of the North West Regional Hospital, we had over 5000 staff and their families in quarantine. We asked whether provision had been made across the healthcare sector about finding additional staff, should they be required. Some explanation was provided around that.

That brings me to each of the specific hospitals, and we talked a bit about the commitments that have been made across each of those campuses. We talked about A&E, and the ARIA ward being closed at the Royal Hobart Hospital Accident and Emergency department. I put on the record that since I have been shadow health minister, I have been contacted by a number of families, particularly with young children - as have other members of the Labor caucus - about their experience at A&E at the Royal Hobart Hospital and sometimes being turned away or waiting long periods of time with children. I will be writing to the minister about a couple of those incidents to bring those to your attention.

The Launceston A&E has the worst bed-block in the country and we asked some questions around the Access Solutions meetings that were held in Hobart, and how those recommendations for those were going to be rolled out across the north of the state. We were provided with some response around that. We reaffirmed that there was no money for the Launceston General Hospital master plan, which was announced during the election campaign and also afterwards. We heard from the minister that he had asked his federal colleagues for some money but has not received any yet. We look forward to another announcement; probably around the federal election. It is disappointing that you would make such a grand statement about a master plan that outlines such desperately needed services for our northern communities but there is not a single cent in the budget for it.

We had some discussion about the co-location of the Calvary Hospital in Launceston with the LGH and we understand that is in its preliminary stages, with signing of a MOU. We are waiting for a development application and some further milestones to be met and we will be watching that with great interest.

We also talked about stage 3 of the Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment and the Government's commitment to that. We committed to stage 3 - upgrade of the Repatriation Hospital - during the last state election. There was not much forthcoming from the minister about that.

That brings me to the North West Regional Hospital. I raised delays to the Antenatal Clinic which was committed to in 2018. We also raised the delay in the review of maternity services and that the Government has been sitting on a report of the review of maternity services across the north-west coast for some time now. You said that you would be releasing it in a couple of weeks. I will be keeping a very close eye on that.

The Burnie Ambulance Station has been significantly delayed since 2018. I met with some residents who are going to be impacted by the new build, and I have written to the minister

about the need to meet with those residents to understand their concerns and some of the changes that they would like to see to the site design. I will speak with him further about that. It was not very clear when that project will be completed. It was revealed during Estimates that a number of sites have been looked at, including the existing site. The conclusion made by the Government is to build it where they have decided to build it. Now they need to work with the closely located residents to make sure it does not impact adversely upon them.

Looking at elective surgery lists across the state, the Government has made a lot of commitments and we discussed these at length. We discussed the capacity of the private system to take on more of the state Government's loads. We discussed the type of procedures they would or would not be taking on. The minister was not able to provide an update on the total number of surgeries they see being delivered through the private system for the next financial year, with that yet to be negotiated. Concerns have been raised with us about the ability and capacity of the private health system to have the staffing levels to provide this service, so it will be interesting to see how many elective surgeries are delivered.

We know that when Michael Ferguson was health minister, the Mersey Community Hospital was earmarked to be the centre of excellence for elective surgery across the state. That does not seem to have eventuated and we asked some questions about that. That is disappointing.

Back to the North West Regional Hospital and the Spencer Clinic development, which is a good commitment to provide better mental health inpatient services to people across the north-west coast. However, there will be a delay before that is built so there is a sense of urgency for there to be better community-based services in the interim.

It is interesting to note that the Hospital in the Home mental health program to be piloted in the north-west will not be happening straight away. My understanding is that has been piloted very successfully in the south so there is no reason why that should not be able to be rolled out immediately in the north-west.

There were many discussions during Estimates around the CAMHS report as well strategies and recommendations, and clinical services plans. All these things have to happen before people get better access to services, and there is a dire need now. There needs to be a greater focus on delivering services rather than strategies and recommendations from reviews. If I recall correctly, the Hospital in the Home mental health program was related to the CAMHS review, but I ask the minister to put that on record when he makes his contribution later today.

We learnt about the provision of \$300 000 to the Circular Head community for a mental health worker in the Smithton community and surrounds. This has been called for by the community for some time now. While we welcome that announcement and the introduction of that service being provided in the Smithton District Hospital, there will be a need to fund that ongoing and right now it is only funded over two years. I think there will be feedback to the Government that it will be a really valuable service and will warrant being continued into the future.

It does make you wonder why it has taken until now for those services to be provided to that community when the mental health and wellbeing, particularly of our young people, has continued to deteriorate over the years. There should have been more action from this Government when it comes to providing services to support our young people, and all people

in rural and regional communities, with better mental health support. We will be watching the introduction of that role with great interest and speaking with locals on the ground about the benefits of it and the need for it to be continued into the future.

We talked about the use of the Fountainside Hotel. It was interesting because my colleague, Ella Haddad, asked the minister during Estimates as to whether this was, in fact, a medi-hotels policy. This was one of our policies in the 2018 election, which was howled down by the Government as being not appropriate and a joke. While I acknowledge there are differences, it does bear some similarities so I want to make note of the -

Ms Ogilvie - They're not hospitals though, they're a quarantine facility. It is different.

Ms DOW - It is a similar principle, Ms Ogilvie. The minister begged to differ during the debate during Estimates but it does appear to be, as I said, a similar principle and some similarities.

We also asked about the terrible event at the North West Regional Hospital where a young boy died from an asthma attack and asked the minister to put on the record all of the improvements that have been made since that fatal tragedy. He was able to do that with the assistance of Mr Lawler, who clearly outlined what has occurred since that time and what would be occurring into the future.

It highlights the importance of support for staff across our rural and regional hospitals and making sure that, no matter where you are, you have access to the best possible technology and diagnostics to ensure the clinical care of a patient is provided at the level it should be, and that our health providers have access to the technology. There was an issue regarding measuring oxygenation levels that the staff did not have access to that as they should have had. Let us hope money is allocated to our rural and regional hospitals to ensure they have the right equipment to diagnose critical situations and are able respond to them appropriately.

We talked about preventative health and the fact that there is only -

Time expired.

[3.36 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS - Mr Chair, I rise to speak about the Estimates of Committee B. In particular, I will be talking about Mr Rockliff's Mental Health and Wellbeing portfolio, as well as Community Services and Development.

It was interesting at the start of the committee proceedings, and Ms Dow mentioned it again, the number of questions she put about the future of Mr Rockliff in this place: I can understand why they would be asking that, given that he received nearly twice as many votes as both of them combined. He is a fantastic member and a great fighter for our region. He will do a fantastic job in this portfolio. He did an amazing job in Education, Agriculture and Infrastructure.

Travelling around the north-west, the feedback I get is that there are many people who feel personally inspired by Mr Rockliff's commitment to mental health, both at a personal level with his long history of volunteering as well as a professional level. I commend the work he is already doing.

I will now turn to some of the outputs we discussed in the Mental Health and Wellbeing part of the portfolio. We mentioned regional mental health outpatient community and inpatient services. One of the really interesting approaches this Government is looking to do is to make sure that there is more community outreach and more services provided in people's homes, in places where they are comfortable, in their local community.

In the Budget there is \$4.5 million for new community health networks, including in Ulverstone, which is where my office is based; Huonville, Mr Chair, which I know is very important to you; as well as Scottsdale.

The ability to get the community involved in their local area and with a focus on mental health is very important because one of the biggest challenges we are having in this pandemic, and that we will have in the years to come, is the enormous mental health scarring occurring with people suffering through lockdowns interstate. We have had a lockdown in Tasmania as well. We have also had border closures. There are families who have been separated from the ones they love, from new babies, and dying parents. The investment we make now will be so vital to, hopefully, staving off some of the worst effects of that. We know that it is an enormously damaging thing for people's mental health, particularly young people. To be able to support them at a time that is very difficult - there are no two ways about it - is really important.

There is an \$8.5 million pilot Mental Health in the Home program. That program will be based in the north-west, in my neck of the woods; something I am proud of. As I mentioned before, the ability to seek care in a way that is comfortable to you is very important in any healthcare setting.

When it comes to something as personal and deeply held as mental health, it is important to be in comfortable surroundings, to be around the ones you love and to have that outreach into communities, so that people do not feel as though they are being institutionalised or medicalised. It is important that they are getting care from people who want to look after them and be there for them in a proactive way, to step outside the hospital setting and into the home and wrap their arms around those people.

An interesting part of this is the Circular Head mental health nurse, a role which has been raised a number of times, to be based in the Smithton Hospital and doing outreach in the Circular Head area. The impact that suicide has had in that community over the last two years has been devastating. There have been a number of suicides amongst much younger people, including young women, which is quite unusual in a demographic sense, as it is men, by and large, who commit suicide. The community is rightly concerned about the growing numbers that seem to be popping up in the area.

It is an amazing community, a very closely-knit community that has a lot of opportunity ahead of it. However, in this time of pandemic, the feeling of isolation can be acute in a rural and remote area. We need to make sure that people know they can get the services they need from friendly people in the local community and that we are there for them.

The Circular Head region has had some particular challenges with suicide prevention, over and above what other places are facing at the moment. We need to be supporting them, and the new mental health nurse has been warmly welcomed.

The upgrade to the Spencer Clinic, the new, \$20 million north-west mental health precinct at the North West Regional Hospital, is something that our community had been looking forward to. Earlier, I mentioned the desire to see more mental health services in the home. However, it is unavoidable that, in someone's journey with mental illness, if it does become acute, they are going to need the best care in a purpose-built facility with a modern approach to therapeutic mental health care. That is exactly what we are looking to deliver.

The new facility will put the services that people in the north-west need at the forefront of what is happening around the state, around the country, because mental health is often the fountain-head. If someone is struggling with their mental health it can have impacts through their life, whether it is their capacity to go to work, their capacity to hold their family together, raise their kids, care for their elderly relatives, or look after their own bodies. We need to make sure those people get the services they need.

There is \$50 million in this Budget to fully fund phase 1 and 2 of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, which does fantastic work across our community.

I turn to Community Services and Development. There is \$5.7 million for neighbourhood houses in Tasmania and we know the amazing work these community organisations do. As members of parliament, there is bipartisan support -

Ms O'Connor - How about tripartisan?

Mr ELLIS - Tripartisan; non-partisan; however we want to put it, support for these organisations because they do an enormous amount of outreach in our community. Yesterday, I spoke with someone who was helped by the Rosebery Community House. They go above and beyond their place in communities around the state, from big cities to country towns to the most remote areas of Tasmania. The people they employ, the volunteers and the communities that grow, brings Tasmanians together. We are proud to be supporting those people and the work they do.

One of the most interesting innovations in the Budget - and it has been missed by some people - is the Youth Volunteer Army. At this stage, the funding commitment is small. It is about \$100 000 a year over three years and it is about getting our young people involved in volunteering. Tasmania has the highest rates of volunteering in the country. One of the things we see is that older people in our community are typically taking up that load.

Young people are missing out in many senses, and they are not getting the opportunities we would want them to get. It brings communities together and they can focus on common goals to try to improve their community, whether through environmental remediation, education, health care or a range of community services that can be done by volunteers and that young people can be a part of.

Time expired.

[3.46 p.m.]

Ms WHITE - Mr Chair, in particular, I will speak about health. Too many people are currently waiting for health care in Tasmania, whether they are on a waiting list to see a specialist or they are waiting for surgery. There are 66 000 Tasmanians in that position. Some of those people are waiting to access health care that is quite urgent. I am sure many of us have

heard those stories. People have had to wait so long that their suspected cancer has become cancer. We have to do much better.

In the time this Government has been in office, from 2014 to now, the waiting list has grown from about 30 000 to 66 000. It is completely unacceptable. Unfortunately, despite the fact that we are borrowing \$2 million a day every day for the next four years, there is very little improvement to show for it. You can see that in the 18 000 Tasmanians on the dental waiting list; in ambulance response times that are the slowest in the nation and, sadly, in mental health care not meeting the demand we see in our community.

I will briefly talk about infrastructure that has been committed to by the government, and the time lines that are blowing out for the delivery of those projects. In particular, in the mental health space, some of the 27 new mental health beds that were promised in southern Tasmania will not be delivered in the time frame that was promised when they were announced. That is really disappointing because we know how extra beds are desperately needed, particularly for people dealing with mental ill health. The beds that have been promised for the north and the north-west are definitely welcome but, again, the time line for delivery of those is creeping out and will certainly not be in this term of Government.

The same goes for significant commitments made at this election regarding the Launceston General Hospital. The key promise made by the Government as part of their health policy was the redevelopment of the Launceston General Hospital, a \$580 million promise they made for stage two, and there is not a cent in this Budget. That was a promise I am sure a lot of people across the north of the state keenly listened to, and maybe even cast a vote because they wanted to see that money delivered to improve the Launceston General Hospital but the fact there is not even a cent in the Budget is disappointing.

The minister said he has had a chat with Bridget Archer, the federal member for Bass. That is nice but she is not going to be able to deliver you that funding. You have had a chat with the Minister for Health and Aged Care. That also is nice. It is a bit like the lovely letter you wrote to the Prime Minister a couple of weeks ago. You are very kind in your approach but we need you to be a champion for these projects and to deliver on them. You certainly did not deliver a cent in this Budget for that particular project.

Mr Rockliff - Of \$12 million, but anyway.

Ms WHITE - Of a \$580 million project. There are zeros across the board for that particular line item so it must be hidden somewhere else, but \$12 million out of \$580 million, even you, minister, must admit it is not enough.

Mr Rockliff - Part of stage 2. Stage 1 completed in 2024.

Ms WHITE - Stage 2 will not be started. There are stories that I want to share in the time that I have that are about problems we are seeing occur in the health system right now. In fact, before I go onto that I will also mention the fact that the minister has made a commitment to double the size of the Royal Hobart Hospital emergency department. That is another commitment that has been made outside the budget process. That was not funded in the Budget.

We definitely need to do more to support people who are trying to access emergency health care and who are presenting to emergency departments. This is part of the problem the

Premier and Treasurer has in his budget black hole. There are number of commitments that have been made after the Budget by different ministers across different portfolios that have not been funded in this Budget. They are not accounted for across the forward Estimates and yet the Government tries to claim they are on a pathway to a surplus.

It is completely ridiculous to believe that when you think about all the things that have been announced since the Budget and if you added them to the bottom line then you can see quite plainly that there will be no surplus if this trajectory continues.

I want to talk about some stories that have been shared with me by constituents. One is from yesterday from someone who spoke about their experience in the emergency department in the south of the state. She is a former nurse and had taken her grandson into the emergency department. I will quote her story:

Wow, we have a struggling health system. Sorry, long post. Heaven help us if COVID hit us. I have been caring for my grandson as he has been unwell on and off for six weeks and to me, today, he was really struggling. Asked for a GP appointment, however all you can get is a phone consult. He won't be seen as he has cold symptoms. No way. This child needs to be visually seen. Not eating, not drinking, terrible fevers and chesty cough, streaming nose, had pneumonia only last year after similar episode and was hospitalised. I bit the bullet and took him to the emergency department. We arrived at 10.30 a.m. and were seen at 4.15 p.m.

He was a bit grizzly and no energy and mostly slept. Hadn't drank and wouldn't drink or eat for 18 hours. Sitting there I took the opportunity to watch the goings-on. The patients started to file in after us in all various stages of distress. Social distancing was happening until just too many patients. Three or four in wheelchairs. Standing room only. All various ages. A lot of elderly. Some came via an ambulance and it disturbed me to see the paramedics having to find a seat in the waiting room and settle them in.

There were patients with chest pain. One of them walked out after saying to me hers was just a little pain, there's obviously people sicker here than me and I will make room and walked out. She couldn't get into a GP. I hope she's all right.

A gentleman who had only been discharged two days ago after surgery for a gastric bleed obviously very unwell. There was a child waiting to be triaged, and another dozen people waiting also. She was dry-retching which set off an elderly lady next to her calling out, 'For goodness sake, this child is sick. Treat her.'

There was an elderly man with a bucket on his lap in a wheelchair that had a nose bleed and was trying to stop it. The worse though was a young mum in her thirties, deposited in a chair by the paramedics. She had asthma. She was struggling to breathe. Her wheeze was audible to everyone in the room. It was obvious the ambulance officers had no choice and were reluctant to leave her. I wanted to offer her assistance as being asthmatic myself I knew

how she felt. The poor girl, after wheezing for around one hour finally went up to grab their attention to say, 'I'm really struggling to breathe.' She was told to take a seat and they will be with her shortly.

Another five minutes and she was whisked into the treatment room and given assistance. You could feel the relief from all in the room that she was being seen. Nurses were treating patients in their chairs before they could get to a doctor. The staff were amazing. Nose down and bum up, however, it was just too many to deal with. Thank goodness for private health and other emergency departments I could go to, however, me having a child meant I could not. They may well be busy, just like the Royal.

Our treatment was amazing and efficient, apart from the wait. I feel for the doctors and nurses in the middle of this. Add COVID-19 and who knows what would happen. The Government needs to do more. It is so sad to see how much nursing has changed since I worked in the emergency department as a student nurse.

That was yesterday, minister, at the Royal Hobart Hospital and I am hopeful that you get reports about what is happening. The Royal has been at level 4 for a couple of days, I believe, which, as you would understand, means they are working at their highest escalation level and staff there are stressed.

I have other stories. I will not use my remaining time to talk about them but we are not seeing improvements in our hospitals despite the rhetoric about record funding, despite the rhetoric about record staffing levels. Our staff are stressed, they are off on sick leave, they are unable to do the job they love to do and our concern is this is not getting better. After seven years, the rhetoric is not cutting it.

Again, I wish you all the best, minister, but the Budget demonstrates that the infrastructure projects that have been promised have been pushed out. The commitments that were made at the election will not be delivered in this term of Government and we have more stories like this that are coming across our desks and in our offices every single day. What happens if there is COVID-19? It is quite true to say the system will not cope if this is anything to go by.

Minister, there is certainly a lot of work to do in this Health portfolio and we all hope for the sake of our community that you get it right.

[3.56 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF - It was a long six-hour Estimates but I can say compared to other experiences I have had, in Health Estimates it was a respectful conversation and I felt that some of the issues that we raised were listened to, and I hope some of the actions that the minister promised will occur. I want to go reflect on some of them.

A major topic of conversation for some period was our state's COVID-19 preparations. I was pleased to hear that the minister has contacted the staff from the North West Regional Hospital who have long-COVID or report symptoms of a long COVID-nature. It is really important that the conversations about workers compensation and appropriate return to work arrangements are in train and the minister met with them. Now, it is really about seeing how

the support continues and is handed out. In the long term we do not know how long long COVID is and that is very hard for people who are suffering symptoms that can be very debilitating, meaning they cannot return to work as much as they would prefer to.

Our state's Delta preparations are critically important. I sought the Director of Public Health's comments on why we do not have any real strong restrictions at all in Tasmania to prepare us as a population for the likely eventuality that Delta will spread to Tasmania, despite the work that we are doing to keep it out of the island. I cautioned about the situation in New Zealand where they had just one case and went in to a very strict and immediate lockdown. Despite that, it has really taken a grip on the country. It seems from the most recent information that they are turning the corner on that but it has been a very severe state of lockdown for at least the North Island for a long time now. It goes to show that communities have to be ready to immediately put restrictions in place when asked to for our own safety and to protect vulnerable people in the community.

I was very pleased that the Director of Public Health came out a few days later and announced that Tasmanians at events over 1000 people would be required to wear masks from now on. That is important because it reminds us that we are living in a COVID-19 world and that we need to have part of our brain taking this seriously all the time if we want to stay in the blessed situation that we are in, and if we want to have our best response if and when, in all likelihood, Delta appears in Tasmania.

We talked about the mandatory vaccination of healthcare workers. We support the Director of Public Health's directions for all healthcare workers listed in certain categories, which are all available on the website now, to have two doses of a COVID-19 vaccination.

The minister talked about the national plan being in place: the minister needs to stop the rhetoric being used by the Prime Minister about a national plan. The fact is there is not a national plan in place. There was Doherty modelling done and it talked about certain situations and when certain restrictions might be lifted under certain conditions. That was a conversation at Cabinet that might have been agreed to. What was not agreed to was the reality of what we do in different Delta-infected populations around the country in response to reaching vaccination rates of 70 per cent, 80 per cent or above. We do not have a national plan because there is no way of enforcing it.

I am heartened to hear that the Health minister and the Premier are both saying what most sensible epidemiologists and public health officials I speak to or read are saying, which is 90 per cent or above vaccination is required to get a population level sufficient for us to be able to respond to Delta as a community and, importantly, as a healthcare system. We will be watching this space very closely, especially looking at the rollout of a third vaccination booster, or dose, which I will ask questions about, and continuing to keep an eye on our ICU bed planning and ventilator capacity around the state.

I will make a couple of points about the ramping situation and paramedics working in Ambulance Tasmania, and patients.

We are very pleased to hear that the money has been put in to try and deal with the elective surgery - an enormous number of people who are overdue for essential category 1, as well as category 2 and 3 elective surgeries. There has been a huge underfunding of this area for seven years by the Government. In the attempt to play catch-up after so many thousands

of Tasmanians have suffered - some of them for well past the national standard time for elective surgeries - money has been put into the Budget.

We are very concerned about the potential for flow-on impact to other parts of the hospital system. I raised the issue about ramping and raised the complexity and unintended consequences that can come from making quick and decisive decisions which are obviously necessary in times of crisis like in a Delta outbreak.

The Royal Hobart Hospital's Acute Respiratory Illness Area, which has now been repurposed to expand the emergency department, has been closed. That is appropriate and we support that in the circumstances. However, it does demonstrate the impact for staff working in a protocol situation, or the guidelines of everyday working life. The flow-on impacts for them have meant a mixing of paramedics with other health staff on the ramp in the hospital, with PPE and non-PPE, full-gown wearers mixing together. Having patients with respiratory symptoms in a ramp situation is clearly a high risk if we have a Delta outbreak.

At the Launceston General Hospital, the ramping times have gone up, up, up for the last three years. They were 25 per cent ramping in 2018-19, then we found they went up to 39 per cent last year. That is going to have a huge impact on surgeries.

Finally, I want to mention medicinal cannabis. I talked to the minister and Mr Webster responded with some figures about how many people have been approved. He said four applications have been made by general practitioners to the medcan board and only two of them have been approved. Even though these patients had been approved through the Therapeutic Goods Administration online access scheme and via their GP in that process, it went to the department and 50 per cent of them, two of four, were knocked back. Minister, you still seem to have gatekeepers in your department. It is very concerning about medicinal cannabis. Something is stopping those people getting access to drugs and you should fix it.

Time expired.

[4.07 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD - Mr Chair, I will start my contribution with the Health output. I was there for the start of the day, the first six hours, so I will confine my comments to that output. I put on record my admiration and gratitude to the health workers of Tasmania who have dealt with incredible adversity during the COVID-19 pandemic since it reached our shores in March last year. That is across the entire health system: health workers working in the public hospitals and public health system, as well as in community health settings, in the private sector and, especially, public health officials working in something quite unprecedented, this pandemic we are facing across the globe.

Public health officials have had to rise to that challenge and many of them have done that across the board. People working on the COVID-19 health line, the hotline, people responsible for contact tracing, vaccination nurses and people staffing the vaccination clinics around the state have had to work in a rapidly changing and adaptable way. I put on the record my admiration for the people working across the health system at every level for the hard job they are doing, the difficulties they have faced throughout the pandemic and the work they have done to support Tasmanians through this time.

It was a six-hour output, which was probably the first time I have been at the Estimates table with a decent amount of time to delve into questions. In some other portfolio areas we may have only had 30 minutes for the whole committee, Labor members, Greens members, the independent member and Government members, to be able to ask questions of the minister and departmental officials. Thirty minutes is a very short time and goes incredibly quickly.

There were instances where I counted two or three Dorothy Dixers during a half-hour output, which is really difficult to palate. In a half-hour output with another minister, there was one example in which we had three very senior public officials, the Integrity Commissioner, the Ombudsman and the DPP available for 25 minutes - all three of them were available for 25 minutes; not 25 minutes each, but 25 minutes for all three. We had at least one DD in that output so I want to put that out there because it is frustrating, it is difficult to provide good scrutiny to government spending and government decisions when there is only half an hour allocated to vital and important portfolios of government. That was not the case here. We had six hours for the Health portfolio and that meant we were able to do our jobs better as opposition MPs in asking questions that affect the lives of Tasmanians.

There is no doubt that there are massive pressures on our health system. Many of those issues and those pressures are the areas we questioned during the Health output. We asked questions about that target that the Liberal Party named up when they were in opposition, of Tasmania being the healthiest state in the nation by 2025. It was a very bold and aspirational target and, sadly, we are a very long way away from meeting that target.

I have said in this place that we all have much to worry about when it comes to the health indicators and the social indicators that we face as Tasmanians. Generally, we punch higher on the list that you want to be lower on and lower on the list that you want to be higher on. We have high rates of chronic and preventable disease, high rates of smoking, high rates of obesity, low rates of health literacy including low rates of health screening for some preventable diseases. This puts an added burden and pressure, not only on those families and the people who go on to develop more acute health illnesses, but also more acute pressure on the acute health system when people become unwell with chronic health conditions that could have been treated earlier in that person's life.

Many times in this place I have spoken about the social determinants of health. They are the kinds of social factors that impact on our health and wellbeing, such as poverty. We know that we have entrenched poverty in Tasmania with more than 120 000 households living in poverty, with generally lower incomes than mainland states, low access to housing, difficulties with food security, and access to things like transport and social connection. While some people might not think of them as relevant to the Health portfolio, they are acutely relevant to that portfolio. Our access to those things and the effects of the social determinants of health on our lives have a direct impact on our physical health and wellbeing and our mental health and wellbeing.

We spoke about a number of Health's infrastructure projects as well that were planned, or announced, by the Government. I wanted to seek further clarity from the minister through this report back process about the Glenorchy ambulance station. My colleague, Anita Dow, asked a question about the Burnie ambulance station and the Glenorchy ambulance station. We received a little bit of information on Glenorchy and a fair bit more on Burnie.

We heard from one of the officers from the minister's department that in relation to Glenorchy, the department had adopted a standard design for the Glenorchy ambulance station development but they then had to rethink that design last year with what they had learnt through COVID-19. He said they had to adjust the design to consider the emerging understanding of COVID-19 and its implications on operations. That work has now been undertaken and that is all perfectly understandable. I wonder if, in his summing up comments, the minister might be able to give the House a bit more information about time lines and budget for the development of the Glenorchy ambulance station. Unfortunately, we did not have the chance to delve any deeper into that issue during the Health portfolio output.

That is where I will finish my comments. I enjoyed the opportunity to attend the Health Estimates output. I very much look forward to helping my colleagues to keep the Government to account for the promises they have made in this portfolio.

Time expired.

[4.15 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE - Mr Chair, I am pleased to contribute in relation to this particular output which took a full day's effort. I thank all departmental members, staff, the minister and everyone who attended and made it such an informative session.

It is an important topic and rates number one on the minds of most Tasmanians. You only have to ask someone what their greatest hope and desire is in this state. It really is to live a healthy and happy life. I feel very grateful and pleased to be part of a government that has health as such a key focus.

It was an interesting Estimates journey for me because it was the first time that I would have been on the committee as part of the Government and it was interesting to be part of it and to play that role.

Before I start picking out some of the highlights of what we heard and what was discussed, I will say something about leadership. It is important to acknowledge good and strong leadership when you see it. Our Health minister is one of the finest leaders we have seen in this portfolio with great respect to Ms Courtney, who I know and like. She is doing a marvellous job in her portfolio of Education.

Leadership in Health takes a certain quality, a certain capacity to be a listener first, somebody who understands the complexity of the area and the multiple moving parts that need to come together to provide a good health system within the constraints of the limited resources that we have as a state. It was a well-managed and true conversation with questions that were asked and properly answered. That is my personal take-out on how the session ran through.

I was particularly interested in the strategic thinking that had gone into preparation, not only for the Estimates committee but also what we are doing in Health more generally. In particular, the document titled *Strategic Priorities 2021-23*, and I have a copy here, beautifully summarises the care, concern and intelligent design of our health project as it is, going forward. I will reflect on that and talk about the work of Kathrine Morgan-Wicks and others in our Health department who have kept us healthy and safe during what has been a concerning period during the pandemic.

They are focused on the three pillars as I can see it, broken down here, which is to build and develop a sustainable and positive workforce, a workforce that we need now and in the future. All of us who have spent time at the Royal - and I have spent many a Saturday there with one or more of my three children, particularly around sporting times. You can get fast into emergency, usually I am crying while the child is bleeding, or the broken arm or whatever the crisis is, and we all know that emergency department is a beacon of care. It is a beacon of care because of the people who are working there and it is also because we know we can go there any time and we will be looked after. I am certain there are times when it is difficult or when it is overworked. That is why you will hear from the minister a bit more about what they are doing to improve resourcing.

It is important to think about the user's perspective and about the patient's perspective in relation to how we are delivering these services. I have never had anything but the greatest care and concern from the people who work at the emergency department. We have arrived on foot, by car, by ambulance, and that is three generations of my family who have been engaged with this hospital. The concept and the work that is being done by Ms Morgan-Wicks and everybody, with the minister's leadership, is to really set us up for success. To recruit and retain people, to look at the ways we are employing people, to look at how we are reaching out nationally to attract talent to our hospitals and to our health sector is really important. I give great credit to Ms Morgan-Wicks and the team in relation to that in particular.

I am really keen and very excited to hear of the university's moves in concert and in discussion with the Government and the department to bring on some new allied health courses. There is a deep and great need for occupational therapy. This is something that I have spoken about in this place many times before. To be able to study that at the University of Tasmania in collaboration with the health services is a wonderful thing and it is something that will attract interstate students to come here as well. I am very pleased that is happening.

The next element of a pillar of focus is to strengthen governance risk and financial management performance and accountability. We all want to talk about that immediate care and concern and the services and the ability to see a doctor or nurse and to get what you need at that very moment in time. The only way that happens is by having an organisation that is fully functional, that is on a solid economic footing, that is run, that has proper processes in place and that can be thinking through those processes to improve how we do things going forward. Audit and risk committees, when things go wrong, when things go right, recognising that, learning from that and developing new processes and strategies going forward are really important.

We all know that procurement became a real issue during the COVID-19 pandemic in the early days for personal protective equipment (PPE). Those processes are really important as well, making sure that we know how, and to be able to predict what we will need going forward. It is a complex business that has many layers of input and many different cohorts and groups that connect into it.

At the heart of this is clinical safety, quality and regulatory oversight. In a past life with my lawyer's hat on, I have sat on boards including Calvary's Consumer Board and I have a little bit of experience in this but what I see happening here is continuous improvement. That continuous improvement happens because a culture of, not risk or fear of risk, but of recognising risk, learning from errors and improving the way we do things.

For many years in this place, we have heard of ways that we could improve access to the hospital, particularly in relation to issues such as ambulance ramping. That issue was beautifully described with the new 000 primary triage and secondary triage process approach. I did cross examine them a little bit but it is based on an interstate model. It is a really smart way of going about it. When you call the ambulance, do you need an ambulance, or are there other elements that can be put into place to help that person straight away?

The reason I raise that specifically in this re-engineering process we are working on as a government, is that I recall during the last election a wonderful conversation I was having at the Claremont footy club with a retired nurse. I think the Premier was there at the time. She said, 'we need to make sure that we are reaching out very quickly. Not everybody needs an ambulance when they ring 000. There are ways of ensuring that they get what they need and it is not always the full service.' What I see happening is that these alternate care pathways through the secondary triage process actually adopt and start to implement some of that thinking.

I am very impressed with the business side of ensuring that patient flow across the health system is improving, that care is being delivered in clinically recommended times and more resourcing and better infrastructure is being built to help that so that the health of constituents can be prioritised.

Time expired.

[4.25 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY - Mr Chair, I rise to make comments to the minister's contribution to Estimates last week and my focus will be in the area of Health. Before I start speaking to this particular matter, there is a consistency and a theme that I am picking up across a number of portfolio areas and a lot of ministerial contributions in terms of major infrastructure announcements.

Earlier, I had the opportunity to reflect on Mr Barnett's contribution and express some disappointment in the process of making timed announcements in election campaigns to raise signature expectations in a community where a funding commitment is made, delivered, and then followed up with actual input into the budget. On that matter it was \$100 million for irrigation which is critically important to all of Tasmania.

Earlier, Mr Ferguson said the reason we are not seeing things included in these current Estimates is because industry is calling out for longer-term consideration of infrastructure development and rollout. From the little, old world of local government where I come from, we run budget estimates every year. The particular council I have experience with, the Launceston City Council, embarked on a major project over the last few years. It was nation-leading in having long-term financial plans and strategic asset management plans where they not only dealt with their current estimates in current and immediate years, but were projecting over 10 years and beyond and doing it publicly so the community could see, where they were committing to certain projects they were actually committing to it. Although real-term dollars in the future may be different, with the announcements that you are making now, with the expectations that you are raising, you are saying there is a commitment to deliver into the future.

My contribution today is in the area of health and in particular to the LGH. It would have to be characterised, I think, as a signature announcement for the stage two masterplan of the LGH.

As I do with every contribution, I acknowledge the good work that is currently happening. There are some funds in the Budget for some works right now. The challenge is always infrastructure. Development, in and of itself, used to be, or could be, determined as the easy part of a delivery. Staffing and operating new infrastructure is always where the heavy spend ends up and where the focus on ongoing investments needs to be made, particularly in relation to recruiting and securing staff.

In acknowledging the things that are happening, there was a signature announcement about the \$580 million for the stage two redevelopment of the LGH. It raises expectations in a community where there is immense pressure, immense disappointment and often complete letdown in the current health system. Just recently, the dashboard data across Tasmania showed 11 000 Tasmanians remain on the elective surgery wait list and only half of them are being able to be seen within the clinically recommended times. When they see an announcement, people expect that means that it is something that is immediate.

We live in a world where we understand future management or future commitments. However, in the real world, when someone in the community hears that there are problems at the LGH and there is an announcement that it is going to be fixed, they would see something being delivered in the Estimates. It was my first year opening the Budget papers and understanding how to navigate them, crazily looking through lots of pages and lots of volumes to find the detail. When I did find the detail in regard to the stage 2 master plan of the LGH, there were zero dollars allocated in any of the years of the forward Estimates. Having a long-term future plan is important but raising expectations and then not delivering in real time is challenging.

In my contribution to the efforts of the Government and in response to the minister's Estimates last week, my trust is that where an announcement is made, a light conversation occurs. Again, it is not dissimilar to the conversation I reflected on with Mr Barnett. You can quickly write a letter and say that I am going to ask for this money but not have done the work early to actually know that it can be secured or the business case has been done.

I trust that the minister will follow up and make strong representations, ensure the funds are secured so the people in northern Tasmania who are concerned about their ability to access and be supported by the LGH can be assured that stage 2 of this project will be delivered, staff will be secured and maintained in the facility and our community will be served by what we hope will be a strong investment into health services in northern Tasmania.

[4.30 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF - Mr Chair, I thank members for their contributions and their questions across the table in Estimates last week. I also thank departmental staff, and the secretaries of departments I am responsible for: Kath Morgan-Wicks for the Department of Health - we devoted six hours of scrutiny to Health on Monday last week; Kim Evans, for the Department of State Growth, with my Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries hat on, for the work he and others did in preparation for Estimates; and in the Department of Communities Tasmania, Michael Pervan and his team. I greatly appreciate all of them and their respective

teams across Communities Tasmania, the Department of Health and the Department of State Growth.

I also thank my wonderful team, very capably led by Chief of Staff, Vanessa Field. My thanks to my team across Tasmania, on the north-west coast and here in the south for their advice and support. I also acknowledge the various other officials who have supported the Estimates process by making themselves available, preparing and collating information and responding quickly to additional requests.

We had six hours of scrutiny of the Health portfolio. This was my first Health Estimates opportunity to be scrutinised, to be held accountable and also to learn, as the questions came across the table. I appreciated all the work leading up to it, and the study we all did. It is a great opportunity to learn and to talk about our government's very strong plan for health, and how that is progressing.

We are committed to significant investment to ensure we are delivering better health care for all Tasmanians in the right place, at the right time, underpinned by a strong, stable workforce; indeed, the need for a growing workforce. It is a plan that continues to prioritise health to the tune of \$10.7 billion over the forward Estimates. It is a significant investment, particularly when you consider the \$900 million more investment than was outlined in last years' Budget. As the Premier said this morning, quite rightly, this government has clearly prioritised our investment in Health.

More broadly, we want our health workforce to be in a very positive workplace environment. I concur with members who have thanked and very much appreciated all the health workforce across Tasmania for their hard work and commitment, particularly under increasingly challenging circumstances. In particular, the last 20 months of the pandemic have placed additional pressures on an already challenging environment. I greatly appreciate the greatest asset within our health system, which is our people. We want the Tasmanian health system to be considered a workplace of choice.

During Estimates, we delivered our long-term strategy, Health Workforce 2040, that will help shape recruitment, education and training priorities for the health service over the next 20 years. This was delivered thanks to the extensive consultation with and input from clinicians, key stakeholders, education providers and consumers of health. Our 2021-22 Budget includes some \$15.7 million over four years to implement this strategy, to build, strengthen and shape the health workforce that will meet the needs of Tasmanians now, but also into the future.

We committed funding of \$198 million over the next four years to meet demand faced by our hospitals to open beds at the Royal Hobart Hospital; to increase capacity in our general medical beds on Ward 2A; open up the paediatric short-stay unit; open the trauma and acute surgical unit and the six-bed mental health short-stay unit.

I am proud of the fact that we, as a government, have continued to open beds in our Tasmanian public hospitals. Since April 2018, the number of available beds in Tasmania's public hospitals have increased from 1360 to 1583 at the end of June 2021, an increase share of 223 beds or around 16.4 per cent. I thank my predecessors, Mr Ferguson and Ms Courtney, for their commitment to increasing the number of available beds and also increasing investment into our health system.

We acknowledge that while we continue to increase funding for staff and infrastructure, demands continue to rise. It has been conservatively estimated that around one in every 16 hospital beds in Tasmania is occupied by someone who actually does not need to be there and could get the support they need in the community or in a rehabilitation bed. That is why our plan includes treating people in the community, if that is appropriate, so that they recover sooner.

Healthcare is more than just about hospitals. We are making a number of investments into community-based care including: our \$8 million GP after-hours support initiative to offer after-hours service to the local community; \$27.5 million for our community rapid response service and hospital in the home services; \$10.5 million to significantly strengthen our in-home palliative care and after care services; \$1 million for our hospital avoidance co-investment fund; and \$1.4 million for the community transport service to support Tasmanians to access the health services they need.

Ms Ogilvie mentioned the ambulance secondary triage service which, where appropriate, diverts patients away from emergency ambulance response and links them with appropriate service providers in the community. This commenced in February this year. I am looking forward to that continuation as it rolls out. It is an example of taking that pressure off our emergency services with diverting patients to more appropriate service providers in the community.

While our focus was on alternative models of care, we were queried on the fact that emergency departments in hospitals are experiencing increasing pressure, due to continually rising numbers of people presenting for care. I recognise that, and acknowledge the contribution of Ms White and her feedback about our emergency departments.

As I said during Estimates, all our emergency departments across Tasmania are challenging environments due to increasing demand. I pay tribute to the people who work in those challenging environments. During July this year, across the state, there were over 14 700 presentations to emergency departments in our public hospitals. Along with increased presentations, we are also seeing an increase in the complexity of patients and an increase in the number of patients who need hospital admission.

During Estimates, we outlined our investment into strategies to facilitate patient flow through our emergency departments to prepare our health system to better manage demand. I acknowledged \$198 million over four years provided to the Tasmanian Health Service to meet demand and to open additional beds.

We are funding the start-up program with \$2 million to complement the recently released elective surgery plan, and that is a positive initiative that addresses some of the areas around outpatient services. I agree, waiting lists are high. Elective surgery waiting lists are coming down; they peaked at around 12 200, and are now around 11 000. They are decreasing, which is pleasing but I acknowledge we have some way to go.

COVID-19 restrictions have had an impact and there are still too many people waiting. That is why we are establishing an Outpatient Transformation Program, including the development of a statewide outpatient plan for Tasmania. We are funding that start-up program with \$2 million, as I said, to complement the recently released surgery plan. That transformation program will implement an extensive, statewide audit program to ensure

waiting lists are up to date; patients are contacted and current needs confirmed; consistent referral protocols and business rules are implemented; communications are improved; availability of online booking processes and electronic referrals for all services; implementation of clinical prioritisation criteria; reduce unnecessary or low-value care; invest in targeted reforms to divert patients to the right care pathway, including non-surgical options; and consider the case for a centralised referral intake hub.

My expectation is that this program will significantly improve the circumstances we see ourselves in at the present time. When it comes to reducing elective surgery, it is important that we see as many people as possible within the clinically recommended time frames. I am pleased that our \$196.4 million will provide around 30 000 more elective surgeries over the next four years. That is a plan that has been clinician-led and is patient-focused. For the first time, there is a clear plan and investment that our clinicians can work to and deliver those 30 000 additional elective surgeries over the next four years. We also need to recruit staff to support that elective surgery program. More than 180 staff across the state are expected to support our elective surgery program including nurses, doctors, allied health and support staff.

The latest publicly released dashboard shows continuing increase in demand in our public hospitals and our health system. I am pleased that the health dashboard will be released every month. It increases the level of transparency and accountability of government. I believe it will be good to inform the community exactly where we are every month. We are well aware of the challenges we face. We will continue to consult, work together with stakeholders and consumers to continue finding other solutions and be innovative, as Ms Ogilvie mentioned in her contribution.

We were asked questions about the Tasmanian Government's preparedness for an outbreak for COVID-19, including the Delta strain that is wreaking havoc across the country, particularly in New South Wales. We are well prepared and we have outlined our preparedness; but of course, Delta is different. Vaccination is the key. Our Delta Shield Plan met our 63 per cent first dose target around one week early, and I am very proud of the vaccination efforts and the team. We also announced opening vaccination bookings for 12 to 15-year-olds who are now eligible for the COVID-19 Pfizer vaccine.

In October, there will be a series of youth super clinics for 12 to 17-year-olds across the state, to help vaccinate and protect our young people more quickly. I am also pleased to advise that since 13 September, all GPs participating in the rollout will have access to Pfizer, giving Tasmanians more options to get a jab. This week, pharmacies are also rolling out vaccinations of Moderna for 12 to 59-year-olds. We thank all those in our primary health care sectors, our GPs and our pharmacies supporting the wonderful work of our state clinics. I cannot be clearer when I say please do not wait, vaccinate.

I acknowledge the overlay of pressures on our mental health system as we continue to adapt to the pandemic. Contributions made by members and Mr Ellis were excellent.

Mr Ellis mentioned he travels the electorate extensively, and he does. I am very proud of his efforts across Braddon, his ear to the ground, very quick to respond to constituents but also to inform our ministers, particularly me and Mr Jaensch, in terms of health, of the needs of his electorate and local communities he represents. He is spot-on when he talks about mental health and the impact of the pandemic when it comes to the mental health and wellbeing of Tasmanians.

We have a very long-term vision for a Tasmanian mental health system, increased focus on community support options and reduced reliance on acute hospital-based services, including emergency departments.

Taking effective action to prevent ill health is a key part of our Government's reform agenda. This sort of generational change will take time but it is important that we put a greater focus on ill-health prevention and wellbeing, which we are doing.

There was some discussion and focus around our vision of having the healthiest population in Australia by 2025. We will never give up on the aspirational goal of being the healthiest state across the nation and we should aim for nothing less. However, we recognise it will take a concerted and collaborative effort to make that happen.

The 2021 Budget includes \$108 million additional funding over the forward Estimates, including 2021 election commitments to continue our transformation of the mental health system and alcohol and drug services, and boost ill-health prevention measures for the benefit of all Tasmanians. This is on top of our \$8 million over four years for the very popular Healthy Tasmania Fund grants program, which helps local communities and councils implement projects and initiatives that strengthen community connection and help people live happy and healthier lives.

Our election policies prioritise and expand on our commitment to roll out the best-practice approach to building a contemporary integrated model of mental, alcohol and drug care across the state so that people can get more holistic support at the right place and at the right time. We are already progressing our election commitments, including \$500 000 to fund the initial implementation plan of Rethink 2020, which is now being released in line with our First 100-Day Plan.

Our implementation plan outlines new areas in focus, including \$1.9 million for a peer workforce coordinator, which has now been recruited and will be based at the Mental Health Council of Tasmania to support the implementation of the Peer Workforce Development Strategy. There is \$7.83 million to continue and expand new services put in place through the pandemic, including the 1800 Tasmanian Lifeline hotline, the Mental Health Council's Check In website to provide support and information, as well as education and awareness resources, and increasing the outreach capacity of Rural Live and Well in remote areas across the state.

I will touch on the Circular Head investment Ms Dow mentioned in her contribution. That investment of \$300 000 is over three years. Ms Dow might have said two but certainly three. We recognise the need across the Circular Head community. The mayor of Circular Head and I spoke late last year about that need. I met with the mayor and a number of community members late in December, a couple of days before Christmas, about the need. Through that, the policy was developed in terms of what might be needed in that local community. We are very pleased to be able to deliver that in this Budget.

An additional \$10 million will be invested in alcohol and drug treatment services. This includes the 65 residential rehabilitation beds across the state; the Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council to employ an AOD Reform Agenda project officer; the Drug Education Network and Holyoake to help them meet the ongoing impact of COVID-19; and we are investing some \$5.1 million over two years to pilot a very innovative program, an emergency mental health co-response team in southern Tasmania, and making permanent our housing and

accommodation support initiative and securing funding for the two-year trial to continue in the south. These initiatives are in place, along with many others I cannot get to given the time, to ensure we get the right care at the right place at the right time.

Time expired.

[4.50 p.m.]

Mr WINTER - Mr Chair, Health is not my portfolio and I was in the other committee as Mr Rockliff fronted it, but I have enjoyed listening to the debate. Mr Rockliff is a newly minted minister, so people in this place and Tasmanians are interested to see where he takes the portfolio and what changes he is going to make. The Budget is obviously the place where it all starts.

Every Tasmanian has a story about the Tasmanian health system and they are not all bad. The best stories you hear about the Tasmanian health system are people talking about the care they receive from doctors, nurses, from health professionals in the Tasmanian healthcare system who do an amazing job, sometimes under enormously stressful circumstances that are not their fault - they are a product of the system and of high demand.

I heard the Leader of the Opposition speaking about the current escalation at the Royal Hobart Hospital. I have utmost respect for the healthcare professionals who are working there through very difficult circumstances at the moment.

The thing about health is that so many people have stories. During the election campaign, I am sure all of us did a bit of doorknocking or equivalent. You cannot help but meet people who have their own stories about health care to tell.

A gentleman told me he had been tested for bowel cancer months earlier and was still waiting to find out whether he had bowel cancer. It was a difficult conversation for him to have and he was desperate. Those are stories you hear repeatedly, stories like that of people who are not able to access the health care they need. It puts enormous stress on people. That is why we need to get this right.

I heard Mr Rockliff say our greatest asset is our people and he is right. The doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals need to have the support in place to allow them to do their job.

I cannot help but wonder whether Mr Rockliff has been given a bit of a hospital pass with this year's Budget. Budget Paper No. 1 -

Ms Ogilvie - Was that a pun? You are very punny today.

Mr WINTER - Thank you. In Budget Paper No. 1, uniform government reporting, this is the concern we have, not just about Health but across almost all portfolios apart from Education. We see an inflated budget this year but then a budget that goes down. In the healthcare area we are looking at, albeit quite a small cut, a 0.7 per cent decrease in funding in the 2022-23 financial year estimate. I wonder how the minister will navigate that.

We know that from the Fiscal Sustainability Report, but all sorts of reports tell us about healthcare expenditure and the quite high inflation. It is going to be very difficult to manage a

budget like that. I suspect, as we pointed out earlier today, that that number will have to go up, and it is down at that stage purely as an accounting measure. It will have to go up, there is no doubt about that; whether it goes up in the budget or the actuals it will need to go up. As happens in many years, the health expenditure goes well over what is budgeted for. This will happen again and it makes it difficult. This is what happens when you do not have the budget for the resources; pressure falls on healthcare professionals. We see things like ramping, patients not getting care within the recommended time frames, people get sicker, they wait for longer, they become less productive and the healthcare outcomes are greatly reduced. None of us in this place want to see that, I am sure.

Being the member for Franklin, I acknowledge some of the commitments that were funded within this year's Budget. The one that I am particularly glad about, and Ms Courtney is in the Chamber, is at Dover, which is fantastic. The helipad and medical centre down there have been funded appropriately, as people would have expected to be in the Budget.

People do not often consider Franklin to be a regional rural electorate. Most people think of Lyons or Braddon perhaps, but you do not get much more regional than Dover - Southport perhaps - but we are talking very far south and we are talking about people who have a long distance to go to get to a hospital. Let us hope that it is not put to use too often, but I am sure that helipad will be a great facility for locals to have and we appreciate that it has been funded appropriately within the Budget.

The one that has not been though, and I am disappointed about, is the Kingston health centre stage 2 upgrade. This has been a long-running saga for that facility over a long period of time. I went back and had a look at the 2013-14 budget where the Kingston tier three community health services facility was going to be funded and delivered by 2016. In the following year's budget it was pushed back to 2017 delivery and we did not actually see it delivered until 2019.

The problem with that facility at that time was that we did not see an expansion of services. We got a new building. It actually had less floor space than the old facility, still has less floor space; it does not have any increase in services. Whilst the facilities are more modern, it did not appear to cater for the growing needs of that community.

We had the announcement of stage 2 during the election campaign, a \$30 million promise to the area that I represent. I was pleased to see that at the time and it was matched by the Opposition, but disappointingly within the Budget, it is not fully funded. It is a \$30 million project that has only been funded to \$10 million in years 2023-24 and 2024-25 and the delivery date is not until 2027.

There was a genuine and general expectation within the community that if that project was being announced in 2021, that it might be delivered a little sooner than six years away and you would not need to vote for the same government twice in order to see a delivery of a project that is important. That is what is in the Budget and unfortunately for those people who had an expectation of perhaps being able to receive a greater variety of services in their local area, it is going to be a long wait to see that happen.

Unfortunately, in some cases, that continues to place more pressure on the Royal Hobart Hospital and the whole plan here was supposed to be a reduction in pressure on services in the city. I hope that project is able to be delivered at least by 2027. I hope we do not see the same

push-outs in delivery times that we saw with stage one and I hope we see a wide variety of services within that over the course of when it is finally delivered.

Estimates of the Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries and Minister for Community Service and Development agreed to.

DIVISIONS 2, 5 and 11

Minister for Education, Minister for Hospital and Events, Minister for Skills Training and Workforce Development, Minister for Disability Services and Minister for Children and Youth

[5.00 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE - Mr Chair, I will commence my contribution on this output by putting on the record my passionate support of public education. I do this because there are lot of people who say they are passionate about public education but frankly the rubber hits the road when you choose to use public education. I am a product of public education and my daughters are the product of public education. It is important to recognise what public education does for communities.

First of all it ensures that every child is given an equal start; well, it is supposed to ensure that every child is given an equal start. What we have seen over recent years with changes, particularly federal funding models around education and their significant investment into private education, is a significant stratification of education. One of the really important things about public education is that, historically, children from every social demographic have been able to attend public education and that ensures that your school is representative of a broader community. Children like mine who have been very privileged get to learn what it is like to come from non-privileged families and, because I came from a non-privileged family, I got to see what it is like to come from a privileged family. It makes you a little bit better. What we see is that it makes you a better contributor to society, and I believe it makes you more empathetic. With this continual focus by the Australian Government on private education we see a stratification where the children who go to public education are seen as the children who go there because there is no better model, there is something else that they cannot afford. That is why public education has to be the absolute best.

Public education has to be the provider of choice but it cannot be the provider of choice when governments do not necessarily support it. Our previous minister - and I did not want to do this while he left the room, but he knows my views about his choice in relation to private education when he was the public education minister. It is something that we need to focus on and be aware of because the type of society we have, the type of community we have, the type of people we want in our community are very much shaped by the education framework they are in. When we see, particularly with the Australian Government, the continued funding, so much funding to the private sector, it limits the opportunities for public school kids. Every child who is not in public education is money that the government is not putting into public education.

I remember one of the most telling stories from the Gonski Review told by one of the panel members that when he went to a particular private school he was able to recount what they did for their grade 9 geography excursion. Having geography in public education is something you do in addition to other subjects because things are pretty tight. For these

children their school hired a yacht and they sailed towards the Antarctic for their geography excursion. I would rather that kind of money be invested in public education so that every child gets the best opportunity.

Ms O'Connor - What school was this?

Ms O'BYRNE - It was a mainland school; it was not a Tasmanian school. This is to do with the national funding model, particularly very wealthy schools, some of which have more infrastructure than regional Tasmanian communities. That is something that any Education minister, particularly in our state system where we are not able to provide every opportunity for our students, needs to be aware of and needs to fight very strongly for. Public education should be the thing that is the most important thing and investing in public education should be the most important thing for those children, for their families and for us as a broader society.

I want to go onto the concerns that were raised during the Estimates process, and we did not cover anywhere near as much ground as we would have liked to. Every year we argue that we need more time to debate the Education portfolios. I am not sure how useful it would be as we do not seem to get many answers. I understand the constraints of the overall time period but there is much more to be understood in our education, skills and training sectors.

Given that we do not get to ask many questions, that is why it was so disappointing to find so many questions that could not be answered. One of the things that we wanted to talk to was an answer that was provided by the minister for Education to questions in the upper House and had to do with suspension levels. One of the concerning things that we found, particularly dealing with kinder children - it was suspensions overall - but kinder children in 2020, even when school did not sit for very long, and even though kinder children are not at school every day, six children had been suspended. That was down only by one from the 2019 data of seven. That is way too many children being suspended from kindergarten. The suspension incidents, I must clarify, in 2019 there were 70 prep suspensions and 37 in 2020. Once again, I point out that was the year we did not have children at school every day. We asked the minister if she could give us the updated figures and that was something she had to take on notice, which was disappointing because it is reasonable to assume that was the data we would be asking for.

The minister was explaining in answer to the question on notice whether or not it was acceptable for kindergarten and prep children to be suspended. She said it was unacceptable for children to be suspended, except in rare and severe cases. This is why it concerns me that the data to second term this year is already 14 prep kids who have been suspended. That jumps to 73 by the time they are in grade 1 - and that is just to the end of term 2. I am not expecting that those numbers are going to decline and we can reasonably assume that they are going to continue.

The questions we asked were around 'Can we get a bit of an understanding of these students?', particularly whether or not these children had behaviour management plans. That is why it was concerning when the minister's response came back - and I do appreciate that this minister has actually answered questions; there are others who have not. The response we received from the minister was that behaviour management plans are put in place for all students who are suspended and, in some instances, this may occur immediately after the suspension is issued.

The concern we have is about how many children in kinder and prep were suspended in 2020 who had an individual learning plan or a behaviour management plan or an adjustment made under the adjustments model. One of the concerns is that children who may have more complex support needs in schools are being suspended.

The answer from the minister was that information is held by schools and not available at a system level. I find that quite disturbing. If we genuinely want to make sure, if it is unacceptable, as the minister said in her previous answer, that kinder and prep children are suspended, then having a process whereby you do not know the circumstances that may have led to that suspension and whether or not we are, in fact, suspending children with a disability, is a really concerning thing.

I know that the organisation that represents the sector, and parents and families in that area, has been particularly concerned about that.

The suspension incident data broadly is also quite concerning. We were able to get the 2021 data as a result of an answer taken on notice. To give you the historic data on suspensions, just to get an idea: in 2016 there were 6598 student suspension incidents; in 2017 that went to 6928; in 2018, 7200; in 2019, 7425 suspension incidents from our schools.

In 2020, this is when you get the thing, 'Oh, we have had a reduction, isn't it wonderful?'. There was a reduction to 6790 but I remind members that, of course, that included the fact that there was a period of time when students were not at school. We also know that not every kid made it back from that time off school, so those students who were struggling may not necessarily have made it back into the system. That is really concerning.

When we look at the data already to date by the end of term 2, 4346 suspension incidents in the first two terms of this year alone. That is a system that is failing children.

What is not clear is how many of those children may have required that behaviour management plan, whether or not they received that kind of support, and whether or not we are failing that many children, but also whether or not a majority of those children may, in fact, be children with a disability.

We asked some questions about restraint. This issue has raised its head a number of times because the department has an internal secret state policy that is not very clear. When we asked that question the minister, again, was not able to answer and referred us to the broader issue of restraint to ask that in the appropriate portfolio which, of course, was her own portfolio later on in the day, in Disability.

We took that on face value but we did get a response on restraint. What we wanted to know was how many children, particularly how many children with a disability, had been subject to the use of restraints in the last 12 months. Once again, the answer was: 'We do not capture that data at a system-wide level.' The failure to capture data at a system-wide level is a deliberate failure. It is a deliberate not wanting to know.

Since then, the answer came back, which was not provided in Estimates so I can only assume that this is a new piece of work, that the department is developing a new restrictive practice policy to provide schools with clarity, that there will be professional learning delivered around that, then it will be publicly available at some stage and there will be

a requirement to report when restrictive practices are used. That is a change in policy that was not able to be announced at Estimates, so I can only assume this is a new position, potentially very hastily pulled together.

As we were not able to understand what the restraint policy was or whether it was appropriate for a restraint policy to be a secret policy, we did as the minister suggested and waited until she had a different hat on and a different staff member beside her to ask her whether or not restraint policies should be secret and what they should include. At that stage, the minister was saying 'that is not exactly what I said I would tell you and I really can't comment on that'. I thank the departmental officials for giving us an understanding of how they perceive restraint policy in relation to the NDIS, but not in relation to schools. That is a concerning pattern of behaviour we are seeing with the department: that if in doubt, we are just going to say we do not collect that information at a system level.

We did get some data on the number of behavioural observations reported. We were trying to get a picture of what sort of levels of bullying and harassment are occurring in schools. When that question was asked in the other place, as a question on notice, the answer came back with the suspension incidences, which was useful information but it did not give us an idea of the bigger picture of what is going on in the school community broadly.

We did get the number of behavioural observations recorded but I would like to better understand the school decision as to whether observed behaviour incidences are recorded or not and that even the data we have may not, in fact, be reflective of the number of behavioural instances occurring because, school by school, they may be doing it at a different level. That is a concerning and interesting point.

The previous portfolio discussion talked a lot about mental health. It is no surprise I want to go to some of the supports provided for students within the education system regarding mental health support. We wanted to understand the average wait times for a student assessment or a student appointment for speech therapists, psychologists, social workers, youth workers and OTs. The department apparently did not have to answer anything on OTs or youth workers as professional support staff because schools can employ them themselves. I am guessing, once again, 'we do not keep that information at a system-wide level', which seems to be a theme.

We did get the data on school psychologists. The waitlist time, from August 2020 to 31 July 2021, for school psychology support was four months for an assessment and three weeks for intervention. That is a very long time.

One of the things we know about children who present with mental health requests for support or need support is that you need to respond very quickly. If a student identifies anything, the fact they have identified creates an environment of potential trauma, so you need to respond quickly. Four months for assessment and three weeks for intervention.

There is a three-month wait to receive speech and language pathology support. That can have a significant impact on your learning and your behavioural work. We have seen a lot of research recently related to the data that leads to behaviour as a result of the fact your speech and language may not be operating at the level of other children your age or within your social grouping.

The minister may be able to explain this for me: in terms of the waiting list for social work, it came back as 'not applicable' because where a social worker is unable to see a student, the social worker will refer the student to alternative services. Minister, could tell me what those alternative services are and what the wait times for those alternative services are?

If the social worker is saying 'I can't see them, so I'm going to write a letter to mum and dad and they can send the child to a private person', that is not dealing with it in an appropriate time because we know there are significant wait times.

If they are referring you to the school psychologist, we know that is a four-month wait for an assessment and three weeks for intervention. If they are employing a youth worker and referring you to the youth worker, we do not know how long that might take. We also know there are chaplains in schools and while they may be invaluable members of the school community, the vast majority of them are not trained in any kind of mental health support. I hope the minister can answer that question for us. I found that a concerning response, to say 'well they would refer it on to someone else' without telling us who that someone might be and the waiting time for that service.

I will briefly touch on TAFE. It again became clear that the only advice provided to government about their brain-zap moment to suddenly change the structure around TAFE is that PESRAC received one, two-page letter as a submission that suggested the effective privatisation of TAFE, despite what the minister might say. One two-page letter, signed by an organisation that the Chair of PESRAC was a member of.

We asked whether the department had provided advice to the minister about the need to change the operating model of TAFE, and there was clearly not anything in there. The minister was not able to provide the clarity that staff need about their ongoing conditions and terms of employment. We are going through this process and we still do not know whether people are to be employed under the State Service Act or be flicked off to Fair Work; or whether some of them will be flicked off to Fair Work and then we will have a couple of levels of employment arrangements.

All of those are fundamental issues about how you might run a training institution. That was extremely concerning; and it is still not clear which part of the government's proposed business model for TasTAFE differs from its current operations as a statutory authority. What is it about the statutory authority that TAFE currently operates under that cannot be done and therefore needs to have a new model? The minister cannot answer that because this was one of those 'I have a brilliant idea, I need to announce something on the day of the Premier's address on the state of the State; I am going to announce the change to TAFE because apparently that is going to be really popular' - without have done any of the work.

Anyone who has been in government for a while, and there are a number of us in this Chamber, knows that you tend to do the work and then make the announcement. When you are hastily drafting a plan to fit your media announcement, then it will not go well.

There was no understanding about the impact on the 100 new TasTAFE teachers, other than that apparently, they will be full-time positions. It was not clear - and the minister might clarify - whether they are going to be permanent positions.

The other issue raised by my colleague, Ms Dow, was around the work being done at the new Energy Trades and Water Centre of Excellence, which is now going to incorporate a lot more schools in much less space, and does not have any room for teaching staff. That sounds like another one of those things where we have made an announcement and we probably have not delivered it in the way we were committing to. That is extremely concerning as well.

I do not understand a government that does not do the work before they make the announcements, or does not deliver on the commitments. When I was a federal minister and we signed an agreement with the Australian Government on funding, we were obligated to agree to it. Maybe it doesn't apply to governments that are the same colour as you; I am unsure. What is being delivered in that centre of excellence is not what was being promised, and there are significant concerns that it will compromise on the quality of the teaching outcomes.

We raised some issues around disability services and the vast range of community organisations who have significant value, who no longer receive funding. The argument is, we give all our money to NDIS.

I remind members that when the original Heads of Agreement was signed, there was always an understanding that state governments would have responsibility for service provision that was not covered by the NDIS. There were always going to be groups that fell outside the NDIS and we were always going to have an obligation. To now say it is not our problem, because it is an NDIS problem, is weak. Telling them that they can apply for other funding models does not work either - not for community organisations that need that support.

Turning to Ashley Youth Detention Centre. On Wednesday I asked questions and, on the Thursday, it was being changed. I do not know if the minister was in any way engaged in those conversations, or whether that was another of those very fast commitments that the government made to get themselves out of trouble.

We need to understand what the new model will look like; what the two facilities would look like. If this is simply about stigma, rather than systemic issues that exist in the Ashley Youth Detention Centre, then that is a failing. We need to understand the therapeutic model and the minister needs to be across it.

Time expired.

[5.20 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER - Mr Chair, I am pleased to speak to this area of our Estimates Committees and I will talk about online access centres (OAC). In 2018 I began advocating on behalf of online access centres across Tasmania. At that stage, OAC were being closed down by the government or being merged into libraries. We began a campaign to ensure continued funding through the Digital Connections Grant Program. That grant program was subject to review and was funded in the forward Estimates until the end of the 2018-19 financial year. The review itself was secretive, with information pertaining to the terms of reference of the review not provided.

As you are aware, OAC provide a unique and invaluable contribution to the community. Largely located in smaller rural communities, the OAC network meets the deficiency in services tailored to individual community needs. They are very important. OAC have exceeded the original purpose of the program, which was to provide assistance with

information technology and internet access. Currently, OAC provide census assistance, COVID-19 vaccination booking assistance, TAFE training, MyGov assistance, passport processing, printing, school support for disengaged students, outreach services, online courses, book exchange, local business support, RSL support, CWA support, family history workshops, film clubs, seniors connections and programs, IT services, basic computer skills training, Facebook classes and community development and internet connections. That is only some of the things they do; there is a lot more that are not on that list.

A number of OAC provide access to information and to the internet to people who are unable to afford data or equipment due to high disadvantage indicators in their community, some of which are also the highest in Australia. The majority of online access centres generate a publication which, in some work we did to estimate their reach, extends to half of Tasmanian households annually. The network is essential to community connectivity in our rural communities. The Love your Online Access Centre program was one that we put together in 2018, to highlight how important those online access centres are. That program and campaign was a testament to the community support and connectivity of the OAC.

Most OAC run on very limited funding with coordinators donating a lot of their own time. All coordinators reported they had developed strategies to enable limited funding to stretch to meet the needs of the OAC. The Digital Grants Program funding should not only be continued, it should be increased. My research into the current funding models of the OAC found that many of the centres rely on federal grants, local government donations and community fundraising activities to maintain the services to the community. This initiative is representative of the sheer determination of the OAC to provide services to their communities.

For example, when I asked the St Helens OAC to put together a few lines about the services they provide to the local community, their feedback was: they have 25 volunteer hours per week that are contributed from the community; 16 paid coordinator hours per week; five unpaid coordinator hours per week; eight volunteer committee hours per week; and 500 visitors on average per week using their services. It is a really important hub for that community.

They also serve the community from a dedicated community-governed digital online access centre that provides safe, non-judgmental support in a non-threatening environment that encourages growth and learning for all. It is really important to the community of St Helens. The median age of the people who attend the St Helens online access centre is 56, compared to Tasmania's 40 years and 25 per cent of that catchment is 65 -plus years.

In addition to our literacy rate of 50 per cent across Tasmania, Tasmania has a welfare dependency rate of 33 per cent and in some areas only 45.5 per cent of students complete year 12 so they also provide local disability support services. There is no access to Centrelink in the St Helens area so that is done through their online access centre. That gives you an idea about the importance of online access centres to that particular community.

We know there are 18 OAC across Tasmania and each OAC has its own individual culture and community connection and to not guarantee funding again is embarrassing, minister. To show how out of touch the Government is when it comes to the OAC network as a testament to online access centres and to the significant services that they provide to the Tasmanian communities, page 56 of the PESRAC Report recognised online access centres, and I quote:

We consider providing greater access and improved digital capability to be a priority, particularly for Tasmanians who live in areas where network coverage is limited. The state Government's existing extensive digital infrastructure footprint through schools, libraries, online access centres and Service Tasmania centres can be leveraged to expand digital access for the community, particularly in regional locations, through longer opening hours, using community and volunteer input.

OAC were heartened to be recognised in that PESRAC report. It sent a really good message across the AT and OACs. However, in Estimates we learnt that the funding of OAC is again not guaranteed, minister. When asked in Estimates, the minister stated:

Having online access is incredibly important. We know that having digital literacy and access to online learning is critical. It also flows through a different portfolio so we are seeing a partnership between TasTAFE and Libraries Tasmania for online access for students to be able to learn. Through that we are looking strategically at the infrastructure that we do have across government. Libraries, obviously, have a very good physical presence in lots of places across Tasmania, including the Bass Strait islands. So we're looking at how we can utilise those facilities through the investment for TasTAFE so we can have smart investing of government resources into those online spaces and access centres.

So, you are nearly there.

Ms Jack then spoke from your instruction, I believe, and Ms Jack stated:

As the minister has said, the online access centres are really important in terms of the broad digital inclusion approach we have in Libraries Tasmania. The grants that are provided to the community-managed online access centres total \$450 000 per annum.

It is really not very much is it when you consider the bang you get from your buck from online access centres:

They are distributed among those community-managed OAC and spread around the state in various locations. At the moment they are guaranteed until the end of June 2022.

Since 2018 we have been fighting for online access centres to have recurrent funding and funding that is assured and funding that is bolstered. They deserve that. They provide so much service to their communities and an incredible number of volunteer hours goes into those online access centres. When we pressed further on the funding of the OAC the minister responded:

It's my expectation given the value that they provide, however, I am not in a position today to provide the detail of that. Considering that I have other funding through other portfolios that are looking around online access. We'll look through the provision of that funding and then look to what would be appropriate in the future.

That is positive. One of the OAC coordinators made a very valid point when I sent this transcript through to their centre because I thought it was very important that they knew again that their funding was not 100 per cent certain. We would really love a guarantee on their funding because these are people's lives. He stated:

What the minister doesn't understand is that TAFE will not cater for our ageing population who are not computer technologically literate but who need to access more and more government services through online portals, nor will it cater for the hundreds of Tasmanians who still live in black spots.

Community members utilise our OAC to register for a COVID-19 vaccination before being able to book an appointment and for assistance with the 2021 Census.

There is a lot more that goes into online access centres than just digital access.

Minister, you must ensure the existing structure of the OAC is maintained, bolster them with adequate funding, enhance what they do so well and guarantee them recurrent funding and support.

Ms Courtney - Good. I look forward to seeing your alternative budget.

Ms BUTLER - Is that the best you have got? That is terrible, minister.

[5.30 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF - Mr Chair, I want to make a contribution about a number of the portfolio areas of Ms Courtney, particularly for Hospitality and Events. Ms O'Connor might also make a few comments about this.

The question for Tasmanians before the state election, which was widely publicised and it was a huge concern for many people who had experienced the time before the 2018 election and who understood the importance of removing pokies from pubs and clubs around Tasmania because of the incredible harm they do to people because of the enormous social disadvantage of areas which have one of the highest rates of electronic gambling machines in the country, perhaps even in most countries, in some of the poorest suburbs of Tasmania.

People were looking very closely at this election and the Greens and others who were standing up for people who have been harmed by poker machines, were pushing the Government to release the report on the pokies tax rate and the special deals that were being done in secret. It was a matter of great public discussion, what was known, and that document obviously was sitting with the Government and the Premier was refusing to release it.

On behalf of people who are concerned about this matter, I asked Ms Courtney when she knew what the pokies tax rate was and whether she knew before the state election. She spent a number of questions pretending it was not, first of all, her portfolio responsibility and pretending that she had no notion about when she would have heard something. It is utterly implausible that Ms Courtney, as minister for Hospitality and Events, did not know if she found out what the pokies tax rate was going to be before the election was called.

Ms O'Connor - It beggars belief.

Dr WOODRUFF - I did not believe her essentially, Chair. On behalf of Tasmanians who care about this issue, care deeply about it, I did not believe it. It did not stack up. If a person has integrity and honesty, I think they would be upfront with Tasmanians. She should have been able to say if she knew or if she did not know. I do not believe that she cannot remember whether she found that out or not. I flat out do not believe it and I think her answers stand for themselves and if anyone wants to look at this issue I would encourage them to go to the *Hansard* and look at the attempts at deflecting responsibility that Ms Courtney made.

I talked to Ms Courtney, as Education minister, about the concerning low investment in literacy in Tasmania, given the fact that the literacy target of the Government when they came to office in 2014, was that we would have a target above the national standard in six years' time. That ought to have been last year. In 2014, the Government put \$8.4 million into achieving that literacy target. We have not achieved the target.

We are still below the national standard and Ms Courtney, in the Budget this year, as minister for Education, has given herself a target of eight to nine years and allocated \$5.3 million to try again to get us to reach the national standard. That is a relatively small investment compared to what was done six years ago and, here we are in 2021, still below the national standard. We have to put more in.

Yes, the Government is putting that money in but it is a huge under-investment in an area which needs so much more. I recognise the work that is going with different teachers across the system and I commend the work of all teachers around the state and to the people who are working hard in the Education department. I have no doubt about their serious intent to try to lift the literacy rate but unless the Government seriously invests the money into this area, they can only do so much. It is distressing to think that good-hearted people are working hard but they are not being given the tools they need and that is more resources, more staff to do the training and more time for teachers to do professional development involving the sorts of good initiatives Mr Bullard, the secretary, was talking about in phonics teaching in the early years.

Good things are happening but not enough money is being put into them to match the need and we certainly need a highly-literate population. More than ever, we need people who can understand the enormous changes that are happening in the world, and evidence around the world is that educated populations do better on every single measure. They do better in family relationships and social engagement, they do better in mental health, they do better in physical health. People do better with more education, and being able to educate yourself is to be literate. That is one of the basic things that is required.

I also spoke to Ms Courtney about the curriculum that is being provided for students to learn about the changing climate and to help them respond with the rising levels of eco-anxiety. We saw the article in the newspaper in the *Mercury* a couple of days ago. Some young people are doing research into eco-anxiety. It is shameful for government ministers, led by the Premier, but every minister who has an opportunity will attack the Greens for trying to reflect the scientific evidence and provide the facts about the changing climate. It is not our fault the climate is changing. We are talking about it. It is everybody's responsibility to lead on this. We will not, and we cannot resile from the facts and the science and that means that children need to be able to understand how to respond, how to talk and how to support each other in a changing world.

Ms Courtney rattled through the sort of Australian curriculum in this area. It is very science-based. There is also Humanities and Social Services. Often, almost invariably, this is aimed at older students but Ms O'Connor, the Leader of the Greens, got an incredibly moving email from a 10-year-old girl who was writing to her really distressed about the fact that adults are not taking leadership. It is the responsibility of adults to talk about these things and to act. We need to listen to young people, and I mean primary school children and give them opportunities in a school environment to safely talk about their feelings and to explore how they can take positive action and to help them find ways of connecting with other people, having conversations about this so it is not such an overwhelming topic. They hear about it on their phones and they talk to each other but we do not want the education of young people to be via social media.

Ms Courtney, as Minister for Education, has a really important opportunity to do more than the stuff that is 'press and send' from the federal national curriculum. It is not enough. There is too much of a lag and it has a conservative overtone to it, in that it underestimates the gravity of the situation and the seriousness of helping children to understand the changes that are happening.

Time expired.

[5.41 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS - Mr Deputy Chair, I am delighted to speak on the Estimates of Committee B about the Education portfolio and I will also be covering Children and Youth in my contribution.

The feedback we got from the members opposite now was interesting. There was certainly plenty of opportunity to put such things in an alternative budget. We have been waiting for quite some time; perhaps we will continue to do so. If Ms Butler is so passionate about the online access centres and libraries and various other things that this side of the House believes in and wants to make improvements, then perhaps you might want to have a chat with the two other members of the Right faction in front of you.

Ms Butler - If you were taking what I said seriously, you would not be playing politics with me. You would be guaranteeing the funding.

Ms O'Connor - This line will work for you for about another day, then you should give up on it.

Ms Butler - Do not play politics with these people's lives.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR - Order, Ms Butler and Ms O'Connor. You were heard in silence. Allow the member to make his contribution in the same.

Mr ELLIS - In this Budget there is a record \$8 billion which is put into schools, education, training, skills and we are proud of that. This side of the House believes that education is fundamental for the wellbeing of the next generation of Tasmanians, for the job opportunities of those looking to retrain and reskill and will set up our state economically for decades to come.

That is why we put in 867 more staff across our educational institutions here in this state. We believe in the empowering opportunities of education and that is why we are putting in more money now than has ever been seen in the history of our state.

A range of issues were broached in the Education portfolio and I will touch particularly on the infrastructure projects. This is something where our Government has been transformative in this state with the investments that are now being made with regard to local schools, right the way through and TAFE facilities.

For example, the \$7.1 million for Montello School in my neck of the woods in Burnie. This is an amazing school community which has been under-invested in for decades, sadly. There is a wonderful group of learners there, but there is an even more amazing school community who personally I have received a lot of advocacy from. I am proud to have been supporting them through this journey and I am glad to have delivered on the commitments we made to them, that they will get a major new upgrade to their school.

The \$16.2 million for the North West Support School. Some of the students have difficulty slotting in with what you might call, more mainstream educational opportunities and this school based in my neck of the woods, will mean that those kids are able to get the kind of educational opportunities that their peers might have.

There is a hydrotherapy pool which is going on at that site and for a lot of -

Ms O'Connor - It's a shame. Hobart is losing its hydrotherapy pool from Glenorchy.

Dr Woodruff - We don't have one for the south.

Mr ELLIS - I will leave that one for you guys and your alternative budget. I am proud of the north-west kids who will be able to enjoy this facility in the north-west. It is important with the high rates of disability in my neck of the woods and we have been fighting for those kids from day one. We believe in them and we want to make sure that they have a comfortable school experience and they can also engage in some of the more physical activities that they may not be able to do without those hydrotherapy pools.

There is a massive redevelopment going on at Devonport High. Anyone who has driven past there in the last few months will see how many tradies are on site at the moment. There is a huge amount of work being done and there is \$4.6 million to finish the job there. I know quite a few tradies who are working on that site and our investments in the education infrastructure are supporting jobs right across our economy. The amount of work on the books of our construction industry is enormous. It is recognised as almost unprecedented in the history of Tasmania to have things going flat-out in house construction, in commercial construction and in civil. A big part of that is the infrastructure upgrades our Government is supporting. Perhaps those are the things the Opposition are going to cut while they harp about the debt being incurred.

We still do not know whether the \$2 billion of extra debt they put in their election commitments are going to be honoured, whether they ditched all those policies, or whether they are going to give us an alternative at some point in time. We are really proud of the investments we are making in the intergenerational infrastructure which will set our state up for generations, particularly with our young learners. We know that Labor put the groceries

on the credit card and did not invest in the future but we are doing the exact opposite because that is what responsible budget management is all about.

There is \$12.2 million to finish the \$20 million upgrade to the Penguin District School, which is an area in the north west that is growing flat-out and will continue to grow because we are investing. I was on-site the other day catching up with the principal, Mr Grining, and they are doing an amazing job of educating kids in Penguin and the broader district and central coast. The new facilities look amazing and there is a heck of a lot of tradies on-site who are getting the job done.

There is also more money for schools in fast-growing areas in our state. There is \$22 million for the new Sorell school, which I know Mr Tucker as the local member is very keen to see developed. There is \$50 million for the new Brighton High School, which I know he is very supportive of as well. There is \$23.7 million for the new Legana Primary School, on the patch of the Education minister, who has been a huge supporter of that community, which is growing at a rapid rate. And why would you not want to live there? It is a beautiful part of the world.

There is also money in the Budget to provide \$4 million to TasTAFE to leverage libraries to increase their training in rural and remote areas. We know that the Opposition cared a heck of a lot about changing the name of libraries to LINC's but did not do too much otherwise. We are investing in the future of that service because we know that information is power and the training that people get at these libraries can help set them up for a better job and a better life.

Literacy rates was covered. We know this Government's record on that. We extended the schools to year 12 because we believe in making sure that everyone has an opportunity to learn. There is also \$26 million in the Budget for six new Child and Family Learning Centres, so getting kids right at the other end of their educational journey. In my neck of the woods, two of those will be in West Ulverstone and the Waratah-Wynyard municipality. We have seen a huge difference that it makes for learners. The one in Queenstown does a phenomenal job and we are really glad to see that rolled out right across our state so that we can increase the literacy, numeracy and educational outcomes for those young learners, which will have a huge impact on their life going forward.

There is \$56 million to support students with disability to meet their needs. We know that there are particular needs amongst the disability community, particularly for young kids. That additional funding will make a huge difference to their lives.

I know the Greens spoke about eco-anxiety and I have to say that they are the cause of most of it. We are in of the best places in the world -

Ms O'Connor - Wow, that is the most breathtakingly stupid and insulting thing you have ever said.

Mr ELLIS - There are only two other jurisdictions on earth that have done what we have done here, Mr Chair -

Ms O'Connor - It is breathtaking. You anti-science Luddite.

Dr Woodruff - You have no idea what you are talking about.

Mr ELLIS - Suriname and I think it is El Salvador have reached net zero -

Ms O'Connor - I will go and find that article from the bright young woman who wrote in the *Mercury* last week. It is people like you -

Mr CHAIR - Ms O'Connor, please.

Mr ELLIS - We are doing an amazing job but one of the things that is really galling for people in the north west, Chair -

Dr Woodruff - It is disgusting.

Ms O'Connor - It's disgusting.

Mr ELLIS - is for the Greens to come in here and claim that they speak for young people. I can tell you that absolutely not. In the north west young people want jobs and to come in here and say that you are going to shut down the native forest industry when we are surrounded by the carbon stores of timber that is sitting here -

Ms O'Connor - You are utterly deluded.

Mr ELLIS - it just speaks to this kind of catastrophism that comes from the Greens and is not based on science and is a big part of eco-anxiety that we are seeing -

Dr Woodruff - That is absolute rubbish. Chair, pull him up.

Mr ELLIS - among our young people.

Dr Woodruff - He is just coming here saying lies after lies.

Mr ELLIS - I also make a quick reference to the Ashley Youth Detention Centre -

Dr Woodruff - It is a lie. Absolutely a lie.

Mr ELLIS - We are closing that and we are setting up a new facility.

Ms COURTNEY - Point of order. We are having members using a word that we know is unparliamentary across the Chamber. I ask you to ask members to withdraw those, please.

Mr CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, I need you to withdraw the word 'lie'.

Ms O'CONNOR - Just on the point of order, Chair, Dr Woodruff did not call Mr Ellis a liar. She said what he said was a lie, which is a statement of fact.

Dr WOODRUFF - Chair, I am not withdrawing a statement of fact. I was not talking about Mr Ellis. But I am not going to suffer that -

Mr CHAIR - The member's time has expired. Mr Ellis, thank you.

Time expired.

Mr CHAIR - The Leader of the Opposition -

Dr Woodruff - If you think that is a good day's work -

Mr CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, I remind you that any member is able to make a contribution as they see fit, just as you are, so do not call on the Chair to 'pull him up', as you said to me via interjection. He has as much right to make a contribution in this place as you do and it is not the role of the Chair to pull them up.

The Leader of the Opposition, your 10 minutes can start again.

[5.51 p.m.]

Ms WHITE - Mr Chair, there are a number of issues I would like to raise. I will start with the Ashley Youth Detention Centre, given that is where the member who just resumed his seat finished off.

We heard through the scrutiny committee that there are six ED5 complaints currently active in the Department of Communities for the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. That is a demonstration of some significant challenges at that facility, none more obvious than the one that has been raised publicly by Alysha.

I acknowledge again Alysha's bravery in speaking out publicly about what she has endured over a period of 22 months where, from the time she raised her complaint initially to it being concluded, it took nearly two years. That is an extraordinarily long time for somebody to wait for an outcome after they have raised a complaint about them feeling unsafe in the workplace because of sexual harassment they are being subjected to.

As we all know now, and it was not in this Estimates hearing, but it was the Premier's secretary of the department who revealed the outcome of that in a public scrutiny committee. Utterly inappropriate. What it did highlight, and what Alysha's example highlights, is that there are significant challenges in the State Service when it comes to the management of ED5s.

I will go to one comment in particular that was made by the secretary of the Department of Communities. When he was asked a question by Ms Johnston about whether or not there was a complaint received in writing, because there are significant concerns that there is no original complaint, Mr Pervan responded:

Thank you, minister. I think we need to be clear that sometimes there's not a complaint. Sometimes the matter is raised with HR and there is an iterative process of going backwards and forwards but there is a nice form that comes out with an 'on this date this occurred and this is a breach of the code of conduct because -' and then we launch an investigation. Sometimes it's as much a conversation and that initiates further discussions and a preliminary inquiry on our part.

Chair, it is my understanding that ED5 is incredibly serious and that in this instance it had been made as a complaint to HR which had then been escalated to an ED5. I find it remarkable that such a serious process to investigate through an ED5 was undertaken when there was nothing in writing. It is hard to believe. I want to make the point that, despite this matter now being resolved, it certainly is not finished.

In terms of the complaint being resolved, the matter is certainly not finished. There is a process underway. The Premier promised within 30 days there would be an investigation concluded. We are a quarter of the way through that and my understanding is that the complainant still has not heard from the investigator. I will leave that with you, minister, but you might want to urgently follow that one up.

I also make the point that whatever replaces Ashley needs to be best-practice and provide a rehabilitative setting for young people who are in a youth detention system. Ideally, through work that we might be doing through the wellbeing strategy, through other work in our school settings, through work in our community, if we can prevent children coming into contact with the youth justice system and, if they do come into contact with the youth justice system, we have better diversionary programs in place and a restorative justice approach so that young people do not end up incarcerated. In Tasmania, and in most jurisdictions across the country, children as young as ten can be incarcerated, which is completely unacceptable. The Government is now taking the approach of closing down the youth detention centre at Ashley and replacing it with two facilities, one in the north and one in the south, as per recommendation 4 of the Harker Report they received in 2016. We want to see best practice in those facilities - rehabilitating those young people and making sure they do not graduate to Risdon, which unfortunately is the fate of many of the young detainees who are currently at Ashley.

Of course, we also know that the funding for those two facilities is not in this Budget. It is another announcement that has been made since the Budget was handed down that has not been funded. It is contributing to the big black hole this government has, when they say they are going to return the budget to surplus; and yet, there are key initiatives like this one that do not have a cent of funding.

There are a couple of other areas I will talk about in the minister's portfolio - one is hospitality, and the minister has now taken on the responsibility for tourism as well, as of Monday. Congratulations.

The business support package that has been announced yesterday is certainly very welcome news but it took a long time to get there. I know the minister has been hearing from the sector about how desperate they are. They are bleeding cash because they are trying to keep workers on. They are paying out their wages at the same time. They have other fixed costs to fund and yet they do not have the customers - because 65 per cent of visitors to Tasmania come from Victoria and New South Wales and they are in lockdown.

Now that the guidelines are online, I have had a chance to take a look at what is available. A business that has a turnover up to \$1 million and employs staff can now access an additional \$15 000 on top of the \$5000 they might have already been able to access in the first round of the program. That is in the period up to the end of October. That is definitely welcome but again, for many of the businesses I speak to that are within that bracket it is about a week's worth of wages, and we are talking about a period of time up until Christmas before borders are likely to reopen. That money has to stretch a very long way, and these businesses may not qualify for payroll tax rebates or waivers. They certainly might benefit from some licensing fee reduction and relief, but the primary concern they have is how do they keep their staff on and how do they pay their wages. They need cash to do that.

What we had hoped to see was a job saver program adopted in Tasmania just as it has been done in New South Wales. That is what we have been arguing for. That is what the

Acting Premier had written to the Prime Minister about just over two weeks ago now in that very nicely-worded letter. That is what he asked for. That is not what we received. That will mean, unfortunately, that businesses will still have to make tough decisions about which workers they can keep on and what hours they can offer their workers. That is because, despite the borders being opened to places like South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland, 65 per cent of visitation comes from New Wales and Victoria and that revenue will not be replaced any time soon. We remain concerned for the health of that sector and particularly the workers in that sector.

I will make a few comments on education. Sorell School - the school I went to - is desperately in need of the infrastructure that has been promised. The money in the budget is not enough. Minister, I am not sure if you have been out there to meet with the staff and the project team on site, or to meet with the mayor, Kerry Vincent. We know that school needs an injection of funds because 55 per cent of children from that municipality go to schools outside of Sorell. We need to be able to make it an attractive place, change of the culture of the place, change the feel of the place so that parents choose to send their children there. It is certainly where I would like to send my children when they are choosing to go to high school and I am hopeful that the facilities will be up and ready by the time my daughter is able to go to high school. I am sure they will be by the time this little guy is ready.

I know, from talking to the School Association there is that they need about an extra \$15 million on top of the \$22 million that has been committed to give full effect to the project. That would include being able to build a new gym, upgrade the performing arts centre and improve the classrooms. Unfortunately, rather than building lots of new classrooms, which is what people would hope for, the projects are retrofitting the old ones.

I graduated Year 10 there in 1998. The classrooms are the same there; that cold, Besser block building with very little natural light. It is not a very welcoming environment nor is it conducive to a good learning space. There are lots of little corners, nooks and crannies which really are not best practice in an education setting any longer.

I make the point that the Labor Party committed \$15 million at the most recent election on top of what is in the budget, so we could actually deliver a state-of-the-art school for that community, which is a real hub now in the south-east and a growing municipality.

I urge you to engage quickly, because I am concerned it is about to tender, project works are going to start and we are going to end up with nice buildings, but not the kind of buildings that we need in order to change the look and the feel of the place and change the culture. I leave you with that, because it is something I am very passionate about.

[6.01 p.m.]

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you, Chair.

Ms O'Connor - You have no intention of answering any of the questions that we might ask in Estimates reply. Is that correct?

Ms COURTNEY - There were plenty of questions that were put last week and I had the opportunity to answer. I am particularly taking on board some of the constructive comments that have been made this evening by members.

I have a range of portfolios that we discussed and interrogated last week across both Houses. In the time I have, I will try to ensure that I give appropriate attention to each.

I will start first with the Hospitality and Events portfolio. I am pleased to now be the Minister for Tourism, and Minister for Hospitality and Events. They are sectors that I greatly believe in. I also acknowledge that they are sectors that have been incredibly impacted by COVID-19 in particular, with borders closed but also in the limitations of interacting, gathering and being able to spend money in venues.

While we are very optimistic about the recovery phase of COVID-19, at the moment we do need to continue to support these businesses.

I am pleased we have been able this week, to deliver our \$70 million, super-charged business support program. Members will see that the content of this package reflects the fact that we have listened to a range of stakeholders. I am conscious that we have a diverse range of needs across tourism and hospitality industry operators and that each of their businesses have quite unique capital structures. Our expectation is that this package will be able to provide that bridge they need for when we see visitors return to Tasmania and people are able to interact more.

This additional \$70 million boost is on top of a raft of other initiatives in the Budget that will ensure that we are supporting the base of these industries and importantly, looking at what we can do to support the workforce.

As Hospitality minister, I am excited about the Hospitality 2030 vision that we are working on with the THA, so that we can not only get through the acute challenge we have now, but look towards the future. What do we need to do to set ourselves up as a sustainable industry in the future? What do we need to do as an industry so we are the industry of choice for young people and people looking at a career change? I am optimistic about what can be done, particularly with the initiatives we have around leadership for women. That is something we will see delivered, not only in the coming months, but in the years ahead.

We have also seen through this year's Budget, the delivery of a range of our events initiatives. Events drive visitation to the state and they also drive intrastate visitation. Many of the events we have in Tasmania are an important part of our way of life. We know that volunteers are very much at the core of those events. It is very pleasing to be able to support the celebration of what is unique about Tasmania, in each location.

Last week I announced that we have secured the next three-year agreement with Dark Mofo, with \$7.5 million across those three years. I am sure everyone in this House agrees that Dark Mofo has become one of the cultural beacons in Tasmania since its inception. It brings Tasmanians out of hibernation and that has also helped us, as a community, to celebrate winter.

When I first moved to Tasmania I did notice that we hibernated during winter. Dark Mofo has helped turn that around and we have seen a number of other mid-winter-style festivals emerge around the state, celebrating the fact that we can don our puffer jackets and get outside. What I particularly like about Dark Mofo is that it challenges us each year; it is always provocative and creates conversation which is really important both for art and our identity; and importantly we are seeing year on year the visitors who come are not just visiting Hobart,

they are getting out and about to other parts of Tasmania, so we are seeing that economic benefit not just coming to Hobart but going out much further - and that is a good thing.

Although I did not have the honour of being Minister for Tourism last week, I am really excited about embarking on this portfolio. I acknowledge the work done by my predecessors; and I also acknowledge Will Hodgman's passion in this space. It is a really important portfolio, not just for the Tasmanian economy but as part of our Tasmanian identity. The work we do in Tourism Tasmania and Brand Tasmania is about ensuring our campaigns have authenticity and importantly, are targeted in ways that drive visitation and visitor spend to our businesses here in Tasmania.

I also had the opportunity last week to be able to attend estimates for the first time as Minister for Skills, Training and Workforce Growth. The breadth of this portfolio is that, not only does it deliver actual training -with TasTAFE at the centre of it - it is very much about pathways into training and then also pathways from training into jobs. That is how I see this portfolio, as ensuring we are removing any barriers for Tasmanians to be able to get a job. As we know, those barriers are many and diverse.

This Budget is delivering almost \$100 million in our plan to evolve TasTAFE. This investment goes across a suite of things, including: people, with our investment in additional staff; infrastructure, because we need to invest in our infrastructure across the state; and technology, and new and unique ways of engaging with learners around the state. We know that it is critical that we have a not-for-profit, state training organisation that can be responsive to industry as well as learners. I know we have passionate staff around the state who are very dedicated to their learners. I take my role as minister very seriously, because see how important it is - and nothing highlights that more than speaking to people whose lives have been transformed by having studied at TAFE. You see it in young people getting that leg-up for their first job. I have also met a number of people who have had the opportunity to retrain after finding themselves redundant or out of work. TasTAFE has been that key lifeline for them to retrain and then have a pathway to a job. I hold the work of TasTAFE and the dedicated staff in high esteem.

More broadly, across the Skills, Training and Workforce Growth portfolio, we are looking at how we can continue to deliver our commitments across workforce development and particularly supporting apprentices and trainees and Tasmanians into jobs. We have our \$13.8 million Delivering Local Jobs for Local People policy. The centrepiece of that is the \$10.6 million additional funding for jobs hubs which I have spoken about in this place many times. I know we have seen extraordinary success of the jobs hubs that we already have in Tasmania.

I am looking forward to working with each of the local governing boards and people of the new ones that we are standing up. We know of the success of these jobs hubs, and the people who are involved with them and embed themselves in it. Seeing the one at Glenorchy come to fruition from the very beginning that it is already getting people into jobs is personally satisfying. It also shows the absolute merit in these types of initiatives. We can stand in this place sometimes and talk about policies but getting out on the ground and seeing how that can impact an individual Tasmanian's life is very powerful. It goes to show how important these types of initiatives are and why the funding that we have is so important to them.

There is a suite of other initiatives across that portfolio that do remove barriers. We have some, such as a Tasmanian Employer Bonus Fund, which is about encouraging employers to employ those who have perhaps been long-term job seekers, have a disability, are carers, or mature aged workers returning to the workforce. We have a range of initiatives such as our Workers Connect portal, funding for job matching services and funding for the Area Connect service. There is also funding for Youth Navigators as well as Youth Connectors, recognising that for young people there are often a unique set of needs and circumstances that they have as they are trying to access training or access a job.

With regard to the work that we are doing, pleasingly, we are also seeing really strong apprentice numbers here in Tasmania. This is something that we should be really proud of. We have a very proud apprenticeship and traineeship system here in Tasmania and I do want to applaud and thank those businesses that take on an apprentice or trainee. Not only is it obviously important for your business to succeed but what that provides for the individual and a pathway for them is exciting.

I will now turn my attention to the Education portfolio. Education is a critical priority of the Government. I fundamentally believe that a Tasmanian, no matter where you were born, no matter what your circumstance, should have access to quality education. This fundamentally predicates our policy with regard to schools going out to year 11 and 12. Once we get to next year we will have seen that happen in every school across Tasmania and I pay an enormous amount of credit to Jeremy Rockliff for his work in that. Indeed, it was Michael Ferguson who was the shadow spokesperson for education when we were in opposition who I know also took stewardship of that policy. I think it is a fundamental policy and it is a decision that our Government has made that will be looked on favourably in decades to come.

We know though it is not just about having schools to year 12; it is about what we do in them. There has been a key focus on literacy. That was a broad topic of discussion and importantly so. We need to be doing more and this is why we are investing in more in-school literacy coaches, increasing the number by 50 per cent. It is why we are ensuring that we are putting support staff in our CFLCs, our psychologists, social workers, speech and language pathologists to replicate the work that is happening in our schools.

In Education we recognise that we need to ensure that we are investing, and not just in infrastructure - that has been mentioned by my colleague, Mr Ellis - in Braddon. We need to have the bricks and mortar but we also need to have a learning environment as well as the support staff and the support services so that when kids are in a classroom they are ready and able to learn. That is how we increase the outcomes we are getting for our students. It has to be a broad approach. I am pleased we are looking at this from a number of different elements.

I will quickly touch on the numeracy framework. Clearly and quite rightly, literacy has been a focus but we have also the 2021-25 numeracy framework and plan for action which outlines a number of priorities, including a numeracy coaching initiative pilot. This is rolling out as a new initiative. It commenced earlier this week across 19 schools with six lead quality teaching coaches so that we can have that professional support in learning, in implementation of strategies across the curriculum and in the assessment of mathematics and numeracy. We want to be able to support our staff at the shoulder and help them co-design and co-teach.

As minister, I am pleased that we have these initiatives. I can say with pride that we have robust models of assessment around each of these initiatives. We want to make sure that the

things we are doing in schools are best practice, are informed by best practice and then we look at the results and how we can learn, adapt and evolve those so we can continue to make sure we are responding to the needs of Tasmanian children.

With regard to disability, it was good to be able to discuss our commitments with our fellow members, particularly our engagement with the broader community and those with lived experience on the Tasmanian Disability Insurance Scheme. That is also part of the work we are doing in reviewing the act as well, noting the fact that things have evolved enormously within the disability space with the introduction of the NDIS. Being able to ensure that we have appropriate mechanisms there, ensuring that the Tasmanian Disability Services Commissioner that we are going to stand up, responding to the needs, the desires and the feedback we are hearing from those in the community is very important.

We are continuing to deliver our strong commitment into the NDIS with over \$1 billion committed over the next four years and we have funding in this year's budget for \$660 000 for the National Disability Services to support them as a peak body for local disability providers. I am grateful for the members of PDAC as well as the ministerial advisory group because they always come to every meeting and are incredibly well prepared. They come with a range of solutions of how we actually create positive outcomes for those with a disability. I am grateful for the time they give to the Government to be able to help us with regard to that.

I will speak about children and youth. This is clearly an important portfolio to have responsibility for. During Estimates, I outlined and we touched on a few of the things that we have additional funding for in the Premier's Child and Youth Wellbeing strategy, in particular Bringing Baby Home. One of the things about Bringing Baby Home that I will highlight is an example of the breadth of the work that has been done with my colleagues, Mr Jaensch and Mrs Petrusma, in how we are supporting families earlier. This is a way that we can support families and carers so we can keep young people safely in their care. That is how we get best outcomes for young people and it is something we are continuing to strive to do on our reform journey, that wraparound support for families so they can safely care for their young people.

We are seeing that with Bringing Baby Home but we also have the Sure Start initiative and a number of other aspects, such as informal kinship carer funding, so we can support those people who are caring for kids, particularly those at risk.

In the time remaining, I will talk about Ashley Youth Detention Centre. It has been acknowledged by a few members. We know that Ashley has a long history. I acknowledge the efforts of the staff at the centre and with the Department of Communities Tasmania. They have made enormous gains toward a therapeutic approach that meets the needs of young people while keeping them safe. I have seen the results firsthand and I commend them for the work they have done.

The Custodial Inspector reflected positively in his annual report, saying with respect to recommendations for youth custodial services that progress has been consistent with improvements made across a range of services. The department has been positive and proactive in addressing concerns raised.

As I embark on this enormous new way, this is not only about custodial youth justice. It is about our whole approach to youth justice. It is going to build upon the work we are already doing with the youth justice blueprint in continuing to build the services that address the

complex factors that lead to youth crime, emphasis on early intervention and diversion and a youth justice system that works in a way that is therapeutic for those who interact with it and keeps the community safe.

Time expired.

[6.21 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR - Mr Chair, I am going to focus on the Children and Youth section of the Estimates with Ms Courtney and make the observation that this portfolio was dedicated one hour of scrutiny. As there were so many Dorothy Dix questions, 12 minutes at a minimum of the time devoted to the scrutiny of the Children and Youth portfolio went to Liberal backbencher questions to the minister to the extent that, at one point, Ms Ogilvie asked the same question she had previously asked -

Ms OGILVIE - Point of order, Chair.

Ms O'Connor - I am making a statement of fact.

Ms OGILVIE - Making a statement of fact, I started to ask a question that I realised I had already read out and then I stopped. Was that your point?

Ms O'Connor - No, you stopped because I said you had just asked that question.

Mr CHAIR - It is not a point of order, Ms Ogilvie.

Ms Ogilvie - Sorry, I was just making a point.

Ms O'CONNOR - Chair, I do not usually tell personal stories in here, I try to avoid it. However, I was devastated when I got home from scrutiny of the Children and Youth portfolio because it was 48 minutes dedicated to this portfolio and we had question after question from a Liberal backbencher to the Liberal minister to the point that I negotiated a question for Ms Johnston. The Chair at the time said she could ask that question, then the second-to-last question of the day in the Children's portfolio went to a Liberal backbencher. It was shameful.

The issues raised in what was the most tone deaf and disrespectful Estimates I have been part of for some time related to two key issues. One was the way the Department of Communities Tasmania responded to a sexual harassment complaint lodged some 22 months ago by a clinical practice consultant, Alysha, who worked with young people at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. We found out in the Premier's Estimates on Monday, because the secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet had let out of the bag, that after all this time that Alysha had not heard a word about her complaint, suddenly, across the Estimates table, everyone was being told - including Alysha - that no breach was found.

We asked a series of questions of the minister about where the original complaint was. It was our understanding, and this was confirmed by the ducking and weaving at the table, that the original complaint could not be located by the department. How can you make a finding that there has been no breach, no code of conduct breach, and no sexual harassment if you do not have the original complaint?

I acknowledge, as Ms White did, the guts and the clarity of Alysha who, in speaking up and coming forward at the time she did, was the catalyst for change at Ashley Youth Detention Centre after a century of horrors. It took a lot of guts when you have lodged a complaint about alleged sexual harassment and been treated in a way by the agency which I regard as dismissive, to then step forward, speak up for herself, for women, and speak up for children and young people and tell the truth about what has been happening at Ashley Youth Detention Centre and that was the catalyst for change.

Every member in this place knows the Greens have been fighting to have Ashley closed since I became leader in 2015. It is our policy to have Ashley closed and have two therapeutic facilities built north and south. I received the most moving email on Saturday morning from a person who had been put into Ashley at the age of 12. He is 45 now. He wanted to say thank you to us and to everyone who has been advocating for the closure of Ashley. It was a decision that was made when he was 12 years old to stick him into Ashley because of family breakdown that sent his life into a tailspin. At 45 years of age, he is still bearing the trauma.

The trauma ripple effect from the Ashley Youth Detention Centre spans across generations. That is why it is so good that we finally have a decision to close Ashley. It will save generations of young people from harm.

I thank the Premier for finally making that decision. I thank Alysha for stepping up. I want to thank journalist, after journalist, many of them women, who followed this story, who persisted to get to the bottom of what is happening at Ashley, for their work and for their advocacy, their courage. I thank lawyer, Sebastian Buscemi, for stepping up on behalf of the children and young people of Ashley and on behalf of Alysha.

We asked questions about what is different at Ashley Youth Detention Centre when we have been assured that the children were safe by the previous minister, Mr Jaensch. I asked what has changed at the Franklin unit, which is a notorious unit where there is substantial evidence that younger children are threatened with being sent there, or are sent there, and therefore where there are older boys who are much more damaged, and those children are coming out the other side deeply and profoundly damaged and therefore carrying lifelong trauma.

Mr Chair, we did not get satisfactory answers out of the agency at the time about where the complaint was that Alysha had lodged. We had ducking and weaving at that table. We did not get satisfactory answers about what is different at the Franklin unit other than some, what I regard, as bland assurances which were not particularly reassuring.

It is a very good day that Ashley is being closed. I would like to know, and I am sure other members of this place would like to know, what that means for the \$7.3 million that was foolishly advocated for a refurbishment of Ashley after the 2018 state election. We know that Ashley was kept open because the Liberals did not want to lose votes in Lyons. Hopefully, that \$7.3 million will be repurposed towards the therapeutic facilities.

I also want to make it really clear that the Greens have an expectation, given the Premier's assurance about the safety of children at Ashley, that every possible resource and all necessary attention will be paid to what is happening to children and young people at Ashley over the next two to three years before it is closed. We need to make sure that there is independent monitoring and oversight. We need the Commissioner for Children and Young People to be

keeping a very close eye on Ashley. Let us not forget, there are still children there now. There are children like that 12-year-old, who wrote to me as a 45-year-old, who are being damaged as a result of being sent to Ashley Youth Detention Centre.

I also want to talk a bit about queries that we had about how TasTAFE staff may be treated as the Government moves towards a different model for the delivery of vocational training through our TAFE. The Greens are not persuaded by the move to - you might not call it privatised, but you are definitely corporatising TasTAFE. We have concerns about whether dedicated people who are working at TasTAFE will be under the State Services Act under state law, state legislation or whether they will be under the Fair Work Act. I recognise that the minister said a decision has not been made yet but those staff who give their working lives to improving the skills, training, and confidence of people who go into TasTAFE need some certainty.

All we have had to date has been that narrow mention in the PESRAC report which we are all sure came from Don Challen. There has been no sound argument put yet for why you would so dramatically change TasTAFE from what it is now.

We are very concerned about the loss of diversity of courses. It will be about making money and breaking even. We are very worried that some of that rich diversity of courses which is available at TasTAFE will no longer be available because they will not be industry-led or money-making ventures.

Mr Chair, I am going to get up in the adjournment shortly and deal with Mr Ellis's incredibly insulting statement about children and young people. Mr Ellis seems to take the view that children are ignorant, they lack capacity for independent thought. That is what he was saying before when he stood up, when he was accusing the Greens of frightening children and feeding them false information, when he is accusing scientists like the 11 000 who signed onto a climate emergency declaration, of scaring children. What scares children are people like Mr Ellis.

[6.31 p.m.]

Ms DOW - Mr Chair, I rise tonight to speak on this Estimates Committee in regard to Education and TAFE and online access centres -

Ms O'Connor - You think it is funny? Like, honestly? You think it is funny.

Mr Ellis - I am quaking, quaking in my boots. Sorry, Ms Dow.

Ms DOW - I hate to break up the party, guys, but I would like to make a start.

Ms O'Connor - I do not care whether you are scared or not. I care that you are a disgrace and children will read this stuff.

Mr CHAIR - Order, Ms O'Connor and Mr Ellis, the conversations across the Chamber can finish so that Ms Dow can make her contribution.

Ms DOW - I want to begin my contribution around some of the school infrastructure projects I asked the minister about during Estimates. I was pleased to hear Mr Ellis talk so

positively about Montello Primary School and the need for upgrades at that school. That is the first time I have heard him publicly speak about that.

Mr Ellis - I have said it about four times in parliament. I will send you that *Hansard*.

Ms DOW - That would be great. That is a project that -

Ms O'Connor - Mr Ellis is a fake.

Ms DOW - I have been working with that school community for some time -

Members interjecting.

CHAIR - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Ms DOW - As I explained to the minister during Estimates, there is a real need for urgent upgrades at that school. I would love the minister to meet with the school community and have a look for herself. There is a need to improve disability access for students and for family members and for staff. Right now, there is inability to access classrooms because of the disability access issues and there is need for immediate upgrades to be done to a lower toilet block at the school, which also has access issues and also urgently needs upgrading.

Then there is the overall need to look at a master plan for that site for the school community going forward. I believe the minister alluded to that during Estimates but there needs to be that immediate work done first. If you do have the opportunity to visit the site, you will understand the urgency of that when you actually see first-hand the state of some of the amenities around the school.

It is positive that you are looking at an overall master plan for that site and what that school will look like into the future. I know that the local school association and families and students who attend that school and the wonderful staff at Montello Primary School are excited about this funding commitment.

We also made a commitment around funding Montello Primary School through the work that we have done locally with the school community. It is important that those immediate works are done and that there is not a delay to that. I want to put that on the record tonight. I congratulate the school association and ex-principal, Denise Witherspoon [TBC], and staff and students on their strong advocacy for improvements to their school because they truly deserve them.

The other school that I wanted to mention is the support school in Devonport. I visited that site and worked with the school community. I understand the needs they have right now and the restrictions they have right now on that site - even the outdoor area is on a hill which makes it very difficult for some of the students to access.

I note the comments around the provision of hydrotherapy services for those students. This issue really came to a head last year when the pool was closed at the North West Regional Hospital. Those students used to have access to the pool for therapy and their ongoing needs. There was a period of time where there was nothing available to them or to a number of members of the local community. This came to a head as an issue. I am pleased that there has

been that commitment made by the Government. It is a valuable service for those students and they should be afforded every opportunity to access it. Those students from the Burnie campus will welcome being able to use that facility when it is up and running.

It has been highlighted to me over a long period of time now, the need for those students to have access to that service like other students in the south and the north. I was surprised to hear from Ms O'Connor that the support school in the south is losing its hydrotherapy pool. That is a great shame and should be reconsidered by the Government.

During Estimates I asked about the renewable energy's schools election commitment. It was concerning to us that has been pushed out past the forward Estimates. I asked the minister about that program. It is an important program. It offers school communities the opportunity to have savings that can be reinvested back into their school infrastructure and operations. It is concerning that there is no money in the Budget for that when it was an election commitment. I ask the minister to reconsider her position on that.

Another area which looks at cuts to funding is the online access centre; those valuable centres you find in many communities across our state that are valued by those who use them. They offer access to a range of services but importantly, internet access which many people do not have access to in the first place. They also provide important education programs around digital literacy, which is a big issue for many Tasmanians across our state, particularly in rural and regional areas.

It was concerning to see that post-2023, there is no funding for the online access centres across the state. I asked the minister to commit to funding those centres past that date. No commitment was given so I asked again for the highest priority to be given to ensuring that those online access centres can continue to operate post-2023.

Another part of our discussion was about TasTAFE. There seems to be limited information from the Government on what their new transition of TasTAFE is going to mean for the people who work in TasTAFE and for the students who access their learning opportunities through TasTAFE. You have put out this lovely glossy plan around your plan and it says clearly that there will be a bill tabled in parliament before November, so in the spring sitting of parliament.

During Estimates you could not tell us about how TasTAFE employees will be employed under this new model. One would think that you would be having the legislative changes drafted right now so you would have a pretty firm idea about how things were going to proceed into the future for those employees. Yet you were unable to give us a commitment about that, minister.

That provides a lot of uncertainty for people currently working for TasTAFE, providing invaluable education and training to people of all ages across our state. There needs to be some certainty around how those employees will be employed into the future, and whether those who are employed under your new TAFE as a not-for-profit, or however you want to put it, will be better or worse off. You said the current staff will not be any worse off, but what about the new staff? You failed to provide us with any sort of clarity around that during Estimates.

The other aspect of TAFE I will touch on is around the delivery of regional TAFE. I said during Estimates that it is disappointing because you have had seven years to improve access

to TAFE across the regions. Part of our jobs plan and our commitment to investment in TAFE was about bringing back more face-to-face TAFE across regional Tasmania. You also made a commitment about it, but when we asked about it in Estimates, you were very scant on details. You could not tell us which target areas that your new regional TAFE model would be rolled out across. You could not tell us when it started and there is only funding across a couple of the out years in the Budget for that transition for that rural and regional model. The details were so scant when the need is now.

You have communities like Circular Head and the West Coast that, in the absence of any firm commitment to regional skills and training development from the state Government, have forged ahead and have secured federal funding for their communities to provide study hubs, coordinating skills and training delivery across their communities. That has simply been because there has not been the availability of skills and training opportunities in those regional communities prior to them doing that work. That came from community advocacy groups for education and training in both of those centres. It highlights the inadequacies of this Government when it comes to providing regional TAFE and access to skills and training across regional Tasmania.

You also promised regional accommodation in Clarence and Burnie. You were not able to provide a lot more detail about when those builds would be complete. They are really important initiatives. Right now, there is no accommodation at the Burnie TAFE campus. There was some time ago but there is not now. There have been concerns about students staying at other sites around the city and the preferred model of accommodation is for that to be provided on-site, close to facilities. There is a sense of urgency in that and it would be good to have some firm time frames for when those builds would commence and, more importantly, when they will be completed.

Time expired.

[6.41 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY - Mr Chair, I rise to make some comments regarding the minister's contribution to Estimates last week. In the suite of portfolio areas the minister is responsible for, there are many areas of personal interest. In particular, Children and Youth, Education, Skills and Training and the broader suite of Hospitality and Events we are discussing now as well as Tourism. It is important for Tasmania and our shared electorate in Bass.

I will start with the hard and end with the positive. The hard is the conversation that has been raised by many here this afternoon regarding Ashley. My journey into public life started only a few steps prior, through Ashley, having worked with the Beacon Foundation at Launceston College. I found a place where I could make a contribution working with young people, particularly young people at risk and was assigned to work at Ashley Youth Detention Centre. I have some personal experience and understanding, although that was 20 years ago. As we have heard, there has been recent change and things do change, but not a lot has changed.

I had to go back and do a little research with the Leader of the Greens' comment about it having been over a century. I thought, wow, really, is that where it all started? Over the last 100 years to get to this point with the extraordinary and devastating circumstances of last week with Alysha's public confrontation with the outcomes of her investigation bringing this to a head.

For many moments in life when we seek to make change, and I know there is seriously good intent to shift what we all understand are the challenges with Ashley at the moment, but for my contribution here I implore those responsible for this transition, to understand that infrastructure alone, that closing a facility and building two new facilities is not the solution.

When we look deeply at concerns in the community or in organisational facilities, it is culture. Culture can sometimes be the most important part of any operation but it can be the most difficult to shift. Yes, with a fresh facility, at some point in the future in the three years that have been suggested, finding a site, designing a for-purpose, best-outcome facility that has the very best teams and people with purpose, consideration and dedication for the work they do with the young people of Tasmania who will find themselves in these circumstances, needs to be at the very core of what happens.

Staying with the theme of young people and their development and expansion for a moment and looking into the education element of Estimates from last week, I want to highlight in a positive way some of the contributions for education facilities in the Bass electorate. I know for some time members of the Legana community have been excitedly awaiting the development of a school for Legana but also were really keen to express their concern or needs about placement and integration and how the facilities, if built, can be shared with community. So recognising the commitment and the timing over these next three years to land that project in a positive way for the community is welcomed. Something that is further welcomed because that has been on the agenda for some time, like many have discussed in their contributions this afternoon, is the number of school facilities. For many years, Exeter High School has been asking for support for their infrastructure upgrades so it is great to see that in the budget and that is a positive contribution.

New to this place and new the process of state level elections, I found it curious in the early build-up of our election in Bass was the really obvious focus that was put on the Glen Dhu Primary School swimming pool. Anyone in northern Tasmania who is in the region of Bass or in the extended greater Launceston area, pretty much everyone, learnt to swim at the Glen Dhu Primary School pool. There were suggestions that it was going to close. Back in the day when we learnt to swim it was freezing; there was no heating; there was nothing; and we would often have our swimming lessons in winter. For a recognition to roll back the intention to close but to contribute or make that commitment to retaining that facility and ensuring that it is upgraded and fit for purpose is also a welcome outcome in this budget.

I want to speak to the different suite of responsibilities for the minister in Hospitality and Events and acknowledging that the Estimates period for Tourism was in another time allocation but they all integrate and tie in together. I want to reflect on the process, not only last week in scrutiny or the week before, in recognising what allocations were actually in the Budget and how much has been set aside in case we need ongoing support regarding any sort of COVID-19 impact for Tasmanian operators who make positive comments when it is appropriate.

The package that has been announced this week is welcomed. I almost find it curious that you can on one hand be really positive about something and also have feedback about it so that the need to defend a decision that a package has raised and then look at all these people who said it is welcomed, of course, it is welcome. Support right now for our businesses that are struggling is always going to be welcomed. If it is enough and it goes to the point of what is really needed is a whole other conversation but to have an expanded package of support is great. I cast my mind back only a few weeks prior, and over the month of this sitting period

and just before, and being able to prosecute that the original grants program did little to support the businesses that were really struggling. Often if you are a small or a tiny business, the financial impact of not having visitation and not having the regular type of clientele that you would otherwise rely on has a massive financial burden. Initially after pressure from peak bodies and from this side of the House to have that reviewed then to open up the \$25 000 above eligible businesses was also welcomed.

I have a particular interest and everyone will be aware of this. When businesses are under pressure and they are bleeding cash and they are having to monitor their cashflow we talk about things being available in a month or so, or in weeks. Some businesses right now are monitoring their cashflow daily. They are trying to figure out how they are going to get to the end of the week to pay their staff so every bit of information is really important now.

I went on the Business Tasmania website over the last couple of days to find out, for the businesses that are in contact with me, how they can find out about what this package actually means. I note today that while we were sitting in the House the website was updated. For me there has been a particular interest over the last couple of weeks of the treatment of the JobKeeper payments and payroll tax. I know there are two slightly different things happening here. There is the historical issue where some organisations receiving JobKeeper have triggered over the threshold and where they thought they would not pay any payroll tax they are now being lumped with quite a large and significant payroll tax liability. I note that in this current package there was a comment about - people might say we are fighting over words but language is really important because it goes to definition. The minister, as we are all aware, was talking about payroll tax being exempt, JobKeeper payments being exempt from payroll tax when, in fact, that was not the case. Now we are talking about payroll relief. I ask that some clarity be provided, hopefully today, if not tomorrow.

When I have been through the Business Tasmania site it is clear what the expanded packages offer to people in different eligible entities, in different revenue categories. However, there is no information I can find yet, nor any businesses that have been interested who have looked for it, on what the actual relief means, how it will work and where they can find out that information. I am not sure if it is updated somewhere else but if someone knows that and they could let me know, that would be great because we can pass it on.

Also, for the people who have paid their liabilities under that payroll tax which was unexpected, when and what the timeframes will be for those reimbursements to occur.

In this suite of responsibilities, more importantly than anything: changes to Ashley. Infrastructure alone, system and structure alone, means a bit, but not everything. It is culture, it is behaviour, it is expectation, it is leadership; it is about how people behave, engage, respect and care for the people they are charged to support.

In my time at Ashley I saw so many young people who had such great potential and they were incredible individuals but for the ecosystem they had grown up in. My plea is, in the three years from now, we need to set a culture where we look after young people and support their potential in our community and beyond.

Time expired.

Estimates of the Minister for Hospitality and Events, Minister for Education, Minister for Skills, Training and Workforce Growth, Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Children and Youth agreed to.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT

[6.52 p.m.]

Ms COURTNEY (Bass - Minister for Education) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

R U OK Day

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Mr Deputy Speaker, Thursday, 9 September was R U OK Day. We know that 65 000 people attempt suicide in Australia every year; that is 178 people a day somewhere in Australia who have attempted to end their lives. Here are some numbers worth remembering:

- it is the leading cause of death for Australians between the ages of 15 to 44 and it is also the most preventable.
- the suicide rate of First Nations people is twice that of non-indigenous Australians.
- people in rural areas are twice as likely to attempt as those in urban areas. I find this particularly concerning, given the amount of rural communities in my own electorate of Lyons.
- one in five Australians are likely to present symptoms of poor mental health and 60 per cent of those 5 million Australians are unlikely to seek help.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the easiest and in some ways the hardest number to remember here is nine. Nine Australians every single day take their own life somewhere in this country. That is 3285 Australians a year. To put that in context, that is roughly the population of Longford that we lose nationally every year.

R U OK Day gives us an opportunity to stop and ask our mates, 'Hey, how are you? How are things, mate? Are you okay?' It gives us permission to not be okay and to ask for help if we need it. It gives us permission to normalise talking about mental health like we would any other health problem, and we should be normalising that. This is the only way we remove the stigma and shame attached to it.

It is also an opportunity to have a discussion about how we, as elected representatives of our communities, can and should do more to reduce one of the most preventable causes of death in this country because we should be doing more.

Comments made by Mr Ellis - Children and Climate Change

[6.55 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, we are elected to this place to do the right thing and some of us in here take that responsibility extremely seriously.

Mr Ellis, when he stood up before, made the most grotesque assertion and a complete untruth, which is that the Greens are responsible for the fear that young people are experiencing now right around the world due to the science on global heating.

It is insulting to the intelligence and capacity for independent thought of young people. Mr Ellis thinks children and young people cannot make up their own minds. I go now to a global study which found young people are suffering profound psychological distress due to climate change and government inaction on the crisis. Some 45 per cent of the 10 000 young people surveyed across 10 countries for the study, which was published Tuesday a while ago, said:

... anxiety and distress over the climate crisis was affecting their daily life and ability to function. Three-quarters of respondents aged 16 to 25 felt that the 'future is frightening' while 64 per cent of young people said that governments were not doing enough to avoid climate crisis. In fact, nearly two-thirds of young people felt betrayed by governments and 61 per cent said governments were not protecting them, the planet, or future generations.

The study, which is said to be the first large-scale research of its kind, was led by academics from the UK's University of Bath and the Stanford Centre for Innovation and Global Health, among others. It is under peer review in the *Lancet Planetary Health Journal*. The authors of the study have warned: 'Such high levels of distress, functional impact and feelings of betrayal will inevitably impact the mental health of children and young people.'

Caroline Hickman, a researcher from the University of Bath Climate Psychology Alliance and co-lead author of the study, said that anxiety among children was 'a completely rational reaction, given the inadequate responses to climate change they are seeing from governments'. In addition, Liz Marks, a senior lecturer from the University of Bath and another co-lead author of the study, said it was 'shocking to hear how so many young people from around the world feel betrayed by those who are supposed to protect them'. I put into that group of people this Tasmanian parliament and people like Mr Ellis.

I received the most moving email from a young person in Campbell Town on Monday 6 September. I am not going to name her because I have not yet asked permission, so I am going to call her Sally for now:

My name is 'Sally'. I live in Campbell Town. I'm 10 years old and I'm trying hard to raise awareness about climate change but I can't lie, it's challenging

trying to be heard when grown-ups are in the way. I'm writing to you to address climate change. Of course, you've already been told about it way too many times but this time it's from a child's perspective. My point is children are the people who are going to be affected the most. You adults, the main problem, are going to get off scot-free.

This applies to me especially as I'm an aspiring writer, activist - climate change and human rights - and proud Tassie girl. I was not going to let anything get in my way until climate change did. My point is that I, yet ashamed to admit it, need your help even though you are part of the Government.

That is not true, of course. We are part of the parliament. She goes on:

I'm constantly working on a way to help but I need more than just one person. I need a nation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, what were we thinking about when we were 10 years old? We were probably thinking about who we were going to hang out with that weekend, where we might go to high school, what fancy piece of clothing my mother might make me on her sewing machine. They are the kind of thoughts that used to occupy my head when I was 10.

Imagine being a young person in Tasmania now who is so distressed, not because of anything the Greens have said but because she is intelligent and she is informed, she is so distressed that she is writing to people like me to say 'can you please help me work out how to tackle this?'

I am not going to send young Sally the *Hansard* of Mr Ellis' contribution earlier because that is what causes anxiety. That is what causes stress amongst young people when they see the sort of garbage that was coming out of Mr Ellis' mouth earlier.

I will go now to a quote from Sam Eccleston, which I read into *Hansard* during the Climate Emergency debate. We sought advice from the organiser of the School Strike 4 Climate on our climate emergency motion and what does scare children and young people.

Sam Eccleston, from the School Strike 4 Climate nivaluna Hobart, has this to say:

Tasmanian young people are some of the most educated and aware on a climate crisis and as such, are some of the most concerned about the effects it may have on them, their families and their communities.

Declaring a climate emergency sends a strong message to Tasmanian young people that the Government is truly committed to climate action and the futures of all Tasmanians.

Declaring a climate emergency will not scare or intimidate young Tasmanians, it will only help to tackle their fears.

Last weekend, Saturday's *Mercury* which was a focus on climate anxiety and there was an interview with young climate activist Chloe McCann - and this is for you Mr Ellis from

Ms McCann. Ms McCann also hit back at comments made by Liberal MPs that climate change alarmism was the real culprit behind young people's mental health problems.

She said:

If they are trying to combat climate alarmism, then they need to have professionals to do that.

The point I make here is that we need to respect young people's intelligence, capacity for independent thought and their autonomy. Remember that young people have more access to more information than we ever did. They have access to Twitter, to Facebook, to Insta and to Snapchat and they are reading the climate science.

What scares them is people like Mr Ellis who comes in here and just for politics makes attacks on the Greens because he thinks it is going to work for him in Braddon.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - The member's time has expired. The member for Clark, Ms Ogilvie.

Ms O'Connor - Oh, the same member for Clark who was chortling away through my contribution just then. It is all very funny, isn't it, climate anxiety?

Modern Slavery

[7.02 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark) - Again, that is not true.

Ms O'Connor - I don't know why you were chortling, but you were.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Ms OGILVIE - I am relieved she has left so I can get on with some business.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to speak about a topic that is of deep but increasing importance. I have three documents that I will refer to. The first one is the UN Global Compact Strategy which is a document produced by the United Nations. I have in front of me, the 2021-23 strategy which sets out 10 principles of the United Nations Global Compact.

This is a special initiative of the UN Secretary-General. The United Nations Global Compact is a call to companies everywhere to align their operations and strategies with 10 principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. Their ambition is to accelerate and scale the global collective impact of business by upholding 10 principles, which I will run through, and delivering the sustainable development goals through accountable companies and ecosystems that enable change.

This initiative has more than 12 000 companies on board already, 3000 non-business signatories based in over 160 countries. It is a massive initiative and has 69 local networks.

The 10 principles of the United Nations Global Compact are:

1. In Human Rights. Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights and make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.
2. Labour.
3. Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining.
4. The elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour.
5. The effective abolition of child labour; and
6. The elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.
7. Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges.
8. Undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility.
9. Encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally-friendly technologies which is what we do here in Tassie, and I am pleased about that - and
10. Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms including extortion and bribery.

The reason I raise this tonight, is I have a deep interest in the issue of modern slavery. It is a topic I have been on for many years now. We know that this is the first year that companies are putting together their reports under the new act that require companies over a certain threshold limit to report on what they have done to eradicate modern slavery from their supply chains. It is an incredibly important issue. I had always thought that in our region specifically it really relates mostly to the garment industry and fashion. Think about South East Asia and the sorts of conditions women and children may be working in.

When I was dressing today I put on my favourite scarf, because it has this fantastic tiger, a bit of a Tasmanian Tiger, which is manufactured by a company called Ted Baker, so I thought I will just have a look and see if that is okay wear that scarf. Is it ethical? Is it right? Where did it come from? I was really pleased to find, surprisingly, that Ted Baker has joined a network called SEDEX, which is an organisation that helps companies address supply chain management, to map and identify where their supply chains land and where their componentry is coming from. They say that their:

intention is to go beyond compliance and look at other indicators to check they're on track with their ethical and sustainability KPIs. Their commitment to transparency means they want to provide more information about their impact, their supply chain and the people within it.

SEDEX solutions will help us to do this.

The SEDEX report then led me to the most interesting part of this story, for which I now have a couple of minutes talk about, which is an Australian organisation, the Anti-Slavery Network, that is an Australian Catholic organisation. They have signed up to SEDEX and are doing their own work. When I open this report I see a lot of good work by the Australian Catholic Anti-Slavery Network (ACAN). It is working hard across its own organisations to make sure that any modern slavery, which is sweatshop type work or rare-earth mineral mining

using children, all those sorts of issues, is identified, mapped and then eradicated from their supply chains.

Looking at their business, they have now mapped \$22.3 billion worth of revenue within all of their organisations, schools, hospitals, everything they do nationwide. They have \$6.38 billion worth of annual procurement spend and 156,898 employees nationally. So it is a big operation.

They have put together what looks to be a very comprehensive report. I thought, well that is good and we have done this at a national level, but what is happening at a local level? I have previously drafted a modern slavery bill for Tasmania. In New South Wales they have just brought on their version of the bill again after it was stalled for quite some time. In conversations with local stakeholders I am hearing that there is an opportunity in Tasmania perhaps to adopt a more sophisticated and more agile model that does not require legislation through the parliament but addresses these issues in a more of a pragmatic way using an organisation such as SEDEX or other groups. What we do not want to do with small businesses and organisations is add a layer of overwhelming administrative burden to what is a really good ethical stance to take.

I thought I would put that on the record. I share it because my thinking on this has changed as I have gone on this journey. I am watching the New South Wales situation with great interest and I think that there is something that we can do here. The question is, what does that look like? If we can play our part in our region, globally as well, to ensure, no woman, no child, no person, is subjected to these horrific practices, no matter where they live, then I think we have to look at that.

Southern Football League Grand Final

[7.09 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I rise on the adjournment today to talk about the game that will not necessarily stop the nation but it will definitely stop the Huon Valley and the south of Tasmania, with the Southern Football League grand final being played on Saturday between Huonville Lions and Cygnet, the Port team.

This is a replay of last year's grand final and this is a testament to the strength of community sport in the Huon Valley. Both of these clubs are well led. They have fantastic men's, women's and junior programs, and are really embedded in their community. We know that the Huonville Football Club led by Todd Cordwell and his team of volunteers do an amazing job in supporting the club, as does Dave O'Neill down at Port Cygnet in terms of their connection to the community and the work they do across the community.

It is going to be a massive game. There will be thousands of Huon Valley folk pouring out of the valley, over the saddle, up into North Hobart to watch the game. There will be a 5000-person limit and I am sure they will hit that pretty soon.

Ms Archer - They'll have to wear masks, over 1000.

Mr O'BYRNE - Yes, they will have to mask up and I will have my mask ready to go. I have my tickets already and I will enjoy the game. I want to pay tribute to community sport

in the Huon Valley and particularly these two clubs that do amazing work in Cygnet and in Huonville.

A replay of last year's grand final. Thor Boscott, the coach of Cygnet, has led the form team of the year and Billy Lamprill who is the heart and soul of the Huonville team, is leading the Lions, so it is going to be a great game. My prediction will be that there will be minutes left to go in the game and big Micky Paul, the big dim sim, will take a mark at the 50, the big fellow and he will kick a goal with seconds to go so Huonville Lions will top the form team of the year, Cygnet. It will be a great game and we look forward to it, and we wish them all the best.

Ms Ogilvie - Well said.

Jessie Spinks Rooke - Tribute

[7.11 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Mr Speaker, tomorrow, 16 September 2021, marks the anniversary of women gaining the right to vote in Tasmania. It was 98 years ago tomorrow that the parliament passed legislation allowing Tasmanian women to vote in House of Assembly elections following the Commonwealth Parliament passing similar legislation the previous year.

To mark this important anniversary, tomorrow the Governor will unveil the recently restored gravesite of the woman we can thank for gaining that right for Tasmanian women, Jessie Spinks Rooke. Jessie Spinks Rooke was the most prominent leader driving the suffrage campaign in Tasmania after she moved here from New South Wales in the 1890s. She was a leader in the temperance and suffrage movements on the mainland, attending the International Council of Women Conference in Washington as a Women's Christian Temperance Union delegate, as well as campaigning for women's suffrage at a national level, which was achieved in 1902.

When she moved to Tasmania, Spinks Rooke established a local branch of the Women's Christian Temperance Union and served as the Tasmanian president. From her home in Burnie she travelled extensively throughout Tasmania by horse and carriage, gathering some 2000 signatures - a significant number against our population at that time - on two petitions to parliament calling for women to be given the right to vote. The petitions and legislation were presented to parliament in 1896 and 1897, where the Legislative Council twice defeated the attempts.

This only fuelled the campaign, with a further 5500 signatures gathered and a referendum bill being presented in 1898, which eventually led to legislation being successfully passed in 1903. In 1906, she passed away and was buried in Wivenhoe in Burnie. With few descendants and with few visitors to her grave, it fell into disrepair until it was stumbled across only recently, about 12 months ago, when Rodney Croome happened to be visiting the same graveyard in search of gravestones belonging to members of his family.

Recognising Jessie Spinks Rooke's name as a leader in fighting for women's suffrage, Mr Croome put out the call on social media. Happily, the City of Burnie Lions Club came on board and drove a project to restore the gravesite. Lions Club secretary Dr Vicky Russell said she felt it was an excellent way of honouring someone who had done so much for the Burnie

community and for women in Tasmania. The grave was in a very dilapidated state and substantial restoration was needed, so her club worked with local community as well as commissioning a grave restoration expert to complete the work.

Dr Russell said Jessie showed the courage of women in that time and she felt it was so important for women to have the vote. Mr Croome said he found it a privilege to be involved in the project because he found Rooke inspiring. He said not only did she devote herself to human rights and democracy, she believed the best way to ensure human rights are respected is to educate and persuade others. He said it was important to memorialise Jessie so that young Tasmanians do not take their rights for granted and so they understand that education and persuasion are the ways to make real change happen.

Mr Speaker, we have so many reasons to be grateful for the work of Jessie Spinks Rooke. Without her relentless dedication, who knows how long Tasmanian women would have waited for the right to vote? Her work in gaining women's suffrage was followed by the right for women to stand for election in Tasmania, not until 1922. I actually spoke about the significance of that time lag in my inaugural speech, and while women did have the right to stand for election in 1922, it was not until 1948 that the first woman was elected in Tasmania. That was Margaret McIntyre. She was elected to the upper House. In 1955, the first women were elected to this Chamber and that was Amelia Best and Mabel Miller.

While 1948 seems like a long time ago, further advancements for women in parliament here in Tasmania, and elsewhere, were somewhat slower. In Tasmania, Jill James was the first female minister in a government and that was not until 1980, followed by Judy Jackson and Fran Bladel, who became ministers in 1989. The first women to lead political parties were not elected to those leadership positions until the 1990s, with Christine Milne leading the Greens in 1993 and Sue Napier leading the Liberals in 1999. It was not until 2011 that Tasmania had our first female premier in Lara Giddings, and not until 2014 that we had our first female Speaker, Elise Archer.

Women now make up more than 50 per cent of the parliament but it has been a slow road and a road that was laid down for us by Jessie Spinks Rooke, who we have to thank for that and for a lot more. Vale and rest in peace, Jessie Spinks Rooke. I am glad that her gravesite has been honourably restored so that she can be rightfully shown the respect she deserves as a trailblazer for women's rights in this state and the country.

Burnie High School - *Sleeping Beauty*

[7.16 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon) - Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to speak about a fabulous event I attended on Saturday night at the Burnie Arts and Function Centre, being the Burnie High School's production of *Sleeping Beauty*. I congratulate the cast, all the crew that worked backstage and prepared all of the wonderful sets, and the amazing band. It was a fantastic production. It was bright, it was bold, there were great songs that everybody in the audience would have known and could sing along to. It demonstrated how talented the students are at Burnie High School. Congratulations to everybody involved. It was an outstanding show and a highlight to what was a long week here in parliament. It was wonderful to be back in my local community supporting a local high school, who have done a tremendous job with their production. It is not too late to catch the show. There are still a couple of shows over the

weekend. I encourage everybody to get behind Burnie High School and attend what was a truly outstanding performance.

Naked Farmer Exhibition - Smithton

[7.18 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon) - Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to celebrate the Naked Farmer exhibition which was held in Smithton on the weekend. It is an amazing event, an amazing organisation -

Ms Archer - I hope that is not literal.

Mr ELLIS - It is absolutely true. There were no naked people at the event but the people in the exhibition who were naked at the time all attended. It was an amazing day, it was held on World Suicide Prevention Day, which was the day after R U OK Day, because mental health has been at the forefront of a lot of people's minds at this really difficult time with the pandemic, lockdown, border closures and families being separated from those they love.

The Naked Farmer is a lighthearted, country, typically larrikin Australian way of getting across a really important message. That is, it takes as much guts to take your clothes off as it does to talk about mental health.

It is all about starting conversations and raising money for some really important causes. There were a lot of familiar faces, maybe not so familiar body parts, at the event. I will give a shout out to a few mates, Leigh Elphinstone, Jarrod House, my beautiful wife, Margot, and young master William were all involved in the photos in the spud factory, on quad bikes, in the calf shed. It was wonderful to see so many people gathered around and talking about really important issues for our community.

One person I really wanted to give a huge shout out to is Rebecca Frankham, who many members in this House know and I note the support from Ms Dow. Bec is a force of nature. She is a mum; one of the best dairy farmers in Australia, probably in the world; and is doing an amazing job in our community in the north-west about spreading the message of mental health. Bec, like a lot of us, has had her struggles at times but has incredible resilience. The way she is raising her family and looking after the family farm, and spreading the message of hope to all parts of our community is truly amazing.

Bec was another person who featured in the Naked Farmer exhibition and, with Zoe, is one of the ambassadors. Bec's photo was particularly poignant, wearing her cowgirl boots, and holding a series of plates. At the start of the night, she encouraged us to ask a few simple questions of ourselves:

What's on our plate? Do you carry more than one? Are any a little broken?
And How's yours looking?

There are a lot of different ways that we can describe 'broken' and that we can think about the plates that we are all juggling with busy family lives, busy work lives and a community that needs our support; but it is important to take that time to check in with yourself and to check in with the ones who you love, and to talk about mental health.

Naked Farmer is a movement that was founded by Ben Brooksby, a young lentil farmer in St Helens Plains in Western Victoria. He is a cheeky sort of fella who spontaneously started this movement when he put up a photo of his nude self getting to work on the tractor. From there it has sparked what has become a global movement, where rural people get their gear off, raise some money and start some conversations. Ben is an amazing fellow and openly admits that he has suffered undiagnosed anxiety as well. He is using that experience as a platform to change lives, here in our community, in his community, right around Australia and around the world.

The Naked Farmer is a homegrown, rural Aussie movement which has gone worldwide. They are raising money in particular for the Royal Flying Doctor Service mental health unit, which has outreach in communities right across the country. I note you are nodding, Mr Speaker, knowing how important their work is. You can give them a call if you need a bit of support and a helping hand - the number is 1300 887 678. That is 24-hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days of the year. An amazing organisation. To help support that organisation, you buy the calendar - and you will have as many naked, rural people in great rural settings that you can ever need for 12 months, and you will be helping a great cause.

Mr Speaker, I will note as well that if this conversation has sparked any concerns for people the number for Lifeline is 131114 or Beyond Blue 1300 224 636.

Sporting Associations - Finals Season

Taroona High School - Opening of the Music and C Block

[7.24 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Attorney-General) - Mr Speaker, I know it has been a long day for people. I was becoming quite inspired by people with local stories, so I thought I would make a short contribution.

I pay tribute to the many sporting and community clubs that we have around the state. I know it is finals season for everyone and most of us as local members - and I am going to mention your big win, Mr Speaker; I cannot pass up the opportunity - but I know that as local members it is very difficult to get to each and every event or awards presentation nights.

I have tried my very best though, and as patron of the Southern Tasmanian Junior Football League I attended their Best and Fairest counts a couple of weeks ago now. I also attended the Southern Tasmanian Netball Association. I sponsor the Club Association Award of that event and go every a year. Last weekend I was at the Hockey Tasmania southern awards with the Minister for Sport and Recreation, Jane Howlett, and a number of other dignitaries as well.

I know we have the SFL this weekend, from one of the contributions tonight. Last weekend, we had the SFLW Glenorchy, the victors over Claremont. I could not lose either way with two of the teams in my electorate but I have been a member of the Glenorchy Football Club for longer. Most people know that in my electorate I have been an ardent supporter of Glenorchy since I had a boyfriend who played in the seniors game - but I will not give too much away in that respect.

Mr Ellis - It was not Dale, was it?

Ms ARCHER - No. I know, I am probably giving too much away. All my colleagues are now going to ask me about this. It was a very long time ago, way before I was married, of course. We also have the major league in our AFL in this state this weekend and, of course, as I said, I note that Bracknell had a big win last weekend. I think there was a drought of how many years, Mr Speaker, if you could interject?

Mr SPEAKER - The first grand final win in 22 years.

Ms ARCHER - Twenty-two years, there you go. I am sure *Hansard* will manage to get that contribution from you. I know it is very frustrating for you, not being able to make these contributions on the adjournment, so I thought I would mention that on your behalf, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER - I thank you for that.

Ms ARCHER - I have already had one of my first bowls of the first lawn bowl season, to open the season at Buckingham Bowls Club last Friday night, and I have many more to come. I am patron of Claremont Bowls Club and I greatly look forward to rolling the first bowl there - and I tend to have much better luck on grass than I do on the synthetic surface, for some reason.

In closing, it was my delight to fill in for the Minister for Education on Friday for Taroona High School's official opening of the Music and C block, which is the school's new arts precinct. It is wonderful building and the public artwork there is truly amazing. I am pretty sure - and I am purely going from memory - that Vos did the construction of the building.

Congratulations to the builders, the architects, the artists and, of course, the school community headed up by the principal, Matt Bennell. We know that school is growing. It was literally bursting out of its previous buildings and it has had two redevelopments in the last few years. This one will really contribute to their incredibly strong arts, music and drama program that produces some wonderful musicians, artists, and performers across a whole diverse cultural and creative sector. That school will only go from strength to strength in their cultural and creative industries, but also their broader subject range.

They are well known for having really good results in academia as well as their arts and their sports. I really do wish them well. I could tell the students were truly enjoying performing in that space - particularly the band, which was travelling up to Launceston that night to play in the Rock. Again, I am going from memory, I cannot remember the exact title. It used to be the Rock Eisteddfod and I think it is called something different now but they are wonderful performers and we were literally dancing in our seats, if that is possible, Mr Speaker. It was a really enjoyable event for a building opening, as dry as they can sometimes be.

Congratulations to all those students who performed at that event and entertained us as well and congratulations again to that school community.

Members - Hear, hear.

The House adjourned at 7.29 p.m.