



**PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**REPORT OF DEBATES**

**Wednesday 2 December 2020**

**REVISED EDITION**



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

## **QUESTIONS**

**Launceston General Hospital - Child Abuse Claims - Actions of Minister, Mr Shelton**

**Ms WHITE question to MINISTER FOR POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANGEMENT, Mr SHELTON**

[10.02 a.m.]

Yesterday on multiple occasions you said you would not speculate on what might or might not have happened if you had acted on information you received about James Griffin more than a year ago. In fact, you could have helped launch a wider investigation into his offending against children. You said it would not have been your place to speak about an ongoing police investigation. In fact, there was no active investigation because it ended when Griffin died in October last year.

It is becoming clearer and clearer that you simply washed your hands of this matter when you could have, and should have, taken it to your ministerial colleagues to broaden investigations, to help identify survivors of Griffin's vile behaviour across several areas of Government. The fact that you did nothing, minister, is frankly astounding.

Do you still maintain that it was the right thing for you to do nothing for more than a year, when in fact the right thing would have been for you to act immediately?

## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I will take this opportunity to clarify a few points that have been made over the last few days.

First, a review of operational responses to significant incidents is a standard procedure, as Tasmania Police is an agency that strives for continuous improvement in delivering policing services to Tasmania. It is important to learn lessons from operations or incidents to inform future responses and improve practices and procedures for the future. I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that that is the case in relationship to this matter. Tasmania Police have established a management review which is examining all aspects of the investigation into the former nurse at the LGH. I have spoken to the Commissioner and requested the management review be completed as a matter of urgency. I am assured that if there are lessons to be learnt they will be implemented immediately. I expect to receive preliminary advice by the end of the year.

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order please.

**Mr SHELTON** - The review will also be provided to assist the commission of inquiry.

Let me explain. In late August 2019 when I was first alerted, this matter was an active Tasmania Police investigation and Mr Griffin had already had his working with children and vulnerable persons registration suspended. I note that this screening and registration process is administered independently by the Department of Justice and not Tasmania Police.

The Attorney-General provided comprehensive detail on the process surrounding the cancellation and termination of Working with Children and Vulnerable Persons registration yesterday.

The briefing I received was confidential. I was not advised of Mr Griffin's full occupational history. At that time, relevant agencies including Justice, Communities Tasmania and the Department of Health had been informed and Mr Griffin had been suspended from his employment.

On 3 September 2019 and again on 3 October, as part of an ongoing investigation, Tasmania Police charged the former nurse with sexual crimes relating to separate complaints. On 18 October 2019, he died by suicide. It is only as the processes of investigation have progressed, including since his death, that broader details associated with Mr Griffin have come to light.

**Dr Woodruff** - After a podcast.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, please.

**Mr SHELTON** - I am advised that the criminal investigation ceased upon his death. However, investigations into the matter continue. First, it became a matter before the Coroner and second, investigative work, including to support the LGH regarding liaison with known and potential victims. The Coroner's findings into the death of Mr Griffin were dated 18 May 2020. I am advised that on that date, the findings were provided to the senior next of kin and to the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

I am further advised that several weeks later, interested parties were provided with a copy of the findings in accordance with the standard procedure of the Coronial Division. I am also advised that, as is usual with deaths that are found to be suicide, the findings were not published on the Magistrate's website at that time. However, due to extensive public interest in the matter over subsequent weeks and months, the Coroner decided that it was appropriate to publish the findings and he did so on 23 October 2020.

Further to the police and coronial investigations on 14 October this year, there was media reporting with extensive details of further disturbing allegations relating to the former nurse. On the basis of the new and emerging allegations in the media on 14 October 2020, the Minister for Health requested that the secretary of the Department of Health undertake a review.

Following the commencement of the department's review, further information came to light from the public. The Premier announced a full independent investigation into the matter on 22 October 2020. As we know, following being briefed on the further historical allegations of child sex abuse, the Premier announced the Commission of Inquiry on Monday, 23 November this year.

It is completely irresponsible to suggest that the minister for Police should interfere in matters that are still subject to serious ongoing investigations by police, or to be interfering in matters that are the responsibility of other government departments, especially where those government departments are already aware of relevant matters.

There is no more important task for the Government than to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our children. While we cannot change the past, we are committed to our Government making a difference in the future, through the commission of inquiry. As the Premier has said, no stone will be left unturned -

**Ms O'Byrne** - They were left unturned. They were left unturned until you were dragged kicking and screaming to this point.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Ms O'Byrne, you will get your chance.

**Mr SHELTON** - as we deliver on our commitment to make Tasmania safer.

I encourage anyone who has any further information relating to the allegations of child sexual abuse to report those matters to Tasmania Police.

#### **Launceston General Hospital - Child Abuse Claims - Actions of Minister, Mr Shelton**

**Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mr SHELTON**

[10.09 a.m.]

The police investigation into James Griffin concluded with his death in October 2019. You have confirmed that. The Coroner handed down the findings into the death of Griffin on 18 May this year, well and truly ending formal investigations. Both of these facts are relevant to your conduct around this matter.

Once the coronial inquiry was finalised, nine months after you were first informed of the allegations against Griffin, you still failed to act. What does it take for you to act? As Police minister, an important part of your role is to protect Tasmanians, particularly in light of the Coroner's report, which did lay bare Griffin's offending. On receipt of the Coroner's report, why did you not at that stage raise the alert and inform your ministerial colleagues so investigations might finally be widened to identify survivors of Griffin's offending?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I will reiterate the point that when I was advised the former nurse had had his working with vulnerable children certificate removed, he had been stood down from his employment and so, from my perspective, the immediate danger to the children at the LGH was overcome. He was removed from his workplace.

**Ms WHITE** - Point of order, it does go to relevance. The question was why, when the Government received the Coroner's report, particularly the minister for Police, he then did not share the findings of that with other relevant agencies and ministers? He did not go anywhere near the question.

**Madam SPEAKER** - He has finished his answer, so I cannot accept that as a point of order.

### **Ashley Youth Detention Centre - Issues**

**Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for HUMAN SERVICES, Mr JAENSCH**

[10.11 a.m.]

Since Estimates last week, the Greens have been contacted by people who work in or around Ashley. They are clear: your claim that Ashley is safe is not backed by the evidence. We have heard testimony that there is indeed a culture of abuse and cover-up at Ashley, that the problems are not just historical. There is the notorious Franklin unit, allegations of regular rough handling, and of regular periods of isolation, otherwise described as detainees being unit bound.

As an example of what we are told, can you confirm one of the three staff members who was belatedly suspended from Ashley this year is the same person who was subject to the allegation of suspected rape in the 1990s, and that person, who held working with vulnerable people registration until his suspension, has in the past year undertaken strip searches of children?

Can you also confirm that a policy recommended by the Commissioner for Children to provide modesty gowns for young people during strip searches is not being adhered to, and when Ashley staff notified WorkSafe that no modesty gowns were available, a senior manager asked them to withdraw the notice?

We are hearing these disturbing stories from multiple sources. The Ombudsman's report also confirms the recent violent treatment of at least one child. There is both abuse and cover-up at Ashley, and either you are not being told what is happening, or you have decided to look the other way.

Do you stand by your statement that Ashley is a safe environment for young people?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Greens for her question. I note that there were many questions and allegations in her contribution. I am sure she will call me out for not answering all of them.

I want to go to what we are doing at Ashley, against the backdrop of concerns raised. I can assure members, and those listening, that any matters raised with my department, concerns around conduct of staff and practices at Ashley, are taken seriously and fully investigated. The recent standing down of three staff members at Ashley on the basis of concerns regarding allegations of historical incidents is evidence that our department takes those matters seriously. Of its own volition, it has instigated its own inquiries and taken the precautionary measure of standing staff down, pending the outcomes of those investigations. Those investigations will roll into the commission of inquiry commencing early next year which will have the full support and cooperation of my department.

In regard to the culture and practices at Ashley Youth Detention Centre, we have made reference to the redesign of Ashley as a piece of infrastructure. We have spoken about the bricks and mortar changes which are about to commence there to turn that older corrections facility into a therapeutic detention facility for young people.

The changes that have been made are not just about the bricks and mortar. We are progressing key initiatives to ensure Ashley is a therapeutic environment for detainees. We have introduced a new learning and development framework to ensure all staff are trained to deliver a therapeutic model of care; the appointment of a clinical practice adviser to provide therapeutic and clinical advice to Ashley Youth Detention Centre staff; a new model of care which includes practice frameworks describing how and what services are delivered at Ashley; and implementing the safe centre framework, an adaptation of the safe wards model used in mental health facilities which aims to reduce conflict and ensure greater safety for staff and residents.

We intend to continue with the redevelopment of Ashley as a built facility but also with the redesign of the model of care that is undertaken inside its walls -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Point of order, Madam Speaker, under standing order 45, relevance. I have waited because the House needed to hear some of that, but there were specific questions that the minister should at least seek to answer, or come back into the House and provide information on. This is really serious, Madam Speaker.

**Madam SPEAKER** - I have to rule that is not a point of order but I ask the minister to try to answer those questions.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Madam Speaker, the member has referred to specific concerns raised and reported on in the Ombudsman's annual report. I can confirm that the department has supported the Ombudsman's recommendations and has already progressed a number of key initiatives to enhance the capacity of the workforce and governance arrangements. I have mentioned some of those but we will continue to do so.

In relation to the practices of searching, in the Estimates hearing I gave a detailed account of the procedures that have been adopted now based on recommendations from the Commissioner for Children and Young People and others regarding how the dignity of young people is protected, but also the importance of there being searches which have found contraband, drugs and knives that otherwise would have entered that facility, and we need to maintain a regime that protects the people inside, both staff and residents of Ashley, from those sorts of items entering the facility.

**Ms O'Connor** - Can you make some inquiries about that direction from senior staff to withdraw the notice?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I further encourage the member, if she is in possession of any information about concerns, to please raise them directly with the department.

**Ms O'Connor** - I've already done that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - My point is, do not save them up to raise them in question time. If there are concerns, please raise them. This member over the last fortnight on a number of

occasions has conflated some different lines of evidence, information and allegations to the point of being close to identifying a person and alleging they have conducted a rape in the past. She has been advised that she has some of those links wrong -

**Ms O'Connor** - We haven't got the rape allegation wrong. I know that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I encourage the member in the remaining days we have in this parliament to consider her option of correcting the record.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Point of order, Madam Speaker, under standing order 45, relevance. Before the minister flees the lectern, we need him to commit to coming back into the House and answering the question about whether a senior manager directed staff to withdraw a notice to WorkSafe about modesty gowns. You need to come back.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Unfortunately, I cannot direct him to do anything. It is up to him how he answers.

**Ms O'Connor** - Just do the right thing and say you will come back and update us.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I am happy to take further advice on the matter that has been raised by the member.

### **End-of-Life Choices (Voluntary Assisted Dying) Bill 2020 - Update**

#### **Mr TUCKER question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.20 a.m.]

Can you update the House on the next steps in relation to the member for Mersey's private member's bill, the End-of-Life Choices (Voluntary Assisted Dying) Bill 2020?

**Madam SPEAKER** - It is an order of the day but is a permissible question provided you do not get into the detail.

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for his question. The matter of voluntary assisted dying is complex, often conflicted, and needs well-informed consideration. In this place, issues of life and death demand the most serious of scrutiny. Voluntary assisted dying is a matter that needs to be handled with the utmost care and compassion. I want to provide the House with an update as to the next steps in the consideration of the member for Mersey, Mike Gaffney's private member's bill, the End-of-Life Choices (Voluntary Assisted Dying) Bill 2020.

Debate on this bill will commence in this House tomorrow, as we have discussed, once the Budget has been dealt with. Sarah Courtney, as the member for Bass, not as a government minister, will have carriage of the bill.

The responsibility of whether this legislation passes into law bears considerable weight on all members in this place. Whilst it is not a foregone conclusion that the bill will pass this



place, if it does it is incumbent on all of us to ensure it is the very best bill possible and, importantly, that it affords the necessary and real protections for the most vulnerable in our community.

In order to provide an opportunity for all members to contribute and express their intent on the legislation, the parliament will sit an additional day this Friday to enable the second reading speech and related debate to occur. Should the bill pass its second reading in this place on Friday, to ensure sufficient time is provided through the Committee stage with the agreement of this House, the bill will become the first order of business for this House when parliament resumes next year.

Just as other jurisdictions have utilised independent processes to ensure legislation such as this is the most robust it can be, I have previously advised that I have requested the University of Tasmania to establish an independent review panel to consider the legislation and provide members with information regarding how this legislation compares to similar laws in other states and around the world, the focus of consideration being the protections in place for those most vulnerable in our society.

The university, independent from me and from the Government, has selected their panel which includes members from the university across a range of relevant disciplines. The chair will be Professor Richard Eccleston, and Professor Grant McInerney, Professor Marg Otlowski and Associate Professor Jenny Presser will make up the panel. Should the bill pass the second reading debate on Friday I want to thank the review panel members in advance for their consideration of this important legislation. The purpose of this process is to receive an objective report from the panel independent of and at arm's length from government to inform members of this House.

The panel will conduct research and target the consultation through a written submissions process in relation to the proposed VAD bill in Tasmania and in order to inform parliamentary debate, provide an independent, objective report containing a concise summary of the VAD bill following amendment by the upper House; a comparison of Tasmania's VAD bill to legislation including bills relating to voluntary assisted dying in other Australian states and territories, and overseas jurisdictions, including but not limited to the processes allowed by the legislation safeguards and protections for vulnerable people; an outline of the historical development of VAD legislation in other jurisdictions in terms of scope and protections; and a synopsis of relevant reports, analysis of materials in other states and territories and overseas jurisdictions pertaining to the implementation and administration for voluntary assisted dying reform.

They will also provide an objective analysis of the safeguards put in place in other jurisdictions relating to the impact of VAD legislation on medical practice and practitioners, allied health and care professionals, family and social relationships and provision for the practices in aged care; an objective analysis of the interrelationship between the VAD bill and existing palliative care and advance care directives in Tasmania and the experience of other jurisdictions in implementing VAD legislation to identify matters that might need to be addressed or monitored over time should the legislation pass into law; and they will provide an analysis of stakeholder feedback relevant to all matters previously described.

The terms of reference will be available later today on the University of Tasmania's website. The review panel's findings will be provided to all members of parliament later in

February next year. It is the Government's intention that the Committee stage of the bill, as I have said, will commence shortly thereafter as the first order of business upon the resumption of parliament, subject to the agreement of the House.

So that all members can be fully informed on the bill, which has had a number of amendments in the Legislative Council, government agencies will also be tasked with providing advice on the implementation of the bill. It is not the policy intent of the bill; and this information will also be provided to all members prior to the committee stage.

To be clear, it is not the Government's intention to delay the implementation of the legislation by postponing the Committee stage to early next year, should the bill pass. It is my intention that, should the bill pass its second reading in the House of Assembly, an amendment to the bill would be moved during the Committee stage, which, if supported by this House, will make the effective start date for the 18-month time period the end of the second reading debate in this House.

It is the Government's commitment to ensure that, if this bill passes, Tasmania will have the most robust laws possible.

As a matter of public record, the Liberal members will be afforded a conscience vote on the legislation. I hope that this approach is one undertaken by all members of this House.

The consideration of this legislation is a very significant responsibility. We owe it to all Tasmanians to ensure that we treat this very important matter and the views shared with the utmost of respect.

### **Port Arthur Events - Proposed Film by Victorian Production Company**

#### **Ms OGILVIE question to MINISTER for the ARTS, Ms ARCHER**

[10.26 a.m.]

Over the course of yesterday, I was contacted, and no doubt others were, by a number of concerned constituents who feel that not enough is being done to ensure the proposed film on the Port Arthur tragedy is accurate and sensitive. There is a world of difference between censorship, and ensuring harm is not inadvertently done to the Tasmanian community.

I feel it is important that the Victorian Government is made aware of the anxiety and discomfort that is being felt. Will you now write to the Victorian minister for the arts to express our concerns and the concerns of the Tasmanian community, on this incredibly sensitive issue?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her important question on this matter. As we know, the film is being wholly produced and filmed in Victoria. I am not certain, but I believe it is probably the subject of some funding or maybe even an application of funding from Screen Australia. I am not sure if Screen Victoria was involved. I am happy to convey our collective concerns on this.

I start by saying that the public discussion around this, although it is in good faith that we are asking questions in this place, tends to bring back horrible, traumatic and haunting memories for survivors and for victims' families, and other Tasmanian community members, and, indeed, the whole of Tasmania. I urge everyone to accept that is the case. We all have an obligation to be very careful when raising the matters outside of this place in the more public spheres, especially in social media.

It is known that I received correspondence from the production company in December last year, informing me of their intention to film a project, and requesting a meeting with me as Minister for the Arts. It is important to note that I take this role seriously as Attorney-General as well, and I am aware they made a similar approach to my head of the Department of Justice, because of the concern around some issues as well. I decided I would not meet with the filmmakers, who I understood were planning to make a film in Victoria, and that the Tasmanian Government did not support, nor were we asked to fund. Tasmanians continue, as I said, to be deeply impacted by this event, especially survivors and victims' families, and our Government will not politicise this matter. I do not seek to be involved.

As the Premier said yesterday, it is a very uncomfortable issue for us all, but Tasmania does not have a role to play in this when it is being filmed in another location, other than what I have done, which is to express that I would not be meeting with them. I advised the production company that, given the understandable and enormous sensitivity around the project, it was not appropriate for the Tasmanian Government to lend any support or enter into discussions about this project. The filmmakers were strongly encouraged through Screen Tasmania to treat the subject matter sensitively. That included an encouragement to speak and consult with victims to ensure that they were aware of the heightened sensitivity and that, with the long passage of time, that had not subsided. It was communicated very clearly to them.

Their approach to me, their email, was very respectful, but I do not think they could truly understand that the Tasmanian community still feels strongly about this, and any type of film or anything bringing back these memories can have a lasting impact on people. Although their intentions are good, they probably did not realise the significant concern of the Tasmanian community. That has been communicated. I reiterate this very strongly: the Tasmanian Government and Screen Tasmania are not involved in the project in any way, nor were we asked to be.

Public discussions in recent days only causes distress and serves to remind Tasmanians of the atrocities committed in our state. Once again, I urge everyone to minimise their public commentary on this matter, so that this impact can be minimised.

### **Northern Tasmanian Netball Association - Actions of Minister in relation to Reports of Alleged Child Abuse**

**Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for SPORT and RECREATION, Ms HOWLETT**

[10.32 a.m.]

Last week during Estimates hearings, you said there would be a meeting on Friday with Netball to discuss James Griffin's involvement with the NTNA, which would have allowed him access to children. The Coroner, Simon Cooper, reported his findings that Griffin had, before his death, made admissions about meeting a child he assaulted through a local sporting group,

where he had acted as a masseuse. The Coroner's report was delivered in May, almost six months before you sought information from Netball Tasmania. Why didn't you, or your department, reach out to them much sooner, and what information did you receive about Griffin's offending from the meeting last Friday?

## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I have not received information from the NTNA in relation to Friday's meeting. I understand that Netball Tasmania is liaising with Sport and Recreation. I expect any information will be made available to the appropriate authorities, and also to the commission of inquiry.

I made contact with them on Friday and also on Monday. We are waiting for them to provide me with information.

**Ms White** - Why did it take so long to act, when the Coroner's report was six months ago?

**Ms HOWLETT** - I only found out about this on Hobart Show Day.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Point of order, Madam Speaker. In order to ensure that the minister does not mislead the House, the minister for Police said that appropriate departments were advised by the coronial findings.

**Madam SPEAKER** - That is not a point of order.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order. The question has been asked; the answer has been provided. Do you have anything else to say, minister?

**Ms HOWLETT** - Thank you, Madam Speaker.

## **Ashley Youth Detention Centre - Issues**

### **Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for HUMAN SERVICES, Mr JAENSCH**

[10.34 a.m.]

I note in your previous answer, you did not restate your claim of last week that Ashley is a safe environment for young people. The independent Noetic report in 2016 strongly recommended Ashley's closure and replacement with two small therapeutic centres, north and south. Yet for political reasons in the lead-up to the 2018 state election, a decision was made to keep that blighted place open.

Three long-time staff have been suspended this year. Their working with vulnerable people registrations have finally been removed, and there is a cloud, as we understand it, hanging over a number of staff still at Ashley. It took months after statements were made about their treatment of young people for any substantive action to be taken against these three particular staff members.

Ashley is a sick place. It is failing young people, and it has for 98 years. Why are you ploughing on with the re-development at Ashley before the commission of inquiry, when you must know that building refurbishment cannot fix a broken model? You cannot put lipstick on a pig. Why are you not listening to the experts and putting those young people first, and helping to set a different path for youth justice so these at-risk young Tasmanians have a better shot at a good life?

## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I will highlight again that the redesign and reforms and the transition to a therapeutic model of care and setting involve bricks and mortar, but also culture, training, and the model of care that is being deployed within the Ashley Youth Detention Centre.

In response to some of the other issues peppered through the question, I note again that the three members of staff who have been stood down as a precautionary measure, pending ongoing investigations, those decisions were made by my department of its own volition on the basis of its own investigation of records and allegations from a number of sources. They are historical allegations and they have taken the precautionary measure. Any matters raised by staff or others will be treated with great seriousness and fully investigated. Even if they are historical matters, they will be treated as if they are current.

Ashley is a complex environment, and it is one where the safety of everybody is of paramount importance. The young people who are sentenced by courts to detention are themselves quite often being sentenced because of violent physical behaviour and crimes they have committed. Therefore, the Ashley environment is characterised by the need to keep people safe and it is a high-risk environment. It is full of high-risk people who present risks to each other, as well as being at risk themselves. We do not deny that.

The member referred to the work being done at Ashley. The physical work that is about to commence includes: softening of the entrance into the centre with a new gatehouse and visitors' reception and secure entrance points with improved visitor and family spaces; provision of step-down, independent and semi-independent living units which will encourage and develop life skills for residents as they transition out of the centre; improvement of all accommodation areas, including de-escalation, self-regulation sensory spaces and acoustics; new purpose-built professional visits, court, video-conference and counselling areas; a new creative arts and music room; and new recreation yards off the main accommodation units, which will also act as key de-escalation spaces for residents when required.

The member is correct; it is not all about the built infrastructure. We are rebuilding Ashley on the inside as well, and the team of people and the skills there, including the appointment of a learning and development officer to reform the learning and development systems at Ashley. This officer has implemented updated training with linkages to the quality improvement workforce development unit, to enable online training. A clinical practice consultant and support officer was appointed to lead clinical governance within Ashley by promoting and supporting high standards of ethical and professional practice. A key focus of the clinical practice consultant and support officer is mentoring staff, providing professional consultation, undertaking critical reflective practice and practice support. This position was made permanent in 2019.

In mid-2019, the position of assistant manager was also created to provide overall management and coordination of Ashley Youth Detention Centre operations, policies and programs. This appointment allows the manager of custodial youth justice to focus on high-level strategic development and infrastructure changes.

We are heavily investing in transforming Ashley from what it was, to what we need it to be, as a therapeutic facility with a therapeutic model of care at work in it. I do note that in the last fortnight there were questions raised about incidents where the claim was made that police were turned away from an incident involving young people at Ashley. My advice is that the police were not turned away. Instead, a process of de-escalating that situation was deployed, which resulted in those young people being safely removed from the roof of the facility where they were holed up, without injury to anyone.

This is an example of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre exercising its new model of care which is about de-escalating those situations, not bringing in the law, not bringing in strong armed tactics or police into that environment, but instead having ways of talking those situations down. I commend them for the work they are doing. I know it is challenging, and we have a way to go as well, but we are investing in transformation of that model.

Ms O'Connor also referred to the Noetic report. Again, I need to confirm that the option we are pursuing for redevelopment of Ashley is identified in that report as an option; option one, actually. There is a summary of that in the Noetic report, which identifies that it optimises the re-use of existing facilities. It identifies that units can be redesigned to provide a more therapeutic environment, and to minimise unintended isolation for small, diverse cohorts such as younger residents, older residents, females or young female residents, pregnant adolescents and residents detoxing from drugs or alcohol. It provides options for young people to move to less secure accommodation on the site before release.

It also identifies that residual facilities can be repurposed to provide additional services for youth at risk, including drug and alcohol rehabilitation and step-down accommodation for low risk residents before release, which could then allow for intensive supports to re-integrate young people back into their communities. It also highlights that the Deloraine site has significant amounts of under-utilised space, which could be used for additional recreational and vocational training activities, particularly in the agricultural settings to enhance the programs that are available.

This is exactly what we are doing, and we are rebuilding the model of care within the walls of Ashley. We are committed to doing this to the young people, and to working with our staff to ensure that they are meeting all expectations of what should be happening in a detention facility for young people. We are committed to it, we are delivering it, we will keep going with it.

I can also confirm in answer to the member's last question that the three Ashley staff members who have been stood down pending an investigation have not been involved in personal searches. We also provided that information as an answer to a question on notice from Estimates.

**Launceston General Hospital - Child Abuse Claims -  
Establishment of Commission of Inquiry**

**Mr TUCKER question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Ms ARCHER**

[10.44 a.m.]

Can you outline to the House the steps being undertaken to establish the recently announced commission of inquiry?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons, Mr Tucker, for his important question. The Tasmanian Government takes the safety of children extremely seriously. On Monday 23 November the Premier announced that the Government would be establishing a commission of inquiry to investigate the responses of Tasmanian Government agencies relating to the management of historical allegations of child sexual abuse.

The important work already under way by Professor Stephen Smallbone and Professor Tim McCormack in relation to the Department of Education, and Maree Norton in relation to the Department of Health and the Tasmanian Health Service and other entities, and the investigations of allegations of abuse at Ashley Youth Detention Centre, will all continue and be rolled into the commission of inquiry once established. The inquiry will commence in early 2021.

The Government has commenced the work required to establish a commission of inquiry into child sexual abuse. I can confirm that the Department of Justice is leading the work to develop the terms of reference. Careful and detailed consideration of the terms of reference is required to ensure that the commission of inquiry is appropriately empowered to consider the management of child sexual abuse allegations.

Work has also commenced to consider the functional requirements of the commission of inquiry, including its leadership, staffing, premises and any additional services, including support services required to support the operations of the commission, and members will appreciate, that is very detailed work. I have also requested advice from the Department of Justice as to whether any legislative amendments are required to the Commissions of Inquiry Act 1995 to ensure it is appropriately empowered.

As we have already said, the commission of inquiry is likely to commence early next year. However, anyone who would like to make a submission to the commission can do so by accessing the portal which is now live via the Department of Justice website at [www.justice.tas.gov.au/inquiry](http://www.justice.tas.gov.au/inquiry). A phone number has also been established to enable people to make contact - 1800 950 110.

I highlight again that these issues and media coverage of these issues can be extremely upsetting for some people. I want to stress that if any aspect of these matters raises concerns for anyone, please reach out for help. The Department of Justice has a list of supports available and you will find that on the department's website but people can call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Beyond Blue on 1300 224 636 if they need to talk to someone urgently.

The Tasmanian Government recognises the extraordinary courage it takes for someone to come forward and report sexual abuse, particularly if that abuse happened when they were a child. In the case of a life-threatening emergency, people should always call triple zero. If someone would like to come forward and report child sexual abuse, they should contact Tasmania Police on 131 444. As mentioned previously, if someone would like to seek information regarding the national redress scheme, they can contact the information line on 1800 146 713.

As I have said previously, the commission of inquiry will support but not duplicate the work of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse which handed down its final report on 15 December 2017, including 409 recommendations to better prevent and respond to institutional child sexual abuse. As members know, the final report comprises an executive summary and 17 volumes. It makes 409 recommendations across a wide range of policy areas aimed at improving institutional responses to child sexual abuse.

On 20 June 2018 the Tasmanian Government tabled its response to the royal commission's recommendations. This response outlines our Government's support for the overwhelming majority of the royal commission's recommendations as presented in its final report.

In closing, Madam Speaker, the Tasmanian Government, through the specialised Child Abuse Royal Commission Response Unit (CARCRU) is currently working on the projects I outlined to the House yesterday. This is important and necessary work, I am proud of what we have achieved and work is continuing in this high priority area.

**Northern Tasmanian Netball Association -  
Actions of Minister in relation to Reports of Alleged Child Abuse**

**Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for SPORT and RECREATION, Ms HOWLETT**

[10.48 a.m.]

The Coroner's report handed down on 7 May said -

On 1 May 2019, an adult female made a complaint to Tasmania Police of historic sexual abuse by Mr Griffin. The abuse commenced when she was 11 years of age and he was 58. ... During that interview, after caution, he made admissions that he had met the child through a local sporting group where he had acted as a masseuse. He also made admissions of criminal sexual misconduct in relation to her.

In your previous answer you said you spoke to the NTNA on Friday and again on Monday. What information did you seek about James Griffin's offending from those meetings in order to support the club? What action did you take when the Coroner's report was provided to your department? If you went to a meeting on Friday or Monday, surely you would remember what you talked about.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, please allow the minister to come to the podium.



**Ms O'Byrne** - It's all right - in your own time.

**Mr Ferguson** - Look, that is not helping anything. You claim that it is a sensitive matter, allow it to be treated sensitively.

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I am advised that there has been no report from the Northern Tasmanian Netball Association of any complaint or issues in relation to Mr Griffin. When Netball Tasmania became aware of the allegations, they contacted the Northern Tasmanian Netball Association and through it, their members, to inquire whether there had been any complaints or issues and we were advised that to date, there have been none.

**Right to Information Applications**

**Ms BUTLER question to MINISTER for BUILDING and CONSTRUCTION, Ms ARCHER**

[10.51 a.m.]

At last week's Estimates hearings, you were adamant that you had no role in meetings with departmental representatives to discuss right to information applications. You said -

I am not present at those meetings when they are discussing the processing of them.

Can you explain why this document, which is the March 2020 agenda for a regular fortnightly meeting you hold with your Building and Construction bureaucrats in your ministerial office, contains a thorough run-down of RTI applications which includes the names of applicants, a description of the information they are seeking and the status of their applications, clearly showing if they are new or finalised?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question -

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, can we get back to the point that we are here for.

**Ms ARCHER** - I do not resile from my answer at Estimates. As I explained to the member then, quite often the right to information requests come straight to my inbox and are referred through to the department.

As the Leader of the Greens has quite appropriately said, it is quite often an agenda item that ministers be advised about the existence of RTIs, but that does not mean we are involved in the process and I absolutely refute that allegation. I am not involved whatsoever in the processing of RTI applications.

If they have not gone through our inbox but the department has received an RTI request, it is standard practice that we be advised of what RTIs exist, how many within the department and that sort of thing. That is not processing the RTI. They are processed at arm's length from ministers and just because RTI requests appear on an agenda item of a regular weekly meeting of my department means nothing other than following correct protocol and procedure of advising the minister of their existence.

### **Rebuilding a Stronger Tasmania - TasTAFE**

**Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.54 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Government is rebuilding a stronger Tasmania with investments in skills and pay?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank Mr Tucker for his question and his interest in this matter. This side of the House remains 100 per cent committed to Tasmanian jobs. Since the height of the pandemic two-thirds of Tasmanians have returned to work, businesses are hiring and Tasmania has the second-highest rebound in job vacancies in the country. Our commitment to skills and TasTAFE is reflected in the State Budget and is helping drive business confidence. The \$21 million JobTrainer program offers free training for youth and people without employment.

Last week, we launched our Vocational Education and Training media campaign, which runs for two years and highlights the greater job opportunities and higher starting salaries for VET graduates versus university counterparts. We launched our adult learning strategy, investing \$4.4 million to deliver more literacy and numeracy support across seven communities, more free training places for literacy and numeracy tutors, and improved access to education for second-chance learners.

This Friday, Ms Jenny Dodd leaves TAFE after leading three years of transformative change, including some of the highest student satisfaction rates in Australia, with 91.6 per cent of students recommending their training: delivering two new health training hubs in Launceston and Hobart that will allow us to train more nurses; helping deliver the highest apprentice completion rates in the country, given TasTAFE trained about 60 per cent of all our apprentices; creating TasTAFE's Teacher under Supervision role that recruits industry-skilled people to study teaching, and provide over 500 Tasmanians with employability skills through their COVID SKILL UP for your Future initiative; and embracing COVID challenges for the transition to digitally supported learning, and one of the quickest returns to campus learning in the nation.

Recently, TasTAFE was shortlisted as one of the three large training providers of the Australian 2020 National Training Awards. TasTAFE students won the biggest awards of the night. Heetham Hekmat from Hobart is Australia's vocational student of the year. Caitlin Radford in the north-west, who studied agriculture, is Australia's apprentice of the year.

I hope those opposite will join me in thanking Ms Dodd for her passion, her commitment and delivering such outstanding results.

**Ms O'Byrne** - I have already had a discussion with Ms Dodd about it.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Very good, Ms O'Byrne, thank you.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to announce that on 1 February 2021, Mr Grant Dreher commences as TasTAFE's CEO. Mr Dreher brings a wealth of vocational education and training experience and a strong background of working in regional areas, including as general manager of education and training at the Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE. He is currently the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Vocational Education and Pathways at Victoria University in Melbourne. Mr Dreher's experience and expertise will build on the transformative work of Ms Dodd that has delivered for students and teachers, and I congratulate him on his appointment.

### **Right to Information Applications**

**Ms BUTLER question to MINISTER for BUILDING and CONSTRUCTION,  
Ms ARCHER**

[10.58 a.m.]

Last Wednesday in Estimates' hearings, you denied any involvement in right to information applications made to your department. You denied you discussed applications with your department or stakeholders. In fact, you said, 'I don't have a role in the RTI process'. You further said that RTI matters are, and I quote -

... handled at arm's length from me as a minister, and I find out about the content of RTIs as the applicant is finding out about the content of RTIs. That is the process.

Minister, that is simply untrue, isn't it? According to your fortnightly meeting with your department in your ministerial office, you are openly informed about what people - including members of this House, journalists, and other Tasmanians - are seeking, and the progress of those applications. Do you still deny you have your fingerprints all over RTI applications so you can decide if information is to be hidden when it should be released?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I do not know what further I can add, other than I reinforce everything I said at Budget Estimates and in my previous answer today.

The member somehow thinks she has some 'ka-ching' moment, when I have just explained, I only see the contents, I only see what is being part of an RTI at the time it is provided to an applicant. Before then, I only know of the existence of the RTI. I am not involved in the processing, nor is my office involved in the processing. It is done at arm's length from the minister.

Can you not decipher or understand the difference that? Your questions last week at Budget Estimates related to the processing of RTIs, and I stand by that, totally appropriate. For you to twist those words into somehow me being informed about the existence of an RTI and being involved in the processing, that is simply and utterly and absolutely incorrect.

**Northern Tasmanian Netball Association -  
Actions of Minister in relation to Reports of Alleged Child Abuse**

**Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for SPORT and RECREATION, Ms HOWLETT**

[11 a.m.]

The Coroner's report that was concluded in May said -

On 1 May 2019, an adult female made a complaint to Tasmania Police of historic sexual abuse by Mr Griffin. The abuse commenced when she was 11 years of age and he was 58. ... During that interview, after caution, he made admissions that he had met the child through a local sporting group where he had acted as a masseuse. He also made admissions of criminal sexual misconduct in relation to her.

I ask you again: what action did you take when the Coroner's report was provided to your department?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for her question.

These allegations are deeply upsetting. As I stated before, I have been advised that there have been no reports from the Northern Tasmanian Netball Association of any complaints or issues in relation to Mr Griffin. I have had no reports put forward.

**COVID-19 Recovery - Digital Ready for Business Program**

**Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for SCIENCE and TECHNOLOGY,  
Mr FERGUSON**

[11.02 a.m.]

What support measures is the Tasmanian Government taking to support businesses to identify new markets, grow their digital footprint and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for his question.

Like everybody in this House, we want to get behind the small business sector to support them to recover. It is certainly in the DNA of the Liberal Party to really get behind business, and in particular small and family businesses, and that is why I am very proud to be a Liberal.

It goes without saying that 2020 has been very tough for the small business sector. It employs more than 100 000 people - almost one in four Tasmanians - and it is crucial for Government to support business in their time of need to keep going, to embrace IT and communication technology to find better paths and more paths to markets, to raise their profiles, and to operate more efficiently and effectively. Of course, the need for many small businesses, this year in particular, has been to pivot in the face of adversity.

Each and every year across this term of Government, the Tasmanian Liberal Government allocates around \$250 000 to support the very successful Digital Ready for Business program. The program ensures that small businesses receive innovative, informative and relevant information at no charge. We want to help these businesses grab the opportunities presented by the ever-changing digital and commercial mainstay. There is little doubt that COVID-19 has resulted in significant interest in the program. For example, the number of visits to the program's website at the onset of the pandemic increased by seven times, compared to the same period the year before. That says a lot about the pressures that businesses are facing, and the best supports that we can provide.

The Liberal Government has stood ready to provide additional resourcing to meet this major increase in demand. I am very happy to report to the House that the Budget provides a boost in funding to the program, to over \$1 million over the next two years. This allows for new resources, including an additional 50 'how to' guides on the Digital Ready for Business website, as well as providing three two-hour business coaching for 713 Tasmanian businesses just this year alone. Their no-cost coaching sessions have provided valuable assistance to businesses. It is about providing tailored and targeted assistance, based on what that particular business may need.

Last week I had the pleasure of meeting Maria Bond. Members of this House may know Ms Bond. She has formed the wedding ceremony store, and is a well-known local celebrant. She had to rapidly pivot her business when the wedding industry was all but shut down at the height of the pandemic. Maria reached out and sought help from the Digital Ready for Business website and the team. Thanks to the free coaching resources available, Ms Bond has been able to identify a new path to market and now provides her experience and knowledge in the industry to train other wedding celebrants. It is a great example of businesses pivoting to find a different way to secure commercial operations - and good on her. This has helped to keep her business and life and family afloat, and we believe this is great. That is why we are doubling down.

I am very pleased to inform the House that from 1 January, the Government will double the coaching support offered to Tasmanian small businesses from the traditional two-hour model to up to four hours per calendar year. Members will want to share this information with their electorates. We are continuing to respond to shifts in demand, and the program is being asked to assist with briefing on cyber security. In recent times, the program has had significant increase in businesses inquiring about ways they can lift their cyber security footing and mitigate their exposure and potential risk. It is a concern that I share.

As the Prime Minister foreshadowed earlier this year, the pandemic has brought the issue of cyber security to the fore, and we all have to take this very seriously. Malicious activity has been increasing in frequency and scale, as well as sophistication and severity. I also announce today that the Government has appointed a specialist small business cyber security adviser to the digital ready for business program. This adviser will provide businesses with tailored and

targeted cyber security advice and assistance upon referral to their digital coach. This is very important.

I am pleased to announce that Mr Andrew Quill of AQ Advisory has been selected to fill this important role, to support Tasmanian small businesses with their initial cyber security needs. Mr Quill is well-regarded by his peers as an expert in the field. He is a recent award winner, is serving as an active member of the industry body TasICT and is chair of that organisation's cyber security subcommittee. Mr Quill will be a tremendous asset to the program as we continue to expand the breadth of free support delivered by the digital ready for business program. This will grow our economy, create even more jobs for Tasmanians and importantly, will add to the support - including cyber security support - that every business needs to address.

**Time expired.**

## **TABLED PAPER**

### **Estimates Committee B - Additional Information - Minister for Racing and Minister for Sport and Recreation**

**Mr Tucker** presented a further report of additional information provided to Estimates Committee B by the Minister for Racing and the Minister for Sport and Recreation.

## **MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

### **Right to Information**

[11.09 a.m.]

**Ms HADDAD** (Clark) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: Right to Information

Thank you for the opportunity to speak again in this place about this Government's lack of transparency, and the fact that Tasmania has become the most secretive state in the nation under Premier Gutwein's leadership. It is a matter of great concern. People are increasingly worried that under this Government's leadership the RTI act is being ridden over roughshod; and it is getting worse.

To explain why this issue is so important, I will go back to the spirit of the RTI act. I will quote from the Right to Information annual report, prepared by the Department of Justice and delivered to parliament. It is an annual report of how RTIs are dealt with across the entire Government. In their last annual report, they said -

The Act is intended to improve the operation of democracy in the state by increasing the accountability of Government to the people and by increasing the ability of the people to participate in Government decision making. The underlying principle is that the information held by the Tasmanian public authorities belongs to the people of the state and has been collected for them and on their behalf.

The report goes on to say -

It is integral to our democratic system of government in the administration of the Act including making decisions under the Act as to whether information requested should be released or not should be approached in this spirit.

I am not confident that RTI decisions in our public sector departments are being approached in that spirit under the leadership of these ministers.

Some people are calling for a legislative overhaul of our RTI laws. I say, on the record, that I believe our RTI laws are very good. We have a very good set of laws that deal with right to information requests and how a right to information request should be handled. They are not being applied well. Things have become steadily worse under this Government. I believe ministers of this Government have created a culture of secrecy and an expectation that RTI requests will be refused.

There now seems to be a reflex action that when RTI requests come into public sector departments, as little information as possible should be released to that applicant - whether they are a member of the public, a member of Parliament, or a member of the media. The reflex action is to withhold information and to release as little as possible.

As we have just heard, the spirit of the act is the opposite. The spirit of the act should be to release as much information on an RTI request as possible. I have been talking about this a lot but I am not alone in raising issues of how RTI requests are dealt with by this Government. The Ombudsman's most recent annual report tells us as that well, stating that public authorities in Tasmania refused to release any information at all in 30 per cent of their RTI decisions in the last financial year. That rate of refusal was nearly twice that of the next highest jurisdiction, which was Queensland at just 16 per cent - so, a little over half of that. Worryingly, Tasmania was 750 per cent higher than Australia's most open jurisdictions which were Victoria and the Northern Territory, which were both at 4 per cent. We are at 30 per cent total refusals.

That means that after the applicant has gone through the internal review process, which has been described this week by the Australia Institute as a hurdle, it is not a benefit to the applicant to go through an internal review process. I am someone who advocates very strongly for administrative review, and it came as something of a conflict for me to be arguing against the idea of internal review under the RTI act. The fact is that what we hear and what we see in responses to internal reviews is that invariably the information is still not released. They might rely on a different section of the act to withhold that information, or alternatively they release just a little bit more - perhaps a few more paragraphs.

Once that is complete what can the applicant do? They can then apply to the Ombudsman for an external review. We heard from the Ombudsman in his report, and also in Estimates last week, that applications to his office for external review of those decisions have steadily increased under this Government. Worryingly, he also told us in his annual report that nearly 100 per cent of those external reviews his office has managed to deal with were overturned. That means they were decided in the favour of the applicant which means the department made the wrong decision in the first place. Why did they make the wrong decision? They made the wrong decision because there is a reflex action now happening in the Tasmanian Government, expected and encouraged by ministers of the Crown, to withhold information and to ride roughshod over the RTI act.

The external reviews by the Ombudsman have gone up as well. We heard from the Ombudsman that applications for external review have increased -

**Ms Archer** - You should not lie in here.

**Ms HADDAD** - It is very interesting that the Attorney-General listens to nothing I say but immediately interjects when she sits down. Maybe you can go back and read the *Hansard* because I was saying that the way the RTI act has been dealt with under this Government has become increasingly worse. It is not just me saying it. It is backed up by research, it is backed up by the Ombudsman and the Australia Institute who have released information on this in the last couple of days.

We also heard from the Ombudsman that the number of days it takes to complete those external reviews is also steadily on the rise. In March 2019, the Ombudsman addressed the Public Accounts Committee and reported on the days it takes to complete an external review; not the number of days it is open but the days it takes for an external review to be completed. In 2016-17 it was 230 days. In 2017-18 it had risen to 318 days. At the time he was giving this report, which was March 2019, the year-to-date figure was that it takes 881 days. That has now risen to 1045 days and that is something that should worry every member of this House.

**Time expired.**

[11.16 a.m.]

**Ms BUTLER (Lyons)** - Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak about the complete lack of integrity by this Government, which is undermining the RTI process at the moment, especially the Minister for Building and Construction within that process. The object of the Right to Information Act clearly states it is to improve democratic government in Tasmania -

- (a) by increasing the accountability of the executive to the people of Tasmania; and
- (b) by increasing the ability of the people of Tasmania to participate in their governance; and
- (c) by acknowledging that information collected by public authorities is collected for and on behalf of the people of Tasmania and is the property of the State.

I do not think the RTI process at the moment is anything we could be proud of and I certainly do not think this Government has any wish to increase the ability of the people of Tasmania to participate in their governance. It is always reflective of that huge spin machine that spends so much time on putting out horrendous media releases. If you spent the same amount of time trying to do some good work and being transparent as you do covering up things, you might have a bit more respect from the public.

Clearly the minister has a role in the processing of RTIs within her department and I understand it is a normal topic for a minister to have an idea about which RTIs have been presented to a department, but the documents we have been provided have it as the third agenda item each fortnight and contains information about the status of the RTIs, the running agenda around the RTIs and provides a lot of information.



It is my understanding, minister, that you are very much part of a process of potentially rejecting, redacting -

**Ms Archer** interjecting.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** - The minister will have an opportunity to reply soon.

**Ms BUTLER** - It is my understanding that you may be complicit in that process and if that is the case, that is not good enough.

There is a culture of spending time covering things up. When you receive heavily redacted documents from an RTI request, and the reasoning behind those heavily redacted documents is pretty scarce, two days after you put in an RTI request, a new media release is put out by the Government machine and it is to do with the RTI request you have put in, at first I thought it was a coincidence; 'Why does it keep happening that every time I put in an RTI request, out comes a media release from the Government?'. But it is not a coincidence. That is the culture. That is what you do. You know you stop things from coming in and out of your department when it comes to RTIs.

The Ombudsman, Richard Connock, has written that agencies in this state are up to 750 per cent more likely to refuse to release any information to applicants than decision-makers in Victoria and the Northern Territory. Almost one-third of all applications for information are rejected entirely. It is a figure that has substantially worsened over the past five years under your watch and I do not think that that is by accident. Mr Connock's annual report also noted that the majority of rejections that were appealed by his office were overturned last financial year. He wrote -

Public authorities do not seem to give sufficient weight to the fact that the act creates a legally enforceable right to obtain information held by and about the operations of state and local government.

It is not okay to simply go into damage control and state that you are going to work with the Ombudsman, and that you and the Premier have met with the Ombudsman to have a look at other jurisdictions and change the way you are doing things. You know that the pollution has started at the top of the stream, minister. You know that the pollution starts with you guys and you cannot keep blaming the Ombudsman. You cannot keep saying, 'It's not our problem, we will fix it', because it works for you; it works for control of information. It works for lack of transparency.

There are journalists who have waited over 12 months for information. Journalists report the truth to our public. Members of parliament cannot obtain truthful and accurate information from a minister. We are also aware that there are meetings within government departments with a minister who is completely aware of the status and the processing of those and even said, 'No, I don't have anything to do with the processing of those RTI documents', but you do.

**Ms Archer** - I do not tell the department what to do.

**Ms BUTLER** - You know that you do. You know we have the documents that support that. You know that you are complicit within this.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order. I ask members to allow the member to make her contribution.

**Ms BUTLER** - Minister, we also know that some of those documents we have been provided contain up to four pages of concise information about RTIs and where they sit in departments, and you are aware of them every fortnight. You can deny as much as you like. You know that you put a lot of pressure onto those different people within those departments and you know that you control RTIs.

I do not know if it is just you but I have evidence that it is you but I am wondering if it is other ministers as well. We will keep going because the buck stops here.

**Time expired.**

[11.22 a.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, there is a lot of heat in the Chamber and I understand the Labor Party is seeking to make this a bit of a personal attack on some ministers. The issue here is the culture. The evidence speaks for itself; we have the evidence from the Ombudsman's report. That is the problem.

We have the evidence from the Ombudsman's report that Tasmania is the most secretive of all states and territories in Australia when it comes to releasing information to the public. That is a fact. Relative to every other state and territory in Australia, Tasmania is the worst, and not just a little bit different - we refused to provide any access to 30 per cent of right to information applications in the last year records were kept. Out of the other states in the country, the best performers have a 4 per cent refusal rate. There is a chasm of difference in transparency in states like the Northern Territory and Victoria. We are 750 per cent more likely to refuse to provide any information at all compared to those states. That is not only a terrible statistic but it has been getting worse under this Government.

It was not always like that because the year before there was a 15 per cent refusal rate, so it has doubled in a year. As a member of parliament, I can see the change that has happened. I can see the change in culture. I can see the hardening happening on every level in terms of being transparent and accountable.

In a two-year period, it hardened. The Liberals came into Government in 2014, and after two years of settling in, the problem started to bite. Where I really saw a kind of hysterical control of information was around fruit fly incursions, biosecurity responses, and it started most strongly when it came to privatisation of our wilderness and natural places - the Planning Scheme changes, the attacks by this Government on our publicly owned lands, and the secretive arrangements that the Office of the Coordinator-General was going into over that.

In the first two years, the Office of the Coordinator-General was going into these secretive interactions, conversations, negotiating, flying to China, flying all around the place, flogging off bits of Tasmania, starting the secretive expressions of interest process. The Government started to clamp down on all this information and people started to realise what was going on. The Tasmanian Planning Scheme was being rewritten, people were asking questions, and the Government was not giving answers, and so it started.

The Government started down the track of hiding what they were doing, being afraid to speak to their own convictions to Tasmanians and say, yes, we are looking at how we can sell off Crown land, we have assessed all the Crown land in the state to see what we can flog off. If you had come out and said that, the Tasmanian community would have known what they were dealing with. If you had come out and said, 'We are prepared to open up our World Heritage Wilderness Area to anybody who wants to come and get a bit for exclusive possession', people would have known what was going on. They would not have put the right to information request in. You would have been really transparent about what was going on, but you continued to hide it.

The culture in this Government is to protect ministers from risk. That is the bottom line. There might be a minister or two who does not personally get involved, but we have written evidence by email with the Department of Premier and Cabinet that an RTI could not have been given to us in a timely fashion because they were waiting sign-off from the minister. We have the written evidence. We have the Ombudsman's report. They are all incontrovertible and they are all factual; they are all written in by the independent Ombudsman. We have the paper evidence. It is clear.

It is not about the Premier having a chat to Richard Connock to solve the problem. The problem is not in the system. Yes, there are problems with the RTI act. There are loopholes that need to be fixed. The Greens have identified them; they must be fixed.

The problem is this Government will continue to ramp up and get tighter and tighter and more secretive and controlling if the issue is about public servants fundamentally being instructed to protect their minister. That is the bottom line. That is what is happening. It is all about a protection racket for ministers. You have minister Barnett never being shown advice so he can have plausible deniability about bans on duck shooting. You have minister Jaensch who does not want to know, really, what the threatened values are for Rosny Hill, because then he might have to agree that he cannot hand it over for a massive hotel to be built at the top of that beautiful place. It is clearly an outrage if you are trying to protect natural values except he is not hearing about the stuff that he does not want to be responsible for if the finger gets pointed to him as having done something wrong.

With a few exceptions, every single minister is using this as a tactic. They do not have to do it because the staff will do it for them because they know their fundamental job is to protect the minister.

### **Time expired.**

[11.30 a.m.]

**Ms ARCHER** (Clark - Minister for Building and Construction) - Madam Deputy Speaker, the two questions asked by the member for Lyons, Ms Butler, during question time, really shows a complete ignorance of standard departmental practices. Even Ms O'Connor, and I say 'even' because she does not jump to our defence as a Government very often, confirmed that it is standard departmental practice.

In the interests of trying to get a gotcha moment, she is trying to say that I get involved in the processing of applications, being advised of the existence of an RTI, being advised of when it might be likely to be released. That is not being involved in the processing. It is not interfering with the processing. I do not tell the department what to do, or what to redact.

This week, Ms Butler has come in here on numerous occasions, on a lot of different topics, and some days we wonder if she is making it up, or if she is set up by her colleagues to say what she says. They all have their heads down. They all look embarrassed. I am embarrassed for Ms Butler for being put up to this stunt today, because it is absolutely futile.

I am going to get back to the RTI itself because it is a really important issue. It is disappointing that they say it does not matter that the Premier and I have met with the Ombudsman. It does matter, because we want to get to the root cause of the issues that the Ombudsman raises in his annual report. It was a really worthwhile meeting, because the Ombudsman is the person we are taking advice from in relation to how we can improve, not only the processes but the culture that has developed, that is written in the annual report. We were very open about that process. The Premier has spoken openly in this place, as have I, in relation to that.

We have also said that we will look at further resourcing. Members know that we have given the Ombudsman resourcing of \$245 000 per annum, which goes to two additional RTI officers. As I explained to the Budget Estimates Committee last week, unfortunately that resource has not been able to kick in yet, insofar as dealing with the backlogs, because of someone leaving and needing to replace that person, and then putting an additional person on, COVID-19 hit, and so we have not seen the backlog cleared.

Irrespective of that, if additional resources are required on top of that, we want to get rid of the backlog. Dealing with the backlog is a priority. Dealing with the cultural issues, how the act is interpreted; those two issues are linked. From our discussions, they are linked, because it may be something like lack of consistency, because RTI officers are interpreting sections of the act in a different way. They may be doing it for different intentions. I am not going to draw conclusions, and I am certainly not going to criticise well-meaning RTI officers. I am not going to allege they are breaking the law or anything like that, which other members come in here, on a daily basis, and say -

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** - This is not a time for debate. Dr Woodruff, you have made your contribution.

**Ms ARCHER** - I feel for the RTI officers because they are not exercising anything but their own judgment and their own interpretation. If that is incorrect across government agencies, we need to get to the cause of that.

As I have said, one of the models that we have suggested to the Ombudsman is to consider whether a centralised RTI unit would be better placed to deal with this issue. The Ombudsman, too, has and should have that continuing role in relation to that educational aspect as well. At the very least, you could have RTI officers serving some time in the Ombudsman's Office, but we need to do more than that. That is why we have tasked, and the Ombudsman has agreed, that it is appropriate for him to look at some other jurisdictions to advise the Government on what he thinks can address the issues he has raised in his report, and I think it is appropriate that that be allowed to occur.

We have demonstrated as a government that we are willing to respond accordingly. It is disappointing, though, that members cannot even acknowledge, at the very least, that as a

government we push out more information than any previous governments. This seems to get lost in this debate time and time again. It is important that we push out information in the spirit of RTI but without there needing to be an RTI, so there is that intention of certainly being open and transparent in relation to what we have addressed and what we continue to address in relation to transparency. I am referring to the information that we routinely release publicly beyond that of previous governments.

We have also addressed a gap in the current rights of applicants and external parties to apply to the Ombudsman for a review of certain decisions in relation to applications for assessed disclosure under the Right to Information Act. The Ombudsman said he thinks his decisions should be the subject of review. As I stated to the House as late as yesterday -

**Time expired.**

[11.37 a.m.]

**Mr ELLIS** (Braddon) - Madam Deputy Speaker, before I go into detail in my substantive speech, I congratulate the Attorney-General for the hard work she does in informing our public and making sure that the Government's work is transparent, well known and in the public domain. She does a fantastic job. To all the hardworking public servants involved in that process, I say thank you. It is one thing for the Labor Party and the Greens to come in here and accuse them of breaking the law, which they have done in the last few minutes - hardworking public servants who are doing their best and doing a fantastic job -

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr ELLIS** - I challenge the Labor Party and the Greens to go outside at one o'clock and say what you said in here. If you want to do it, go for it.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order, Dr Woodruff and other members. The member was silent during your contributions so I ask that he is shown the same courtesy.

**Mr ELLIS** - Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. It will be one o'clock in an hour and a half. You do not need to do it in here under parliamentary privilege. If you have the convictions of your beliefs, go outside and say it publicly in a way that you are not under parliamentary privilege.

I want to talk about the public information that this Government is putting out on a daily basis that the Labor-Greens government was hiding and making people do RTI requests for. Since June 2018 there have been 60 new datasets that are available to every every single member of the public so that they can see what is going on with the Government in terms of what we are delivering -

**Dr Woodruff** - And they tell them nothing that they want to know.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order, Dr Woodruff.

**Mr ELLIS** - Under the disastrous Labor-Greens government that we all had to put up with for 16 years, for these 60 datasets you literally had to do an RTI request to even find them

out. They are now in the public domain. You can go onto any computer and find out. That is the difference. We are making this information available rather than forcing people to do an RTI request to find that stuff out. It is much more transparent.

It is good for all governments that we are transparent in terms of the data we provide to the people we are looking after because it keeps us all accountable. It makes sure that our voters in Braddon, and in your electorate of Franklin, Madam Deputy Speaker, can see what we are working on, where we need to improve and where we are doing a good job.

Previously Labor and the Greens made sure that the only people who found out these 60 datasets were the people who had time to do an RTI request. It was disgraceful and it is one of the reasons we have been working so hard to reform the kind of secrecy that we saw under the previous Labor-Greens government, the government of Lennon and Kons, and all these figures of great derision in the Labor Party and across the community.

We are working as a government to push out more information than any government in the history of Tasmania. The Attorney-General made that point brilliantly, and I hear the Labor-Greens opposition go silent because it is the truth. This is the problem. They forgot for a little while, and we are reminding them and it turns out that they have nothing to say. It is embarrassing that they had 16 years to do something about it and did nothing. We are now looking after it and they accuse us of being secretive. It is the height of hypocrisy and laziness. They do not want to do the work; they did not even bother doing the research.

I am going to touch on some of that as well. In the RTI annual report, the number-one reason for refusal of information is that it is already in the public domain. What sort of bonehead do you have to be if you are in the Labor-Greens opposition to go searching and scrounging around for RTIs when the information is already available? It is literally the number-one reason that the RTI officers are knocking things back.

These are hardworking people. There is already a backlog and they have better things to do than act like some kind of unpaid research assistant for the Labor Party and the Greens. Do the work. Do not make these people who have a very important job to do, do your Googling. We know Dr Google or Dr Broad is a big fan of jumping on the internet and trying to find whatever garbage he can pull out of his search engine. Surely he and the rest of the Labor-Greens opposition can do the work. Apparently not. That is why we see that the number-one reason they are getting knocked back is because the information is already available. It speaks of laziness and a lack of respect for the RTI process. One of the reasons we are seeing high numbers of incompletions of these RTIs is because they are already available.

I want to talk about the annual report of the Ombudsman. Part of the Ombudsman's role is an avenue for external review of the decisions made by public authorities not to release information sought in application for assessed disclosure under the Right to Information Act 2009. If at the conclusion of a review, the Ombudsman is of the view that the authority's decision was incorrect, the Ombudsman can make a fresh determination. That is an important part of our legislation. It is important to understand that the external review applications are often complex and voluminous. It can take some time to appropriately consider all the information. That is why they cannot afford to have their time wasted by lazy people in the Opposition who cannot be bothered to do their own research, or who cannot seem to tell their research assistants what they need to be looking for. It is simple Dr Google stuff.

Last year we provided the Office of the Ombudsman with additional funding of \$245 000 a year to address matters raised by the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman has welcomed that additional funding and stated that the additional level of resources will enable the office to clear the backlog of cases it is currently struggling to deal with and to establish practices and procedures for more efficient handling of applications for external review in the future.

In his 2019-20 annual report, the Ombudsman reiterated his statements. In the 2019-20 budget, the Tasmanian Government allocated an additional -

**Time expired.**

**Matter noted.**

## **APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2020 (No. 46)**

## **APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2020 (No. 47)**

### **Reports of Estimates Committees**

#### **In Committee**

**Resumed from 1 December 2020 (page 141)**

#### **DIVISIONS 2, 3, 5 AND 11**

(Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability Services and Community Development, Minister for Trade, Minister for Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries and Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing)

[11.44 a.m.]

**Ms DOW** - I rise to speak about Estimates Committee B and Mr Rockliff's portfolios of Education, Skills and Training, Advanced Manufacturing and Mental Health and Wellbeing.

I begin my contribution by focusing on some of the matters we discussed in the Education portfolio, namely, capital works projects at local schools across Tasmania and a couple of schools in our electorate, minister. We had a lengthy discussion about the need for upgrades at Montello Primary School, as well as the need for better access at the support school in Devonport. I understand there will be some work done on the car park there at the beginning of next year.

I noted a number of delays in Education infrastructure projects and some of the school redevelopments across the state. While we welcome those redevelopments, we would like to see them meeting their time frames to ensure students have the benefits sooner rather than later. We also discussed skills and training and, in particular, access to TAFE across the regions.

We discussed the new initiative around a registered training organisation which is industry-led in partnership with the Tasmanian Hospitality Association. This followed on from discussion with the minister for Hospitality the previous day, to understand the time frames for implementation, and to acknowledge that the THA action plan outlines the need right now for additional resources and investing in skills and training across regional areas.

This is contributing to additional pressure on small business owners and hospitality business owners in particular. At a time when we are looking to attract more visitors to regional Tasmania to support regional economies, it is important we have the infrastructure in place, such as access to skills and training, to enable businesses to operate and benefit from the trade which has been directed their way.

The time frames for implementation of this RTO were unclear. We asked further questions about utilising JobTrainer funding as part of this initiative and Skills Tasmania were not able to provide a definitive answer about whether that would be utilised. It will be interesting to see how that develops and the time frames, and whether there are additional initiatives put in place to fill some of the gaps around skills and training across the state in the meantime.

We talked about the north-west Job Ready Generation Package, which was announced during the federal by-election some time ago. It was pleasing to have an update on that program and the initiatives that are being rolled out. I understand there are benefits being delivered locally, because a number of initiatives across the state are aimed at increasing access to skills and training. It would be a shame to duplicate - or not target - any resource or funding that comes to local communities, to ensure there is maximum benefit for those accessing skills and training.

That brings me to Advanced Manufacturing. We were provided with an update on the new action plan for advanced manufacturing across the state. The plan builds on the work that was done over the first four years around advanced manufacturing. The genesis of that work came from changes to advanced manufacturing particularly in our electorate, minister, with the transfer of manufacturing by Caterpillar to Rayong and all the work done there with industry.

We understand that funds allocated in this financial year in the Budget are primarily aimed at developing a capability network across the state. That can only be positive. I understand the Tasmanian Minerals and Energy Council and their advanced manufacturing advocates, and people like Kent Wylie, have been working closely with the Government around the development of the capability network. Having a better understanding of the capabilities around our state, and for individual businesses to understand the capabilities of others so that they can collaborate on initiatives together and grow their business, can only be very positive.

We understand that the action plan outlines a number of initiatives, and there is only preliminary funding this year. It will be useful to understand whether there will be an ongoing commitment in the outer years of the budget to address and implement a number of those key actions. It is important that funding is allocated to each of those initiatives.

The Defence Advocate attended during Estimates, and I thank him for his work. It was helpful to gain an understanding of what he has done this year. It has been a difficult year with COVID-19 and that has put restrictions on travelling and engagement.

There was some reflection during our Estimates Committee, mainly around the flexibility and adaptability of our local manufacturers, particularly during COVID-19. We reflected on distillers and their move to hand sanitisers and the like around the state, and commended them.

We also discussed the annual National Manufacturing Strategy and the federal government's move towards looking at doing more manufacturing locally in Australia. We



emphasised again the importance of Tasmania being part of that, and the need to understand how the work being done locally around our Advanced Manufacturing Action Plan would link to the National Strategy and provide opportunities for Tasmanian companies and businesses.

Under the Mental Health and Wellbeing portfolio, we discussed the decision in this year's Budget not to fund the hydrotherapy pool at Latrobe. I asked the minister why that decision was made, and whether there is an opportunity to reconsider the decision so that very valuable service can be accessed again by the local community.

[11.52 a.m.]

**Mr TUCKER** - It was fantastic to be part of Committee B for Budget Estimates. Our Chair, Mr Street, did an excellent job.

The minister, Mr Rockliff, was able to provide a lot of detail around how the Government is rebuilding a stronger Tasmania through initiatives in education, mental health and wellbeing, skills, trade, advanced manufacturing and defence, and disability services and community development.

I was very pleased to have an update about providing additional support for prep students. From 2021, our Government will commence the delivery of staged funding to achieve its 2018 election commitment. That funding is to provide the equivalent of 80 teacher assistants to government schools. The funding, which will be allocated based on need, will support play-based, inquiry-led learning, underpinned by the Early Years Learning Framework in the Australian curriculum. Funding will increase to \$4.9 million over a three-year period, and by the third year will provide funding to support all 149 Tasmanian Government schools with a prep enrolment.

I was also very interested in the \$14 million investment being made to support students impacted by trauma and/or with behavioural issues. Mr Rockliff was able to talk quite comprehensively about how some learners, such as those impacted by trauma, may need additional support to engage in learning. It was pleasing to learn that a funding model has been developed to identify need, at both a whole of school and individual student level. Thirty-three schools have already received targeted funding in 2020 to build capacity in their school to support students impacted by trauma.

Staff in these schools have participated in workshops relating to trauma-informed practice and shared their experiences. Importantly, these schools will be measuring the impact of their work using data from the Annual School Wellbeing Survey, along with other metrics such as attendance and suspension data. The minister was able to quote a principal who reported 'the additional support has successfully increased our student's attendance, his connection to more staff and his confidence in his abilities to achieve better outcomes for himself'.

In the 2019-20 Budget, the Tasmanian Government committed \$7.25 million over four years to build capacity in schools, to support children and young people impacted by trauma. In the 2020-21 Budget, the funding commitment has increased to \$14 million over the Budget and forward Estimates. The importance of building on this initiative has been accentuated through COVID-19. We know that experiences of trauma in childhood can have far-reaching consequences and often result in significant behaviour and emotional challenges that can prevent students engaging in learning. Childhood experiences in trauma can also have

profound and enduring impacts on individuals, families and the Tasmanian community more broadly. We can all be affected by trauma, either directly or indirectly. I congratulate the minister on this initiative, which is clearly supporting the wellbeing of learners in order to provide them the tools to have a fulfilling and productive life.

Mr Rockliff was also able to talk more broadly about how the Government has prioritised mental health and wellbeing in his Education portfolio. In fact there has been an unprecedented \$81 million committed to support mental health and wellbeing in public schools since 2014 which includes across the forward Estimates. This includes a record number of professional support staff including social workers and psychologists.

I was pleased to see the minister provide detail of the efforts to improve access to learning for adults. The Adult Learning Strategy will see a significant expansion of 26TEN, a great program, expanded delivery and more local services across seven communities, and additional free training spaces for literacy and numeracy volunteers.

I was pleased to receive an update on the retention rates for senior secondary students and the work being done to re-engage students. Changes to the Tasmanian Education Act mean that in 2020 young people must participate in education and training until they complete year 12 or equivalent. Our Government has made further changes which are resulting in more students staying engaged in education for longer. TCE attainment is more than 10 per cent higher since we came into government, while the latest years 11 and 12 retention rate is 78.7 per cent, an increase from 78.3 per cent in 2018.

Students are also being retained for longer into year 12. Direct retention of students from year 10 to year 12 from the mid-year census in August 2019 was 66.2 per cent, higher than 2019 at 65.7 per cent and the highest on record. Senior secondary enrolments at extension schools this year have increased by 7 per cent. Extending all high schools to year 12 has been a major game-changer, bringing us into line with the rest of Australia and allowing greater choice and equity of access to senior secondary education.

The minister was able to provide advice on upgrades to TasTAFE facilities such as Alanvale and Clarence campuses. I note that it is only this side that has made a commitment to improve TasTAFE facilities.

COVID-19 has presented difficulties for our exporters and there are some complexities in this current global market, particularly in relation to China. I asked Mr Rockliff how exporters are being encouraged to manage their export risks. He was able to point out how the Government's overarching trade strategy has been based on the core philosophy of market expansion, diversification and managing risk, which is worth noting. Over recent years the Government has undertaken a range of trade missions to explore new markets and look for opportunities to expand and diversify. With the Government leading trade missions to Japan, the European Union and the United Kingdom last year, this year we would have embarked on a trade mission to the United States.

Although we have a strong relationship with China, we need to understand that our export profile is quite diverse, particularly in the food and agribusiness sector. For instance, our key markets for milk powder are Thailand and Sri Lanka; for cheese, Japan and the Philippines; for onions, Belgium and France; for beef, the United States and Japan; for chocolate, New Zealand and Malaysia; for hops, the United States and Canada; and for wine, the United States and the

United Kingdom. In the trade strategy, the Government is prioritising new opportunities in our five key international markets. It was interesting to hear about these efforts.

There has been some attention on the Government's aspirational target to be the healthiest state by 2025 to which the minister has made clear the Government remains committed. I asked about the next Healthy Tasmania five-year plan which is due next year. It was interesting to hear about how, in designing the next plan, the focus will be on finding new and better ways of working across government with communities to develop long-term solutions to address social and economic factors that may influence poorer health outcomes for Tasmanians.

I know Mr Rockliff is very passionate about the health and wellbeing of Tasmanians and helping people to lead healthier lives, which also helps reduce demand on our health system.

[12.00 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I want to speak to a number of matters in Mr Rockliff's various portfolios, particularly Mental Health and Education. I was asking questions of the minister in the Education portfolio on behalf of the Leader of the Greens who has our education portfolio responsibilities. There is an intersection between Education and many other portfolio responsibilities of this Government, not least that of Mental Health and Wellbeing that the minister also holds.

It was a quite pleasurable Estimates briefing with Mr Rockliff. He treats matters seriously and answers questions respectfully. That is a highlight in this Government.

**Ms O'Connor** - Certainly notable.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - It is notably different. I want to particularly mention the conversation we had about adult Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, which was an issue that had been raised with me by a number of constituents who were concerned at the lack of diagnostic criteria national guidelines, the lack of services, and the lack of public understanding of adult ADHD in Tasmania. I was gratified on their behalf and everyone with adult ADHD in Tasmania that the minister took that matter seriously and has guaranteed to examine the material which my staff have either sent or will be sending him very shortly. I thank you for that and we will continue to have conversations about this matter in the future.

Returning to the serious issue of the response to the climate emergency, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact it has had on young children in Tasmania, there is no doubt that primary school, high school and college students are hugely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although Tasmania has been relatively buffered compared to other states in Australia in terms of the impact on schooling, certainly compared to Victoria where students were required to be at home with parents for months and for a second time, there is no doubt that children in Tasmania are hugely affected.

The recent information reported today from the Australian Association of Primary Principals is that across Australia high anxiety is fueling childhood depression and teenage suicides. There has been an increase across Australia since the start of the pandemic and schools have also seen a rise in bullying and truancy. They say even primary school children are now increasingly harming themselves.

I do not have the statistics for Tasmania. The minister would know more about that than I do but clearly there is a trend and we must be having some additional impacts in Tasmania. It is not just how children respond to crises but it is how their parents are responding at home. One in seven primary school children has a diagnosed mental illness and the leading cause of death amongst 15 to 24-year-olds is suicide. Four per cent of children have a prescription medication for anxiety or antidepressants.

It is concerning that the Government did not prioritise funding towards additional school psychologists and school social workers. There was not substantial extra funding in the Budget for that. It is the case that children may be able to access support through their parents at home, but clearly if there is an issue at home, the school has to be a safer place for children to have those conversations, for children to talk about bullying and trauma, and the complexity of what is happening at home and how that might impact on how they are experiencing it.

The Greens' alternative Budget prioritised substantial extra money for social workers and school psychologists. It can be done, it can be prioritised, and that is a huge gap in this Budget.

The other huge gap in Education is around speech pathology. The minister did not disagree. I asked him a number of times to confirm whether the Australian Education Union in Tasmania's figures for the recommended number of school speech pathologists should be a ratio of 1:500 students. AEU Tasmania says that Tasmania has a 1:1250 ratio. Clearly, more than double the number of students to one speech pathologist. The Government has refused to put money into this, despite the fact we have seen some concerning trends of literacy rates trending downward amongst early childhood years and in the seven to nine-year-olds. That needs an investment in speech pathologists.

I recognise that the Education department has put resourcing across the school system, and I understand the idea of spreading it in many different ways, but there is a specific expertise that only speech pathologists can provide. It is really important that more money should be put into that, given all the other problems that children are facing.

In relation to school psychologists, climate anxiety is an emerging and increasingly huge issue for young people. I raised Mission Australia's survey, the fact that 44 per cent of children in Tasmania have ranked the environment as the most important issue in their lives, and that is up 15 per cent from two years ago - clearly, a huge trend in increasing anxiety and depression amongst young children. We have to support them in the school system.

I want to comment on the matter to do with the eating disorder clinic, which the Greens have been strongly advocating for on behalf of all people in Tasmania who need a standalone specific facility dedicated to managing issues for people with eating disorders. That has been funded in the Budget. We had a long conversation about the step-up, step-down facilities, and where they are distributed around the state, to make sure it is not only focused in the south, but we also have services in the north and north-west. We will keep asking questions. I am satisfied that the information looks as though these things are rolling out, but the devil is always in the detail.

Given the Greens only have two questions in a rotation in Estimates time, it is very hard to get right to the bottom of these matters. It is clear there is some goodwill to progress that matter as quickly as possible.

The other issue I want to mention is the co-ed schools of New Town and Ogilvie. We remain concerned that the Government is continuing to progress a one-size-fits-all, despite what the minister says. He got as close as he has come in previous Estimates to basically saying that Taroona High School will most likely not be pushed to go to years 11 and 12. On behalf of the community of students past, present and future, both at Taroona High School and Hobart College - and Elizabeth College and the other colleges - I really hope that the minister does not mess up what are already outstanding institutions providing very high-quality support and material to their students.

Forcing Taroona High School to go to years 11 and 12 would fundamentally break the quality of the education at that school. They cannot put more facilities onsite. The footprint is already massively oversubscribed. There are amazing connections already with Hobart College, which is just up the hill. There is no reason not to enhance those connections, put more effort into making that relationship strong between Taroona High School and Hobart College, and I really hope the Government looks to doing that.

**Time expired.**

[12.11 p.m.]

**Ms STANDEN** - I rise to contribute in relation to the Estimates Committee B, and specifically the output group related to Disability Services and Community Development, which is an area I have a keen interest in. I sometimes take a lead role on behalf of the Opposition in the lower House in relation to these matters, and it plays to my interest and background in this space in roles prior to coming to parliament.

I thank the minister for his openness at Estimates, and providing answers to a range of questions. I also thank the department, and the public service generally, for what is, I know, an extraordinary amount of work in preparing briefs.

I was asked the question last week by a family member: what is the value in this, and is it a valuable exercise? My response from the inside, being a member of parliament, and previously a bureaucrat, was yes. We are limited in time and the amount of information that we can explore and examine under Estimates hearing conditions. However, it is the one time of year that ministers are required to be thoroughly across their brief, across their portfolio, and for that matter departments compile up-to-date briefs and have that engagement with their ministers, so that the community, through elected members of parliament, have the opportunity to scrutinise not only expenditure, but the priorities of government.

It is extraordinarily important, and I thank the Government ministers and all public servants who have put their time and effort into that extraordinary workload. It is welcome and it is worthwhile.

I want to flag an issue about cross-portfolio responsibility. I was frustrated in a number of instances in addressing questions to ministers. Having worked within the Department of Premier and Cabinet in the past, you would think I would know what questions belonged to which minister, but I am constantly confused, in particular around Human Services and Community Development and Disability Services, and which minister is responsible for what. Heaven knows how the department cope. Once it used to be that there was one department, one minister, or at most a couple. I note that within the Budget Papers there are instances where departments are responsible to six, or perhaps even more, ministers. It must be extraordinarily

difficult to coordinate that effort. If I cannot understand it, then heaven help the average Joe Blow on the street.

In the note that came forward from the Government relating to portfolio responsibilities, whole-of-government, in the instance of Disability Services and Community Development I hoped that would have given us access to ask questions, for instance, about hotel quarantine and that type of thing. But no. I was told that was under Mr Jaensch's responsibility. I had questions about accessible housing for the Housing minister, but he did not seem to understand or know what I was referring to there. I had questions to the Minister for Human Services, and to the Minister for Disability Services and Community Development, trying to understand who is responsible for the care of children with disability at Ashley Youth Detention centre.

I know it is stating the obvious but these are people. These are Tasmanians we are talking about and to try to hide behind different responsibilities and different portfolios is not helpful to the process. There ought to be much stronger crossover and communication between the Government and the ministers in Cabinet.

I cite the example of disability housing. I asked a question that was put on notice about the Government's promise that 20 per cent new social housing homes would be accessible for people with a disability and whether the Minister for Housing could confirm that this had been achieved. The answer that came back to me in response was that the source of the statement to provide 20 per cent of new social housing homes as accessible for people living with a disability is unknown and had not been identified by me as requested during the committee hearing.

I identified the source and showed it to Mr Jaensch yesterday in examining the Minister for Housing's Estimates. He queried whether this was an area of his responsibility. I asked the Minister for Disability Services and Community Development whether it falls into his portfolio. This is a document called Agency Implementation of the Disability Framework for Action 2017 under the Premier's Disability Advisory Council. It appears on the Communities and the DPAC websites and it specifically says it is under the Department of Justice responsibility, so perhaps the answer is going to be that this is under the minister, Ms Archer's responsibility. I do not mind as long as somebody takes responsibility for this. It says -

... require 100 per cent of social housing new builds in Tasmania to include accessibility in their design, with 20 per cent of those homes being built to the platinum universal standard.

We have one of the highest populations of people with disability in Tasmania. I say again that I do not mind who takes responsibility for this, but I do not believe that the amount of social housing accessible for people with disability is high enough to meet the current, let alone future projected demands. I ask the minister to look into this to ensure we have proper cross-portfolio coordination.

We asked questions about Disability Services, particularly around people who are not eligible for the NDIS and who fall outside of qualification for the NDIS. I also asked about the cuts to some 18 disability service organisations that had previously been block-funded providers in the change to the commissioning approach driven by the Commonwealth with bridge funding and transition and finalisation arrangements in place to the information linkages and capacity building.

I put it to you this way, minister. When I worked at the Smith Family, if somebody came to me and said, 'I want to sponsor this child. I'm going to give you \$100 and I want it to go directly to this child and nothing else', in the case of the Smith Family I believe that is a promise that could be guaranteed but, for a lot of these charities, there are costs to fundraising, there are staffing costs and so on, in supporting and servicing the needs of clients. It is not reasonable to have them just under the commissioning approach. I also see grants that are just to deliver a project without making provision for at least 10 per cent to 15 per cent overheads to organisations.

We have a situation in Tasmania where there is substantial market failure. I understand that these reforms are aimed at consolidation of the sector but, although well intentioned around efficiency and consolidation, if we are not careful we will lose the innovation within the system and the service to people who have deep connection and trust relationships with these charities that are very important.

Recently I went to the AGM of BIAT and they showcased a very successful project they had done with disability and these providers around a disclosure video-type of approach connecting people with disability with employment options. It has been extraordinarily successful. That was funded through ILC money but it just goes to show that without the backbone of the organisation for core recurrent funding for payment for staff to retain those extraordinarily experienced people to provide the ongoing connection to the client base, those projects ultimately will be worthless. We need to take care of the ongoing funding needs.

We did not get a chance to explore workforce development issues within Disability Services in the House of Assembly Estimates but I understand there was a reference in the other place about COVID preparedness plans and response plans for the disability sector. I am very encouraged to hear that because throughout the COVID emergency I consistently heard concerns about supplies of PPE and capacity of the sector to be able to respond in the future.

I would have liked to have explored further digital literacy and connections and so on, particularly for people with disability, but that crosses over to the aged care sector as well. We only scratched the surface around food relief and I hope to be able to hear further about the Government's plans to provide support in that sector.

**Time expired.**

[12.21 p.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I rise to make a few brief comments about the Estimates for the Minister for Education and Skills and Minister for Trade in this instance.

I will start with some observations of the trading situation of Tasmania and at risk of again being falsely accused of malign motives, I will simply point out to the House that to rely overly heavily on a vindictive regime like the Chinese Government is not in Tasmania's best interests. It is very clear from the information that the minister and his departmental advisers provided to Dr Woodruff's questions at the Estimates table that the impact on Tasmanian exporters of the current punitive measures being inflicted on Australian exporters by the Chinese Government is significant right now and is likely to become more so, which makes the argument for a very accelerated diversification program compelling.

From beef to barley to seafood to wine and now to wood, we find out at the Estimates table, Australia's and Tasmania's exports are being blocked by an arguably irrational and childish regime. To the greatest extent possible we should be strengthening our trading relationships with democracies, with trading partners where it does not feel like an abusive relationship. All members of this House will be aware of the tweet that was put out by the Chinese minister for foreign affairs over the past 48 hours, which was disgusting, in relation to evidence of some Australian Defence Force personnel's murderous conduct in Afghanistan.

I strongly urge the minister to accelerate the trading relationships with small to medium states that are democracies, to send a trade delegation to Taiwan and to focus on trading relationships with Malaysia, Japan, the United States and Singapore. It will not happen overnight but it is arguably the most important work in the Trade portfolio that the minister can undertake in order to protect Tasmania's world-class exporters.

I echo the concern raised by my colleague, Dr Woodruff, in relation to the rollout of years 11 and 12 in Greater Hobart. The extension of high school to college in a number of schools is a positive, but we cannot allow ourselves to sacrifice the outstanding colleges we have, and I will talk about this as a member for Clark at this point, in Elizabeth College and Hobart College. The richness of the educational experience, the quality of the teaching staff at the colleges in and around Hobart - and I must include Claremont College in that - cannot be overstated. We need to be cautious in urban areas where we have high-quality colleges that we are not trying, as Dr Woodruff says, to make a one-size-fits-all program that comes at the expense of the outstanding educational standard and programs of quality education that are provided by our colleges.

I will also briefly touch on one of my favourite little local schools, South Hobart Primary School. It is such a great school and it is in a growing area - the school population is growing by about 50 students a year. This is a great testimony to South Hobart Primary School's reputation and its culture. However, it has created significant space and infrastructure challenges, to the extent that now they feel that they have no choice but to close the school library to provide for two extra classrooms, and to relocate the library in some form to a shed at the end of the car park. There is no question that reading is essential to literacy and books open up a magical world of the imagination for children. They are an essential nutrient for brain development and they strengthen literacy, critical thinking, knowledge and empathy. We must do everything we can do to encourage children and young people to read.

I encourage the minister to visit the South Hobart Primary School and talk to the members of the South Hobart Primary School Association. They are really worried about the impact the closure of the library will have on their school. I am hopeful, minister, that you will be able to provide some sort of support to that school to ensure that they can retain their library in some form.

I do not have all the answers, but putting a library in a shed does not seem like much of an answer for that school. If there is any capacity, for example, for a temporary library through a terrapin or something like that, it must be considered. I know there has been significant capital investment in South Hobart Primary School in recent years, but we have to acknowledge that this school is growing by an extra student every week. It is not sustainable to keep trying to jam children into the spaces that are available. I note, for example, that South Hobart Primary School leases some space to Lady Gowrie which is a fantastic childcare centre but



perhaps it is time to reconsider that relationship, given the needs of the School. A petition has been established - Save South Hobart Primary School Library.

Last time I looked, 1075 signatures had been garnered for that petition. I encourage all my colleagues, as members for Clark, to engage with that school community. Perhaps we can work constructively on this, to make sure the kids at that beautiful school still have access to a quality library. They should not be made to go to a library which is in a shed at the end of the car park with double roller doors and, for a library, it has all the appeal of a dog house.

I hope the minister recognises that it is not South Hobart Primary School's fault that its school population is growing; it is actually testament to the quality of the education that it provides, its culture, and its reputation across the wider Hobart community. Because this school is growing so rapidly, infrastructure money will need to be invested into that school as a matter of urgency because those children love that library. The teachers, the educators at that school want the library to be retained and certainly the parents do as well.

I gently but firmly encourage the minister for Education to contact the South Hobart Primary School Association and work with them to make sure that the literacy that is available through a school library that is well-resourced and comfortable for children, so that a place to spend lunch hours on rainy days reading is still available to them in the new year.

[12.29 p.m.]

**Ms WHITE** - I rise to make a contribution on the minister's different responsibilities as we discussed at Estimates.

In Education, I acknowledge that there is some additional funding for the Brighton High School which is very welcome news because the acquisition of land had not been factored into the cost to build that school. However, I disappointed there was no additional funding for Sorell School. I worked very closely with the school association and the staff at that school and I know how excited they are about the redevelopment. I also know, from viewing the designs and understanding the proposal, to develop that school fully will require more funding. There was no hope that there would be some extra allocation provided in this Budget to fully realise the redevelopment. It is not being provided for in this Budget but rest assured minister, it is something I will keep speaking with you about. I am sure the community will as well.

As a former student of that school I am passionate about making sure that it is updated and does not miss out on becoming the best it can be. It needs to be providing the best learning space for those students and making sure that students in the region are attracted to go there. We know that about 55 per cent of them bypass Sorell School, and that is adding to the congestion on our roads. It also means that members of that community are not going to their local school. I consider we can do better there, and the redevelopment is a good step in the right direction but it will require additional funding to realise its full potential.

I will also speak about mental health. I sat in on that discussion with the minister, and we were speaking about the new initiatives that are coming online, particularly at St Johns Park. You received the report into Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and began to understand the high number of current vacancies in mental health and that there are areas where vacancies have not been filled. In other cases, locums are working, particularly in medical roles in mental health, and those roles are not being filled with permanent staff. It is a priority to make sure that we have permanent staff recruited to fill those vacancies.

I note the minister has undertaken a recruitment drive in the United Kingdom. Obviously, COVID-19 has been a disruptive time, and I am sure that has impacted on the ability to encourage people to travel around the world and come to Tasmania to take up a job. Nonetheless, it is really important that we do not just announce new services but we actually resource them. They need to be staffed; they need to be staffed with the right people and the fact is right now we have a number of vacancies. That results in huge waiting lists and delays in accessing treatment, particularly for young people, because we just do not have the people there to see them and that is really worrying.

Those figures are available - I do not have them in front of me - for members to take a look at to understand the extent of those gaps across services from the north-west to the north and the south, particularly in youth mental health. I know the minister is focused on recruiting to fill those gaps, but it needs to be prioritised.

I will also talk briefly about trade, which is a portfolio I also have responsibility for. I thank the minister and his staff for offering a briefing during our Estimates exchange. Since that time your office has been in touch and I thank you for that. We will take up that offer because we did not have very much time to examine this output group. It is important for us as an export-orientated economy, as an island state, that we have good trade relations. It is right to point out that we are heavily dependent on trade with China. That is a problem, if we look at the actions they are currently taking, particularly in relation to some of our grain exporters across the country. We need to diversifying our markets. We need to make sure we have strong relationships across the region so we can support our farmers and our advanced manufacturing businesses and all those who are involved in trade to have continuity of market access, and ensure that if there is disruption in a particular market, it is not going to be catastrophic for them.

A question I asked, which I hope to follow up through the briefing is, what trade delegations are planned for the future; where the Government sees as a priority for its trade delegations; what they will be focused on and how we will participate in those given the COVID-19 restrictions, particularly the impact that has had on travel. It is very important, because many of these trade relationships are heavily built on personal relationships and being face-to-face with somebody, and being able to understand that culture in which you are having those engagements. Those delegations are important, they have our support and we recognise how necessary they are, particularly as we are looking to expand and diversify our markets across the globe.

I want to talk about community services the minister has responsibility for, in particular food relief. We saw throughout this year the level of demand for food relief double. It has been an extraordinary year and there have been a lot more people who have reached out for support who may not have done so in the past.

We heard very clearly from community service organisations that they were supporting temporary visa holders who were not able to access any other type of support. They were seeing people who were the working poor, not necessarily people they had been dealing with previously, who had lost hours or in some cases had lost their jobs, and they were coming forward for food relief. They were also identifying in those people problems with loneliness and isolation and in some cases discrimination, particularly for those people who are migrants in our community. They were also identifying signs of homelessness and supporting them to access services. Those frontline community service providers were doing an extraordinary job,

not just providing food relief but also identifying other problems and concerns that people had in their life and trying to help them. I recognise an additional \$800 000 was provided in food relief as a result of COVID-19 but that has been expended now.

There was also \$20 000 provided to Neighbourhood Houses to support their communities. Having visited a number of them over the last year, I have seen how they have used that money and it has primarily gone in food services and providing for emergency food relief to their communities. That money too has run out, or for those houses where it has not run out, it is about to run out. There was no additional funding in the Budget for Neighbourhood Houses to continue to provide that emergency outreach and support or meet the demand they are facing and the concern we have is with JobKeeper ending next year and changes happening again to JobSeeker where the payment is further decreasing, that demand is not going to abate but in fact increase. We need to make sure that those services are resourced because the ones on the front line are not only providing food relief but they are providing emotional support as well and they need to know that the Government has their back.

There was some additional support provided to Loaves and Fishes after the COVID-19 money ran out but that is not ongoing in the Budget. That again is just a one-off contribution and their biggest problem is what the federal government chooses to do. The federal government does not recognise Loaves and Fishes as an emergency food relief provider because they are not a national organisation and they have chosen to only fund national organisations.

That means that the state's largest provider for emergency food relief, Loaves and Fishes, does not get any federal funding at the moment. That really does need to be rectified. There was not any funding in the federal budget for them either, but hopefully in the May budget we can see that addressed. It is really important that they continue to receive support. They are not just providing food across the state to all of these organisations on the front line but they have now started to produce meals and providing them to people across the state as well and doing an extraordinary job.

I had the opportunity to visit them in their warehouse in Devonport recently and saw how passionate they are about the work they do. I have had a long engagement with those organisations over my time in parliament and firmly believe it is more important than ever that we make sure they continue to receive funding so we can make sure those who are most at risk in our community do not go hungry.

I understand the government is doing a mapping of 137 different organisations looking at the sustainability of food relief, whether they be in schools or in the community. That information will be vital to inform future funding decisions but we need to make sure that the gap between now and then does not mean that people miss out. I put on the record that it was a disappointment not to see additional funding provided, particularly to Neighbourhood Houses, given the extraordinary work they have been doing.

**Time expired.**

[12.39 p.m.]

**Dr BROAD** - I rise today to speak mainly about the Trade portfolio I sat in on during the Estimates process. There is no doubt that Tasmania, as my Leader Rebecca White has stated, is an export-oriented economy. We are but 540 000 people and we are remote from

markets. We are a long way from Europe and a long way from North America. Indeed, we are a long way from our markets.

In terms of population we are insignificant in the scale of the world, but we produce products that the world wants. That was reflected in Mr Rockliff's comments. Without trade we would be just feeding and clothing 540 000 people. If trade was just limited to Australia we would be probably trading in a market of 25 million people. There are a lot of alternatives to that in a modern world and we can trade with over 1.4 billion people in China, or approaching 8 billion around the world. We are an export market because there are huge opportunities offshore and those trade connections are very important, and that is why this portfolio and this discussion is important.

Mr Rockliff is right when he says that Tasmania has what the world wants. There is a growing middle class, especially in Asia, and they do not want to survive on minimal calories; they want to have higher and higher quality products, and those are the products that we have, those are the products we should be exporting and we should be trying to derive as much value from that as possible.

The minister spoke about this being an extremely challenging year for Tasmania's trade having to contend with COVID-19, export disruptions, border restrictions and not to mention freight difficulties. The avenues of getting our products to our markets have been restricted, especially some of our fresh products. The first product that was hit during the initial outbreak of COVID-19 was rock lobsters and they still do not have 100 per cent full access. Just the other day I saw rock lobster being sold at a reasonably cheap rate from a boat at the wharf just outside of this building because we rely heavily on China and that market is not as open as it once was. There are definitely some headwinds.

The minister has been busy launching plans. In his discussion he talked about many different plans: an interim trade action plan, an accelerating trade grant program, and a trade alliance program. Then he went through various actions plans, like a post-COVID salmon industry trade plan, a horticultural industry trade plan, a red meat trade plan, a forest industry trade plan, an Asian market engagement plan, and then relaunching the accelerated trade grant program, and so on. The minister has been very busy with his plans.

We would really like to see some outcomes from these plans, and this portfolio has seen some outcomes. We need to do more than just launch plans. We have to have KPIs, we have to track, and we have to make sure that those plans are meeting expectations and it is not just a tick-and-flick exercise. We will definitely be holding the minister to account on that.

Mr Rockliff reflected on the rock lobster industry which was hit back in January and early February, and he talked a bit about China. The member for Clark, Ms O'Connor, also spoke about our relationship with China. There is no doubt it is a very complex relationship.

**Ms O'Connor** - It's an abusive relationship, that is what it is.

**Dr BROAD** - Yes, okay, just interject.

**Ms O'Connor** - You provoked that.

**Madam CHAIR** - Order. Dr Broad has the call, thank you, Ms O'Connor.

**Dr BROAD** - We have a very complex relationship with China and the Government's jurisdiction -

**Dr Woodruff** - It is standard tactics for the Labor Party whenever we talk about anything to do with the Chinese Communist Party.

**Dr BROAD** - Anyway, we have a very complex relationship with China and it is the Australian Government's jurisdiction, but what we are seeing federally is not particularly helpful to our trade markets. Indeed, throughout COVID-19 one of the lessons learnt was that we need to diversify our markets, not only in what we export but in what we import. That is definitely something we need to do. There are some positive benefits from trade which I do not think the Greens particularly recognise and that is that an isolationist policy is probably not in the best interest of Australia or China. Bilateral trade between any two countries is a bringer of peace rather than a bringer of war.

**Ms O'Connor** - It can be, but tell that to the Chinese government.

**Dr BROAD** - We have a situation where we are far better off having a dialogue and a relationship with a country and a reliance on each other.

**Ms O'Connor** - But they're so irrational you can't.

**Madam CHAIR** - Order. Ms O'Connor, you have made your contribution. I ask that you allow Dr Broad to make his in peace, please.

**Ms O'Connor** - Quite ill-informed.

**Dr BROAD** - Yes, I am trying to make some points instead of just interjecting. It is a subtle point. I am not sure if people are aware, but there is a thing called the McDonald's Theory, and that is that two countries that have a McDonald's franchise in their country have never gone to war against each other. Obviously, McDonald's is not the creator of world peace, but what it highlights is that when you have a more interconnected economy, and you are relying on each other - and McDonalds certainly appears -

**Dr Woodruff** - That is just stupid.

**Madam CHAIR** - Order, Dr Woodruff.

**Dr Woodruff** - I am sorry, but this is just ridiculous.

**Madam CHAIR** - Order, Dr Woodruff, I do not want to have to start issuing warnings.

**Dr BROAD** - Absolutely no sensitivity to these. I am trying to make -

**Dr Woodruff** - It has nothing to do with world history.

**Madam CHAIR** - Dr Broad is making his contribution. I ask that he be allowed to make it with you being quiet, please.

**Dr BROAD** - I am trying to make quite a complex point here and if you listen to the explanation you might actually understand -

**Ms O'Connor** - Are you mansplaining?

**Dr BROAD** - There definitely is. The more interconnected we are, and the more reliant we are on each other, there is less and less incentive to drop bombs on each other or go to war. If we have a trade policy that is based on isolationism, so isolating a country like China -

**Ms O'Connor** - Who is arguing for that?

**Dr BROAD** - I am not. Just sit there and be quiet, please. I am trying to make some points here.

**Madam CHAIR** - Order, Ms O'Connor. I ask that you allow Dr Broad to make his contribution. You can raise these points on adjournment, if you should wish, but please allow Dr Broad to finish.

**Dr BROAD** - I am trying to make some points and what you want to do is debate via interjection.

Diplomacy is a very sensitive topic. Diplomacy that takes years, and there is a lot of professionalism in it. It is very sensitive and it has to be culturally appropriate.

**Ms O'Connor** - It has to be two-sided.

**Dr BROAD** - It does have to be two sided. Our record, when it comes to things like human rights, is not exactly glowing either. Our treatment of Indigenous peoples is not exactly glowing either. If the Chinese were tweeting about what the SAS actually did in Afghanistan, how would we handle that?

I know what is happening at the moment is diplomacy via tweet, and it is something that unfortunately has been brought in via Trumpism - diplomacy via tweet and via meme and so on. That is not appropriate and it is not constructive. We should move away from that. We should be working towards greater understanding. It is far easier to work through diplomatic issues and human rights issues when you are dealing with somebody who you have a relationship with, rather than with a megaphone, and that is something that trade does.

Trade can open the door to that discussion, but in saying so, we do need to look at diversifying our markets. We know that the ASEAN region, which is just on our doorstep, is also growing. Their economies are growing, and indeed their middle class is growing. Mr Rockliff reflected on that by investigating options such as Malaysia and Singapore. There are other options like Taiwan, which the Greens mentioned. Taiwan is a country roughly the size of Tasmania, with 25 million people in it. They are a modern, vibrant economy and they are consumers of a lot of our products. We should be getting more products into it and Japan, the United States and so on.

If we are going to engage with people, we need to have people who can do this on a professional basis. It is good that this portfolio is funded, but with the business and trade areas it seems a lot of the funding is for salary. It looked like, from the conversation, there are salaries

of \$1.2 million, but only \$63 000 of non-salary. I think that was what was mentioned by Mr Rockliff. If people are going to do their jobs, they probably need a bit more non-salary than that.

This is a very important portfolio, and it was disappointing to learn that the funding only continues for two years of the Budget, not four. These programs should be funded throughout the forward Estimates. This is vital for our economy, as an export-oriented economy, to get our products to the markets to create opportunities. If we have a situation where these people are not funded over the forward Estimates, and they do not have enough operating to do things they need to do, then the Government should look at that, but this seems like it sort of fits into the pattern. Mr Rockliff said there was an expectation that these programs would be funded under the third and fourth years, but that should be done, and not used as a way to hide the Budget surplus.

**Time expired.**

[12.49 p.m.]

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Madam Chair, I thank members for their questions in the Estimates process. I thank the nine members in this House who have spoken within the two-hour time frame on a range of issues. I genuinely welcomed the opportunity last week for Estimates scrutiny on all my five portfolio areas of responsibility. It is an interesting but very good process. There is nothing like eight hours of scrutiny to sharpen the senses and strengthen your knowledge of certain areas across your areas of responsibility.

Many areas were covered. I will touch on Education first, and the mental health and wellbeing aspect of Education. Since 2014, we have invested some \$81 million to support mental health and wellbeing in our schools. I am mindful of the contributions that have been made in terms of the need for investing in those areas. We should and have invested in these areas.

I am conscious of some of the figures Dr Woodruff mentioned around anxiety in young people, and the importance of our school psychologists, our professional staff, our social workers, and of course speech and language pathologists. We are investing around \$14 million over four years to build the capacity in our schools, and to support our children and young people with those emotional and behavioural challenges. I am pleased with the level of trauma funding that is coming through now, as a very key investment, which is part of the bilateral that we signed with the Commonwealth two years or so ago in terms of that growth funding. We have chosen to put that growth funding, or part of it, into trauma-related investment, and supporting students with disability as well.

I mentioned the annual Student Wellbeing Survey. This is a very important data set - if I could sound a little clinical about it - of information around the students' voice in terms of their wellbeing. This is the second such survey, following the pilot. Some 30 000 students contributed to the survey. Importantly, at a very local level, the local school community, principals, teachers and support staff can support their students based on that survey data of the student voice. Statewide, it is very informative also for our department of Education.

The improvement in literacy and numeracy outcomes for students continues to be a priority. NAPLAN data shows that when the educational levels of parents are taken into account, our results are on par with the rest of Australia. We know that teacher quality - and I

had this discussion with Mr Willie in the Council scrutiny - is key to improving educational outcomes, to ensure a year's growth for every single learner. We have discussed the year 1 phonics check. We will provide an additional tool for teachers to support student literacy. Over 30 schools have participated in the pilot of that. We are extending that to all schools next year.

We are strongly recommending that the schools partake in the year 1 phonics check. My expectation is that all schools will do that. We have committed some \$12.8 million over the four years for 35 additional quality teaching coaches to support our dedicated and talented staff.

The subject of disability came up, and COVID-19 has reminded us all that every one of our learners is unique. Individuals have their own hopes, their aspirations, their ways of learning, and sometimes barriers also to engagement. Trauma, as I have spoken about, is a barrier to that engagement. This year we introduced the Educational Adjustments funding model for students with disability, which includes funding of some \$34 million over four years. I am proud to say this Budget increases this funding even more, to build on improving access to engagement for students with disability.

A number of questions were asked in this area particularly around implementation and one of the areas I would like to touch on is that question around students being required to provide medical evidence to verify their disability. It is important to understand that the new educational adjustments model has shifted schools from the previous model which saw students' needs described as deficits and identified things a student could not do to a model where the funding is aligned to educational adjustments needed by students and made by teachers to ensure appropriate teaching and learning programs are implemented.

The process for support within the new model, which is based on the same processes as the nationally consistent collection of data on school students with disability, requires that there is evidence the student has a disability and evidence the school is making educational adjustments to meet the student's teaching and learning needs on the basis of their disability. This could come from a range of sources. It may include diagnosis from a paediatrician or documentation that parents and schools have access to from a variety of sources such as speech pathologists, psychologists, GPs or allied health professionals.

We discussed the area of co-education at Ogilvie and New Town and I was pleased to announce that Ogilvie and New Town will commence co-educational education in 2022 as part of the next phase of the Hobart City Partner Schools collaboration with Elizabeth College. The Government has agreed with the joint recommendation put forward by the school association of each school which has increased educational opportunities for students in Hobart and this decision was in line with the community sentiment expressed during consultation, with work now being done to look at potential models of delivery.

We are very supportive of all our eight colleges around Tasmania. Dr Woodruff mentioned Tarooma High School extending to years 11 and 12 and we expect all our high schools will be extending to years 11 and 12, but as I explained in Estimates it is not a one-size-fits-all model. It is in collaboration, in partnership within the collective of colleges. To see the focus on the individual student through that collective arrangement and collaboration between schools and colleges is important and it is offering more choice for our students. No college needs to be threatened about the years 11 and 12 rollout. In fact, in many respects it strengthens the college and the relationship with the local school.



Ms O'Connor and Dr Woodruff mentioned the South Hobart library relocation and mentioned sheds and other such things. The department recognises that increasing enrolment numbers at South Hobart Primary School has placed pressure on the school's capacity. A meeting with members of the school community was held last night, I understand, and I am informed there was a broad support for the development of a master plan to ensure the long-term future of the school is vibrant. This master planning process will commence in February and will also inform library solutions and this will be progressed as a priority.

I understand that the short-term loss of the physical library space to accommodate new learning areas has disappointed some members of the community but access to the library resources and learning program remains a vital part of the education program at South Hobart Primary School and a range of innovative strategies have been put in place in consultation with the community to ensure students have access to the library learning program. I reiterate that the master planning process will commence in February and will also inform the library solutions.

The years 9 to 12 project in vocational education and training was discussed at Estimates. I am excited by the work being undertaken in partnership with industry and the community to deliver on this years 9 to 12 project shaping a new curriculum and a strong vision for vocational learning in VET in Tasmanian schools. We are providing some \$6.6 million over four years to engage and empower our learners through years 9 to 12 by accelerating the packages of learning programs designed for years 9 and 10 students and the Back on Track pilot to engage at-risk students.

We covered a number of areas within Education. I commend all our leaders around Tasmania, our principals, our support staff, our teachers, attendants and teacher-assistants for the work they have done through what has been a tremendous year of disruption for education provision in Tasmania.

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

## **APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2020 (No. 46)**

## **APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2020 (No. 47)**

### **Reports of Estimates Committees**

#### **In Committee**

**Resumed from above.**

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Mr Deputy Chair, I was thanking our Department of Education staff across all our public schools, and indeed all sectors, for the work they have done regarding the 2020 school year, COVID-19, and the disruption there has been.

When speaking of education, I acknowledge a most important issue - the discussion about historical child sexual abuse. I reassure Tasmanians that we take all allegations of child sexual abuse extremely seriously. It is why I announced an independent inquiry in August this year into the Department of Education. The inquiry is to examine whether the legislation, the

policies, the practices and the systems now utilised by the Department of Education operate in a way that minimises the risk of child sexual abuse within Tasmanian Government schools.

That inquiry will now be part of a commission of inquiry announced by the Premier. I expect all allegations around Mr Griffin to be fully investigated as part of that commission of inquiry. There are safeguards in our education system to protect children, including mandatory reporting obligations and the requirement for a Working with Vulnerable People registration.

However, we should never think the job is done. I am very conscious that I am responsible in the public system at the very least for over 62 000 children and young people who go to school. They deserve the utmost care and safety as they learn. This is why we announced the Department of Education inquiry in August, to make sure we have full and proper knowledge of every single thing we can do to protect the safety of our children. I know the commission of inquiry will be a way of ensuring we take every step necessary to identify any systemic gaps and put measures in place to fill those gaps.

Turning to schools and TAFE, we had the report of the Australian Education Union (AEU), which raised issues about online learning. Those issues included claims that TasTAFE was setting students up to fail, and that up to 60 per cent of TasTAFE students would not complete their training. The evidence, as I am advised, does not back up these claims. In fact, 74 per cent of TasTAFE's enrolments for 2020 have already been resulted, which is on par with this time last year. Given the impacts of COVID-19, this is a commendable position. While there will always be elements of online learning, delivery in practical learning and face-to-face and workplace setting learning environments is critical to the success of TasTAFE students. It sets TasTAFE apart from all other learning environments. In fact, online learning improves access for adult learners and it needs to be used in the right mix as part of a delivery of TasTAFE's programs.

I am proud of where TAFE has come from in the last few years. It has been a challenging road leading up to the appointment of our current CEO, Jenny Dodd, but we have achieved, through Jenny's strong leadership, seven years registration from the Australian Skills Quality Authority - the maximum available renewal period. That is a testament to the quality of TasTAFE's training and everyone who works within TAFE.

Notable achievements include: revamping TasTAFE's nursing qualifications and opening two new health training hubs at campuses at Launceston and Hobart and increasing the number of new Diploma of Nursing enrolments in 2021; Tasmania having highest the apprenticeship completion rates in the country; the Centre of Excellence Projects; and the nation-leading Teacher under Supervision initiative to help meet industry training needs; and we have continued our investment in TAFE infrastructure right across Tasmania. In addition, we are getting on with the job of paying new teachers to learn and keeping them engaged.

TasTAFE's teacher under supervision role has seen at least 25 new employees join the organisation, learn the skill of teaching and demonstrate their contemporary industry skills. It is successfully changing the way TasTAFE recruits in critical industry areas.

I also note our work in Disability Services and Community Development, food mapping and food relief. This Government is providing a record \$4.3 million across 2018-21 to organisations to ensure food is on the tables of Tasmanians in need. Prior to the pandemic, we were working on a long-term planning project to support food security, and that project was

mentioned by a couple of members. We envisage that a future model of food relief will move from increased emergency food relief provision towards community-based and school-based food security models.

Turning to NDS, and as minister for Disability Services, I will continue to advocate strongly on behalf of Tasmanians with disability and the service providers that support them, to ensure that NDS delivers the best possible outcomes for Tasmanians. Now that the NDS is at full roll-out, a full review and a rewrite of the Tasmanian Disability Services Act 2011 is required. My new Ministerial Disability Consultative Group will have a pivotal role in this review. A discussion paper will be developed to support the review and will outline key topics to guide the consultation.

Regarding COTA and support for older people, our Strong, Liveable Communities Tasmania Active Ageing Plan 2017-22 provides people with opportunities to grow older in a way they want. As our peak body for older Tasmanians, our funding enables COTA to develop important initiatives that support people to age actively, including initiatives on helping older people find work.

We discussed Trade, Advanced Manufacturing and Defence. I welcomed the discussion on trade with Dr Broad and various differing opinions. I am pleased that our office has contacted the Leader of the Opposition and shadow minister for trade and I appreciate Ms White's interest in this matter. It is important that everyone has full knowledge across a number of areas of portfolio responsibilities, and particularly of the importance of the relationship between our trading partners, irrespective of who is in government. Those relationships need to be meaningful and remain meaningful, irrespective of who occupies the Treasury benches, for the sake of continuity and to ensure the security of those in our exporting businesses. As Dr Broad pointed out, they are many, and we are an exporting state through and through.

Dr Broad mentioned a number of plans and initiatives as part of the interim trade action plan. We have a trade action plan over six years, 2019-21, and there will be a review every year to take account of market conditions and different contexts from year to year. The interim trade action plan had to come to effect with a \$2.65 million investment, given the disruption of COVID-19 of which others have spoken, and our exposure in certain industries, such as the seafood industry.

It is important that we diversify our markets as much as possible. It does not mean we do not recognise China as a very important trading partner, but it is growing the pie and the opportunity.

I mentioned some figures around our exports, totalling some 41 per cent of our exports to China. Our next leading trading partner is Japan at 7.3 per cent. It is important that we are actively growing the pie in other markets, in that diversification. That is why we have got business development managers scheduled to be in place in the United States, Singapore and Japan. I believe they will strength relationships in those prospective areas and/or regions. I commend the trade team since the release of the interim trade action plan. We have launched the revitalised accelerating trade grant program boosting funding to \$500 000 to assist businesses as they reconnect and re-establish trade in their key markets as well as explore new export markets, and we are continuing to support Tasmania's trade-focused businesses and

industry. I have mentioned the business development managers as well. Advanced manufacturing is also a key area.

I only have a couple of minutes, but I could speak for half an hour on Mental Health and Wellbeing. I welcome the interest of members with respect to the mental health reforms and the workplace development initiatives we have in place.

**Time expired.**

**Estimates of the Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability Services and Community Development, Minister for Trade, Minister for Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries, and Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing agreed to.**

## **DIVISIONS 2, 10 and 11**

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

[2.41 p.m.]

**Dr BROAD** - I rise to discuss the Estimates process for Primary Industries and Resources, predominantly.

We have all been through, and are continuing to go through, a global pandemic caused by COVID-19. This is a time when the importance of biosecurity has really come home, and the important work that Biosecurity Tasmania does in protecting us not only from plant pests and diseases, but from COVID-19.

It was very surprising to hear, and have it confirmed, that there was an opportunity for the trajectory of the north-west outbreak to maybe have been changed. We heard evidence that on or around 19 March this year, biosecurity officers at Launceston Airport identified that passengers from the *Ruby Princess* may have posed a biosecurity risk to Tasmania. They kept those passengers in an airlock. They separated them from other passengers, and then sought advice from the department. It escalated to, we are not sure who, but we found out that the message that came back to those biosecurity officers was that those passengers should be allowed to leave Launceston Airport. We also found out that, at that time, Biosecurity Tasmania had a shortage of masks, so the passengers themselves were not given masks during the period. Also, we heard that there were no medical checks done on those passengers. Those passengers were let go home.

Many questions remain around this particular incident. We still do not know who knew what. We still do not know who actually made the decision to let those passengers go home. There is a lot of confusion around whose responsibility it was. That was certainly borne out through the Estimates process, not only in Estimates for the minister in charge of biosecurity, but also in other sessions, particularly with the minister for Police. We heard conflicting evidence, and we still do not know.

We have seen a series of press releases from the Government that do not address the key issue. The key issue is that biosecurity officers identified the risk, the passengers were held at the airport, and ultimately the call was made to allow the passengers to disembark. The

Government talks about how there was an expectation that those passengers would quarantine for 14 days. An expectation. From what I gather, they were not told that they had to isolate themselves or quarantine themselves for 14 days. It was an expectation. That is the language that the Government has used. The minister may update the House in his response, but that is the language that was used: that there was an expectation that they isolate, not that they were instructed to isolate.

There was a question put on notice to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, and we have only just received a response to that. The question was very similar to what I asked in our session, which was, who made and how was the decision made to allow the *Ruby Princess* passengers identified by biosecurity officers at Launceston airport, on or around 19 March, to leave the airport and circulate in the community? The response was -

Effective 17 March, anyone who arrived in Tasmania on or after 16 March and had been overseas in the previous 14 days was required to self-isolate for 14 days.

However, these passengers were not at that time classified as having been overseas. They were cruise ship passengers, and this is the crucial point. If passengers had flown in from overseas, then they were instructed to self-isolate for 14 days. However, these passengers from the cruise ship were not. This response is not appropriate. It does not delve into the decision that was actually made. Then it goes on to say -

This was a direction issued by the Director of Health under the Public Health Act. Effective from 20 March, all non-essential arrivals in Tasmania were required to self-isolate for 14 days.

This was a direction issued by the State Controller under the Emergency Management Act, but that was the day after the passengers arrived. The problem is, we still do not know who made the decision to allow these passengers to go home without quarantine - although, apparently, there was an expectation, but they were not instructed to quarantine. We still do not know who made that decision.

We heard evidence during the Estimates process as well that Biosecurity Tasmania had not done an internal review, but they had provided evidence to Greg Melick, SC, who is investigating the north-west outbreak. It is typical of this Government that the Melick report was handed to government on Monday - after Estimates - but the Government will not release that report publicly, until we do not know when. They are definitely not going to do it while parliament is sitting so that we can scrutinise it.

This is typical of the Government. We saw that the Government was dropping reports either during the Estimates process while we were debating issues and asking questions, or immediately after the Estimates process. What we saw here, from Thursday and Friday, there was pressure on the Government to explain what was happening with the *Ruby Princess* and who made this decision. After everything was finished, after our chance to scrutinise that report across portfolios in Estimates had gone by, come Monday, the Government made the announcement that this report had been handed to Government. It still has not been released. We still cannot scrutinise. We still do not know what was said. We still do not know the evidence that Biosecurity Tasmania handed to Greg Melick.

This is typical of the Government's secrecy and how they operate. It is really atrocious and it is a shame. On 30 April, the Premier said in *The Examiner* and *The Advocate* that -

Most likely the *Ruby Princess* is the root cause of our problems on the north-west coast. In terms of how this disease has spread is, frankly, something we will never know.

We now know there was an opportunity. These passengers were identified at Launceston airport. There was an opportunity to change the course of what ended up being the outbreak on the north-west coast. The Government may be right, we may never know - but only because the Government will not tell us, and go through all the methods they use to keep everything secret.

Throughout the Estimates process I asked a number of questions on different issues. I questioned the minister about the recreational fishing strategy discussion paper. Under the heading, Identifying Funding Sources to Improve Programs and Facilities that Benefit Recreational Fishers, one of the suggestions included a boat fishing levy. That is something the minister did not rule out, and neither did his department, so I am not exactly sure what is going on there. Is there going to be a tax applied to fishing from a boat in Tasmania? We will find out about that some time soon. We have heard about the land tax for shacks being jacked up. It might be more than land tax - there might be a fishing boat tax applied to them as well. The minister should try to clear that up pretty soon. He definitely did not rule it out. He ruled out a saltwater fishing licence, but he definitely did not rule out a boat fishing levy. He should rule that out. That side of the House talks about the Tasmanian way of life but they are increasingly taxing shacks and it looks like they might also be taxing fishing boats.

I had discussions about biosecurity detector dogs. It appears that the purchasing of detector dogs largely happens through rehoming, through dogs' homes and so on. I had heard there was potentially a detector dog, a beagle, bought for \$50 from Gumtree. I still have not had an official verdict on that, but it was definitely not ruled out.

We also heard about the 600-count border checks for biosecurity officers, where they open a box of fruit or other product and check 600 pieces of fruit, for example, in 45 minutes. That is the 600-count border check. There were 4147 of these checks. That is pretty good work and equates to a lot of fruit being checked.

The evidence from Biosecurity Tasmania was that there were 431 pests and diseases detected. When you find something at the border that is good because it is much better than in the supermarket. However, that only equates to around a 10 per cent detection rate; so in one in 10 boxes they open, they are detecting a problem. Those risks might have been major, like fruit fly, or might have been minor, like contamination. It was quite surprising to find that it was a 10 per cent detection rate. I argue that this calls for more funding and more checks rather than fewer. Perhaps we need to strengthen the requirements on people wanting to export to Tasmania so that we do not have a detection rate as high as 10 per cent. I believe we need more investment in this area.

I also talked about import risk assessments. There was a note in the Budget Papers that import risk assessments were 100 per cent up to date. That is not what the potato growers think. It has been acknowledged by the department that the risk assessment for importing fresh potatoes into Tasmania is out of date and does not take into account diseases that are present

in other states that put our own industry at risk. The minister took some joy in quoting from a press release from the TFGA early in the discussion about the risk of South Australian potatoes bringing disease into this state and devastating our industry. What he does not quote is the press release from the TFGA which came out after the potato growers got organised and had lengthy and frank discussions with the TFGA, which changed their initial position.

The press release from the TFGA says:

After a meeting of TFGA potato grower representatives and a fresh market representative today the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association (TFGA) are requesting further talks around the following:

- An enhanced inspection regime for the importation of fresh potatoes, in addition to the Ransom recommendations into Tasmania until the completion of a review of the Import Risk Assessment (IRA).
- That the current proposed time line for review of the IRA be truncated to be completed by the end of 2020.
- That all current disease area freedom status in Tasmania be reaffirmed as a component of the review.
- That all necessary resources that are required by Biosecurity Tasmania and TIA to help industry collate all virus testing data into a central database to address the concerns around area freedom be provided as a priority.
- That labelling of imported product with a 'State of origin' label in addition to the 'Do not plant' label as recommended in the Ransom review.

While the industry does not wish to impede free trade they nevertheless believe that the risks associated with not implementing the above is causing genuine concern in the Tasmanian potato industry, the review of the IRA will, in the view of our members, provide certainty moving forward and a contemporary environment in which to operate in the potato industry.

That is not the TFGA backing in the Government and allowing them to do nothing. The potato growers of Tasmania want the import risk assessment for potatoes updated as soon as possible.

I do not sense any urgency from the minister. However, I asked about funding for this update and the secretary of the department informed me that this is part of their core business. I would like to see this done as quickly as possible because this is one of Tasmania's most important industries. The last thing we want to see is an outdated import risk assessment putting our industry at risk. We want to see a potato industry that flourishes.

Our seed industry, for example, gets export access to places like Indonesia, markets that companies such as Agronico have been trying to develop for five years. We do not want to see that knocked on the head because the Government is dragging the chain on updating the import risk assessment to take into account the diseases that are present in places like South Australia

and comparing them with diseases that are present in Tasmania. This needs to be done as a priority.

I tried to ask the minister about the deer problem and, in particular, their recent assessment of deer numbers. I showed him a photo of deer not on a deer farm but in somebody's paddock. The response from the minister was trying to find out whose paddock it was rather than address the issue at hand, so trying to find a way to shoot the messenger rather than take any control of the problem with deer. This photo was provided to me by the TFGA. It has been circulated and there is no reason to believe it is not authentic. I have seen large numbers of deer in paddocks. Instead of answering any questions, the minister would say, 'What are you going to do about it?'.

The minister also said that the population of deer had increased by 5.4 per cent between 2006 and 2019, which was incorrect. The population of deer has increased by 5.4 per cent per annum, so every year the deer numbers are increasing by over 5 per cent and that includes removals, which includes shooting and other control measures. The expansion of irrigation through the Midlands and other areas that have traditionally had deer as a wild population means there is a lot more food around. The population growth is increasing by 5.4 per cent a year despite shooting and so on. If you look at the maths of a 5.4 per cent per annum increase, that means the deer population will double in approximately 13 years. The Government is doing some minor changes but they are not addressing the core issue that in 13 years' time we will have well over 100 000 deer if nothing else changes. That is a problem for the state.

During Estimates I also spoke about the issues industries are having with their exports to China. I spoke earlier today about the impact of coronavirus and how the first impact was felt by the rock lobster industry and is still being felt by that industry. I am hearing that the industry is really struggling and people are treading a very fine line between staying in business and going bankrupt. That is an area that needs to be worked on.

China is a very important market. We heard Mr Rockliff say that China makes up about 40 per cent of our exports. That is a huge market for us. We have seen the number of exports to China, in regard to whole logs, for example, come to a complete halt. There was a halt on woodchips, which now has been rectified, but we are hearing that whole log exports have stopped. That means contractors do not have any work. The lack of sensitivity that our federal government is showing in the way they are discussing the China situation is not very helpful. We need to take a diplomatic approach rather than diplomacy via tweet and media comment.

Moving on to the Resources portfolio, in previous budgets there was funding for a restart of Copper Mines Tasmania and the Avebury mine. They have dropped off the budget. I am not sure if that is due to a lack of confidence in the restart. We would like to see these mines restarted to create employment and exports. It would be good for the north-west economy, but we are not seeing that, and it looks like the provision for the support is not there in the Budget. Hopefully, it will still be available if and when these mines decide to get the funding to get going again.

We also heard that the minister seems to have completely forgotten about the southern export solution that had been quite hyped. The minister seemed to not want to address that. It seems like there is no southern export solution, and the minister should be honest about that.



The minister would not discuss the Derwent rail extension that was put forward as an option in the Rolley report.

We would like to see more details on those areas, rather than them be simply forgotten. You pay money for these consultants to do their work, and then you completely ignore it. Are we going to see, before the next election, another consultant engaged for another snow job?

[3.01 p.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I am going to begin my response on Mr Barnett's Estimates by challenging a statement that Dr Broad made then. There is an acute lack of understanding, on at least Tasmanian Labor's part, about the reality of the trading situation that we are in as a nation, and as a state, with the Chinese Government. It is not reasonable to say that a diplomatic solution will fix this. We are not dealing with a rational government. We are dealing with a vindictive government and a serial human rights abuser.

I have always taught my kids that you have to stand up to bullies, because if you do not stand up to them, you embolden them. I am no great fan of the federal Morrison Government. I know there have been missteps made along the way, but as a proud sovereign democratic nation we cannot allow ourselves to continually get kicked by an irrational, misogynist, genocidal Chinese government regime.

It was an interesting Estimates experience with minister Barnett. There are still questions outstanding, which we hope will be dealt with through the independent inquiry into the *Ruby Princess*. There are still many questions outstanding about the decision-making matrix around the release of the *Ruby Princess* passengers into Tasmania. From the Greens' point of view, we expect to see some answers around that decision. It is not about pointing the finger at anyone. It is about making sure that those same mistakes are not repeated.

We had quite a long discussion about the explosion of the deer population in Tasmania. The survey work undertaken by the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and the Environment really only studied the north-east area, and into the Central Midlands a little bit. The number that has come back from that survey is an estimated 54 000 fallow deer in the Tasmanian landscape. We know that figure is unreliable because so many other parts of Tasmania were not surveyed.

We certainly know from the farmers' point of view - and I know Mr Barnett understands this - that yes, there are farmers who have a cohort of shooters who come and clean up deer on their property, and it is important for that shooting community; it is an important professional and recreational opportunity, but it is not a long-term solution to the expulsion of the deer population in Tasmania.

A huge part of the problem is the fact that deer are listed basically as a protected species under the Nature Conservation Act 2002.

When I put to Mr Barnett the proposition that professional shooters should be allowed into the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) to clean up deer populations within the TWWHA where we know they are having a devastating impact on the cultural and natural landscape, the answer from minister Barnett, regrettably, was to point to something that my friend and colleague, Dr Bob Brown, has said about how you eradicate deer. The goal here has to be eradication, and our skilled professional shooters have an important role to play in

eradicating deer from the Tasmanian landscape. In doing so, they would do a massive favour to our primary producers, but they would also help to ensure that our wilderness areas are not trampled by this destructive feral species.

We also had some interesting back and forth across the table about the decision to allocate \$2 million to Scottsdale Pork for the construction of an abattoir for a private business person who is a member of the Exclusive Brethren, which is a religious cult that not only does not pay tax, it does not believe that girls should receive an education. It is a legitimate question. Why is the Government giving \$2 million to one primary producer who is a rabid Greens hater? Absolutely rabid, Mr Deputy Chair. In fact, Felix, you were probably still in college in 2006 when Mr Roger Unwin and the Exclusive Brethren ran a highly discriminatory and hateful campaign against the Tasmanian Greens in the lead-up to the 2006 election. There is a legitimate question here about why other pork producers were shut out of that equation. Why has \$2 million been given to someone who has a long history with the Tasmanian Liberal Party?

We discussed the failure of this Government to protect the leatherwood resource for Tasmania's honey makers. There is a memorandum of understanding between Forestry Tasmania and the Beekeepers Association, which is clearly not being upheld. I encourage minister Barnett to talk to more people than Mr Bourke from the beekeeping sector about their deep worries about the long-term viability of their businesses as honey producers but, importantly, as leatherwood honey producers. We know that through Forestry Tasmania's logging practices, leatherwood coupes are routinely being flattened. It takes hundreds of years for a leatherwood coupe to recover to the point where it is a healthy flowering little ecosystem that will provide the honey that those beekeepers need. I encourage minister Barnett to get on to that as a matter of priority.

There was a question that we think needs to be answered for all of Tasmania, and that is, where is the balance being struck between this rollout of mass irrigation in the state and sustainable water supplies, environmental flows coming through our rivers and streams, as well as supplies to towns and cities across the state? I quoted from a well-known fisher, Mr Carl Hyland of Fishtas, who visited Brumbys Creek at Cressy recently, and found a once-plentiful fishing spot had developed boggy banks, and the only fish seen were lying dead on the edge. He said it was a muddy, smelly ditch. Mr Hyland, who said he saw water being used for irrigation at farmland near the creek, said Brumbys Creek's conditions were the worst he had seen in decades. He said -

I have fished streams of Tasmania for more than 50 years and Brumbys was always up there as a favourite. It was for years renowned for its healthy aquatic life, but when I was there I saw no signs of insect life at all. It was devoid of that. It was dead.

The Greens are very concerned to ensure that, in this frantic rollout of irrigation schemes across the state and the allocation of water to primary producers, we are not draining our rivers and creeks dry, and we are not heading into a summer period where there will be restrictions on domestic water consumption, because the drawdown for irrigation is so high.

In fact, in the Budget Papers we see that the allocation to irrigation has increased. I think it was by about 1000 megalitres. Sorry, minister, I do not have that information in front of me.

**Mr Barnett** - It was a lot more than that. I can help you out.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Was it a lot more than that? In the past year? Thank you for confirming that. I cannot find the number right now. We have to be very careful in Tasmania. It is a state that has different climates for different regions. We know, from the Climate Futures work that has been done through our fantastic scientific institutions in Tasmania, that projects climate change impacts out for the next century or so, with a 10-kilometre by 10-kilometre grid on the Tasmanian landscape. We know that substantial parts of Tasmania will be drier over the course of the next century and you have to be very careful that you are not putting primary producers into land that will be naturally drying out and try to pump it full of irrigation waters, removing important environmental flows from places like Brumbys Creek near Cressy.

We believe there needs to be a substantive examination of Tasmania's water stocks and what the projection is for the future so it is equitably shared and we are supporting our primary producers as well as making sure there is sufficient water there for domestic consumption and not drying out our rivers, creeks and streams. It is so important that we get this right. If you over-irrigate you cause huge environmental damage and on top of that you run the risk of increased salinity. We know this minister is a big fan of irrigation and he purports to represent primary producers. To do that you have to get this right. We want to make sure that Tasmania's world-class primary producers are able to access the irrigation they need but it has to be done carefully and we urge the minister to have a root-and-branch examination of water resources in Tasmania.

**Time expired.**

[3.11 p.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** - I rise to make a brief contribution in reply to the Committee A Estimates hearing for the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, Minister for Resources, and Minister for Energy. To be honest, it was a very frustrating Estimates in getting detailed information from the minister, particularly as it relates to his Energy portfolio. There is no doubt that the minister is good on the lines. He is good on -

**Ms O'Connor** - The clichés.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Some would call them clichés. I would call them rehearsed lines that give the impression that they are doing one thing but it is the opposite of the duck on the pond, really. There is not a lot happening below the waterline, which is concerning for Tasmania.

We raised a number of questions around a project that has massive opportunity for Tasmania economically, socially and environmentally in terms of our ability to underpin renewable energy across the country through the Marinus Link. It is a wonderful opportunity but it is not without question or qualifications in terms of how it is constructed, when it is constructed, how it is to deliver energy to the mainland, and how much it will cost Tasmanians.

On question after question around the detail, below the spin, below the clichés and below the well-rehearsed lines from the minister, there was precious little detail. We have heard time and time again that there is a fast-tracking of the Marinus project when we know initially it was committed to being built by 2025. That has been pushed back now to 2028 and potentially 2030 depending on the national energy policy in many respects but also in terms of resolving the fundamental question of cost.

We know that TasNetworks is apparently fast-tracking their proposals to upgrade the network but again that has been pushed back. Under questioning in Estimates, the minister would not answer and could not answer why all the dates are being pushed back when all the announcements are saying they are fast-tracking them. We are very concerned about the governance of this and the minister's and the Government's ability to land this project in the context of the best interest for Tasmania. We know that their special purpose vehicle has been established by the federal government and three transmission links have been identified as crucial, having the ISP to upgrade the national network, but we know, only a couple of days ago, the Victorian Government signed off on a deal with the Commonwealth to underpin one of those for the construction of the Kerang link which is one of the three transmission upgrades that have been identified in the ISP.

That really concerns us because the announcements from Government are that they are fast-tracking yet they are being delayed. When you have other parts of the nation signing off on deals with the Commonwealth Government to get those transmission lines going, it raises serious concerns about the management and governance of the Marinus project in Tasmania.

The fundamental question that has been asked about this project from day one is, who is going to pay for the Marinus Link? This Government, at every opportunity, fails to answer that to give the Tasmanian people clarity. We know that under the current rules, the Tasmanian consumer will pay for it through higher energy bills. The mantra of the Government is that cheaper energy means more money for Hydro. Unless that matter is resolved about who pays in terms of the cost allocation across jurisdictions, Tasmanian consumers will pay for that.

Apparently, there are discussions ongoing with the federal government and other jurisdictions around the 'beneficiary pays' principle. When you see the Estimates transcript from the upper House, one of the minister's advisers from the energy policy area, Mr Terry, said they had a committee working on it across jurisdictions. I asked the minister about the crucial discussions with the Victorian government and what progress had been made outside of ministerial council meetings. We know that the whole structure of ministerial council meetings has changed. You have Angus Taylor and the Cabinet confidentiality that is occurring now within that COAG process. There used to be a level of transparency around the minutes of the meetings, the communiques, and a whole range of discussions. That level of transparency is now no longer there because of the changes made to the ministerial council meetings following the establishment of the National Cabinet during COVID-19.

The federal minister, Angus Taylor, is holding a range of conversations with ministers across the country to which we are none the wiser. When you talk to other jurisdictions to try to find out what is happening in terms of that argument around the beneficiary pays principle or the owner pays principle, the existing system of allocating costs across the network for major infrastructure upgrades, there is no light at the end of the tunnel. There is no indication that that matter is going to be resolved in the short term.

On top of that, you have Victoria announcing multibillion dollar plans for renewable energy on the mainland with batteries at Geelong and a number of proposals. There is a battery connected to the Snowy 2.0 system that has been announced by the Victorian government and the Commonwealth. You have a whole lot of development occurring on the mainland in terms of renewable energy. It is a national market so the challenges are now starting to stack up in terms of Tasmania's ability to have a second and potentially third link, or two 750-megawatt links to the mainland. There are now serious questions opening up about our ability to deliver

on that, yet we are spending millions and millions of dollars in the preparatory phase. We know that is important but unless you have the endgame sorted it is speculative. It is almost gambling with Australian taxpayers' money to deliver on a major project.

During Estimates when asking questions of the minister around this it was very frustrating not to be able to get any sort of quality answer from him that would give us confidence that they have this in hand and there is an ability to land those issues.

There was also discussion around the west coast renewable energy project being run by those who own -

**Dr Broad** - Are you talking about Whaleback Ridge?

**Mr O'BYRNE** - Yes, Whaleback Ridge, that is it. Sorry, I did not have it in front of me. The Whaleback Ridge proposal and their frustrations with Government. They have a major proposal for hydrogen in Burnie, creating thousands of jobs. They have a major proposal at Whaleback Ridge on the west coast for a windfarm, and yet they are being given the runaround by this Government. For the last two months, or nearly three months, there has been an approval on the desk of a Government minister to at least put up some MET towers to do some measurement of the wind resource - they cannot even get approval for that.

The mantra is Marinus is the big deal, we are going to create thousands of jobs but the Government cannot explain how they are going to deliver it and they cannot explain who is going to pay for it. At the moment, Tasmanians will pay for it through significantly increased power prices. We know we have the highest power bills in the country by virtue of usage and so Tasmanians do not want to pay for it.

The Government said, 'You don't have to pay for it'; but they cannot explain how they are going to deliver it. Yet there is a major project - a windfarm and a hydrogen project - which will create thousands of jobs and millions of dollars, potentially billions of dollars, of economic activity over the long run for Tasmania. They cannot even get a simple approval out of the government to do the measurement with their towers in the area they are proposing the windfarm. This is a Government that is good on the mantra, that is good on the spin, but cannot actually deliver.

**Time expired.**

[3.21 p.m.]

**Mr ELLIS** - I rise to speak about Estimates Committee A which examined the estimates of the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, Minister for Energy, Minister for Resources, and Minister for Veterans Affairs, the honourable Guy Barnett MP, Thursday, 26 November 2020. At the outset, I congratulate the minister on a truly outstanding day yesterday -

**Ms O'Connor** - I guess you got straight answers to your Dorothy Dixers.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIR** - Order.

**Mr O'Byrne** - No, no. He is talking about yesterday. He is not even going to talk about this.

**Mr ELLIS** - No, I am talking about Teddy Sheean.

**Ms O'Connor** - I thought you were talking about the Estimates, pardon me. It was an outstanding day and you had a lot to do with it, minister. I thought you were talking about an outstanding Estimates experience. I take it all back.

**Mr ELLIS** - I perfectly understand the member's mistake. No offence taken.

I congratulate the minister on what was an outstanding day - the culmination of 17 years of very hard work on your behalf and longer than that from the family as well. It was a wonderful thing to watch. I thought the Governor-General spoke particularly well, as did the Prime Minister. It was a beautiful moment in our national story.

I will start with Primary Industries and Water under this minister's portfolio. We took a comprehensive agriculture and seafood policy to the last election. The Budget delivers what was expected. It delivers three to five of our comprehensive agri-food plans for 2018-23. The latest agri-food scorecard for 2018-19 shows Tasmania's agricultural production is worth \$1.9 billion, up by approximately seven per cent compared to 2017-18, and a total agri-food value of \$2.92 billion.

In Tasmania we produce 4.5 times more food than we consume. It is pleasing to see that in 2018-19 the value of packed and processed food production increased by five per cent to \$4.86 billion, and international agri-food exports reached a record high value of \$768 million. Our plan involves investment of \$153 million over five years to grow agriculture and a \$26 million commitment for our seafood and fisheries sectors.

This budget continues a range of initiatives to help achieve our target to grow the farmgate value of agriculture to \$10 billion by 2050. Key to this budget is the allocation of \$1.9 million for the workforce resilience package headed by the Tassie Harvest Jobs Take Your Pick campaign. Key elements include a Tasmanian agricultural jobs campaign linked to the National Harvest Trail, a two-year boost to the Strategic Industry Partnership Program to co-invest with industry peak bodies and organisations to support industry resilience, promotion, targeted skills and training and regional transport. It also includes extension of the FarmPoint hotline and agri-growth liaison officers to provide a critical single contact point for primary producers to access information and services.

There is also a two-year boost to Safe Farming Tasmania through WorkSafe Tasmania, to ensure agricultural employers are workforce ready to safely employ more Tasmanians.

There is more than \$9 million to support industry developments across key agricultural sectors - the Rural Financial Counselling Service; farm business mentoring; Blundstone scholarships; the Tasmanian Women in Agriculture and Rural Youth Tasmania Leadership programs; the TFGA; the 'living next door to a farmer' campaign, which is wonderful and a great part of the Tasmanian way of life - and they make fantastic neighbours; agri-growth liaison officers; and a FarmPoint website and helpline.

There is also funding to boost local agricultural research development, an extension with an \$8.1 million investment to upgrade public research farm assets in northern Tasmania, in conjunction with UTAS and the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture.

We have also invested \$300 000 into Rural Youth Tasmania, to support Agfest 2021. That is on top of the \$60 000 the government provided this year to help Agfest in the Cloud, come to life. I am looking forward to buying a heap of new power tools on the day.

We are also contributing \$3 million to continue investing in Landcare across the state and the wonderful work those people do, and \$4.8 million for the Weeds Action Fund. There is \$1.1 million towards moving 100 DPIPWE staff to the north and north-west, which is bringing the department closer to farming and fishing communities.

I will turn to irrigation and water management. The 2020-21 State Budget is investing in irrigation infrastructure across our state, to create jobs in our regional areas and expand farm production. The minister is very fond of saying 'water is liquid gold' and he could not be more correct. Farmers love this and it has had a transformational effect on our state. That is why we are investing almost \$30 million to continue delivering our nation-leading irrigation projects across Tasmania. This includes \$15.9 million for the south east irrigation scheme, and \$13.8 million for Tasmania Irrigation to deliver water infrastructure across Tasmania.

Agriculture is the cornerstone of the Tasmanian economy. That is why the state and Commonwealth governments are jointly investing \$185 million to deliver irrigation infrastructure to support rural and regional Tasmania, creating jobs and expanding farm production to meet our growing demand for our premium produce. When completed, our pipeline to prosperity, and that is what it really is, the state-wide irrigation plan is expected to provide almost 78 000 megalitres of water; create up to 2600 full-time jobs; trigger an additional \$150 million of on-farm private investment; and inject an estimated \$114 million each year into the sector and the economy more broadly.

I turn now to our wonderful wild captured farm seafood sector. This funding includes supporting the commencement of a review into the Living Marine Resource Management Act 1995 and a study into the Tasmanian ocean business incubator concept. This important legislative work will contemporise the legislation, which has not been reviewed since it was implemented. It will also enable improved flexibility in responding to challenging circumstances. An incubator could accelerate innovation in Tasmania's diverse fisheries, seafood and marine related industries, post-COVID-19, and so enhance their global market access. We are supporting the salmon industry to grow to \$2 billion a year by 2030 through our sustainable industry growth plan.

As part of the second review of the plan, the Government is committing \$250 000 for a marine spatial planning exercise. This exercise will identify potential sustainable growth areas for new offshore finfish marine farms, including lessons from the pilot marine spatial assessment tool that was developed by the Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) in south-east Tasmania. This aligns with the intended plan to deliver farming offshore.

I turn now to biosecurity, coronavirus and border controls. The Tasmanian Liberal Government remains committed to ensuring the health and wellbeing of Tasmanians. The 2020-21 State Budget will ensure our strong border controls are maintained as we continue to recover from COVID-19. Biosecurity staff at our airports and seaports have played a critical role in the Tasmanian Government's coronavirus response, including screening all passenger arrivals in Tasmania to uphold travel restrictions and quarantine requirements. We are taking action to ensure this continues.

The Budget locks in \$6 million for the continued delivery of traveller assessment and border control across the state, along with the continued operation of the G2G pass app and the Tas e-Travel systems. This is only an initial allocation, so should the coronavirus situation change in other states, and we hope it does not, we will not hesitate to increase it if required.

It also ensures that Biosecurity Tasmania can continue to maintain the state's strict biosecurity requirements and protect the state from weeds, pests and disease. The \$6 million allocated in the Budget is in addition to the \$2.6 million Securing our Borders initiative that continues to support frontline service staff, education awareness programs and improve biosecurity preparedness and emergency response capacity.

Our support for strong border control is another way in which the Tasmanian Government is protecting Tasmanians during the coronavirus and I wish to associate myself with the comments made by the minister on the day about the fantastic work that our hardworking public servants in Biosecurity do. They have truly been some of the heroes of this difficult time.

There is \$400 000 in critical infrastructure for dogs' homes -

**Time expired.**

[3.35 p.m.]

**Ms HOUSTON** - I rise to make a brief comment on Estimates Committee A for the Minister for Primary Industries and Water and Minister for Veterans' Affairs. My comments will mostly relate to Biosecurity and Veterans' Affairs.

We learnt in Estimates that passengers from the *Ruby Princess* had been stopped at Launceston Airport and put in an airlock by Biosecurity Tasmania staff to be held there because they were identified as a potential risk given that they had been in international waters. They were kept in this airlock while Biosecurity sought advice on what should occur with these passengers. It is not clear who made the final decision, or where the advice came from, but the staff were eventually advised to release the passengers, who were not advised to quarantine and who were not health-checked.

Admittedly, this was early on in the picture, but we cannot help but wonder what might have happened if those people had actually been held and quarantined in isolation for 14 days instead of being released into the Tasmanian community.

This was at the beginning of COVID-19 and Biosecurity did everything right in protecting their staff and securing the passengers and asking the questions, but obviously something in that transmission of information failed badly. There was a point made that they were not aware of the full ramifications of what had happened on the *Ruby Princess* but we will all soon find out and we are hoping that once the report of the inquiry into the north-west outbreak is released, we will know much more about that.

We also had a fair bit of discussion about the feral deer population. I get to hear quite a bit about feral deer in my office because people are constantly calling me saying there are feral deer in their yards in Riverside, which would never have happened a few years ago. There are feral deer stepping out onto the highways. They have been seen on the West Tamar Highway and they have been in the gorge and around the basin, which is highly unusual. We would



never have spotted them there even four or five years ago; they would not have been that close to the main roads or that close to town.

I am not opposed to recreational deer shooting but is insufficient to contain the numbers that we are now seeing. Good conditions, lots of water, lots of food and competition for territories has meant they have moved out of the areas they were in and the population has expanded unchecked. When they move out of their traditional areas in search for food and territory, they do quite a bit of damage.

I am not surprised to learn that the number of deer in Tasmania is somewhere around 50 000, which is double the minimum population of 24 000. I am concerned that there does not seem to be an acceptable maximum number for the feral deer population and there is a risk to native wildlife and livestock if numbers of feral deer go unchecked. I have even had reports of animals being sighted in the Punchbowl Reserve, which is a couple of minutes from where I live and very close to the city. I went there to look because someone said there was a deer in the reserve so I had to check. It was not there when I went but there are lots of places to hide. There is the potential for them to move around and link up areas of land and get that far in, because we have seen wildlife do it.

There was also some discussion about environmental security and the acquisition of detector dogs, where they are sourced from and temperament testing. There has been information passed on to us that handlers have been bitten by dogs, that their temperament is not suitable for the tasks they are being used for and that some of them may have been sourced online from places like Gumtree, so there is no pedigree or temperament test. We know that animals are retrieved from rescues, which is all well and good if they have the appropriate temperament, but as you can imagine, temperament in those sorts of dogs that are handled a lot and are around the public, is paramount. This is why many other places have their own breeding program for beagles for detection work.

I want to talk about Veterans' Affairs. It was apparent that quite a lot has been done in the way of Veterans' Affairs, especially during COVID-19. I had a lot of contact with RSLs and from members who were concerned about what would happen at the beginning of COVID-19 and that they could not run their usual businesses. I even wrote to the minister about one club in particular that was concerned that they could not do eight-ball or darts. Those things were their bread and butter that allowed them to keep their doors open. We learnt that there are now around 2500 veterans and their families across the state, that there is a range of initiatives across a range of areas, and that the RSL now has peak body status providing them with \$110 000 a year, which is extremely valuable.

The highlight of Veterans' Affairs this year has to be the Teddy Sheean VC Memorial Grants and his VC; the minister attended the event on 1 December.

There have also been additional funds out of that grant which are going to the RSL and support for Legacy who also cannot do their fundraising. It was very disappointing that Legacy was not out on the streets fundraising this year with their pins and badges because of the COVID-19 restrictions. Usually we would send out the Army cadets and have one on every street corner selling pins and badges on Legacy Day but that was not possible this year.

There was \$40 000 for Legacy north and south, which is very important. There was also \$60 000 for a veterans' health and wellbeing centre. That is invaluable because we had a

lengthy discussion about the health and wellbeing of veterans, particularly their mental health needs and how they reintegrate into the community once they return. That is particularly challenging now that we have such a dispersed population of veterans. They tend to be spread out across the state rather than being concentrated in one area. Once upon a time in our history veterans tended to occupy similar areas in veterans' housing, like my grandparents did. Now they are spread out much more, so that support of having a community around you is not there.

There was extra funding and support for COVID-19 during the pandemic, and I believe 50 RSLs were supported with that. A certain number of those had a very difficult time. There was extra support for Legacy, and I believe they now have ongoing funding from the state Government directly. That is a huge benefit.

Then there was the partnership with Parks and Wildlife for veteran's health and wellbeing. I believe that has had a really good uptake, so there have been many good things going on in that space, which is enlightening to hear. We have a lot of direct contact from veterans, and I have a few who would like a conversation with you about how that can be improved.

[3.41 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - I want to raise some issues that I spoke to the minister about, and a number of matters raised by the Leader of the Greens, Cassy O'Connor, in relation to my portfolios, particularly the marine environment, and the management of fish farming and fish farming expansion in Tasmania, and the damage that is occurring in the marine environment as a result of improperly managed fish farm expansion and fish farm operations.

Ms O'Connor asked the minister about the Storm Bay expansion and the lease approval process for Petuna for their site near Betsy Island. It is clear, from the minister's response, that the concerns that were expressed by the community at the time, and by marine scientists and other people with marine expertise, are founded in reality. Indeed, the process for making the decision to approve Petuna's lease next to Betsy Island was totally flawed, and was not based on anything like an adequate scientific assessment.

It was premised on the construction of a marine farming review panel. The membership of the marine farming review panel was so debased by the time the panel had reached its end point of making that decision that it was technically quorate. The minister makes it clear, from his answers to Ms O'Connor, that he continues to use weasel words, to pretend that the final recommendation provided to him as minister by that supposedly independently scientific panel was credible advice.

In fact, it was rubbish advice. It is very clear that there was nobody with any scientific competence and credentials sitting on the marine farming review panel at the time. Despite the fact that a position was required for a person with biosecurity expertise, only five of the nine members of that panel remained at the end of the process. The two scientists who had the most credentials, the most length of service in their respective fields, and importantly the person who had the biosecurity expertise, Dr Barbara Novak, and Ms Cherry, who is herself a marine expert, both resigned because they were disgusted with the process, and had no confidence in the outcome they would be able to achieve as a panel. The scientists with the scientific expertise in biosecurity resigned.

The panel that remained had five people on it, among them people with incredibly conflicted interests in relation to the industry.

Ms O'Connor managed, through persistent questioning, to extract from the minister, and from Mr Shepherd who was at the table providing answers, the expert advice that was sought by marine farming review panel constituted the advice of the Chief Veterinary Officer. What qualifications does the Chief Veterinary Officer have in marine science and in marine biosecurity science? It is obvious that they are not qualified to sit in that position. Otherwise they would have been listed as one of the people who should be sitting on the panel in the first place.

We have a Chief Veterinary Officer. They are paid by the Crown to do work in areas of expertise clearly not related to marine ecology, not related to the matters that would be germane to the decision-making of the marine farming review panel. That is not the appropriate person to seek advice from. What happened?

The two credentialled expert scientists who gave authority to the decision of the panel resigned in disgust, and left the Government with an unpleasant conundrum. They had to push this approval through for Petuna. They scratched around to find anyone who could possibly be called something to do with animals, and found the Chief Veterinary Officer, and said there you go. There was also an overseas epidemiologist. Who knows what their expertise was in: plants, people, animals, trees, whatever. We have no idea what their expertise was, but apparently that gave a tick to the box. Mr Barnett said the panel determined it did have the necessary expertise and experience required under the act.

That is because they were technically quorate - five out of nine. Four of the people on the panel had left, two of whom had left in disgust. The experts left. The women members of the panel voted with their feet, gave it a red-hot shot for months and months and were disgusted at the process.

I hope the Labor Party is listening to this as well as the minister, because the Labor Party puts their hands over their ears when it comes to the processes surrounding the fish farm industry.

The responses of the minister show that, despite the devastation in Macquarie Harbour, despite the fact it is well known from the experience there that when you let fish farm companies put as many pens as they possibly can into a controlled environment, you increase biosecurity risks. What happens is you increase the likelihood of death - not only to the salmon in the pens, but ultimately to everything else in the environment. We had dead zones in Macquarie Harbour. We had biosecurity outbreaks all over the place. You would have thought that the Liberals, in Government, would have learned from that experience, but no, they have done it all over again. The Liberals and the Labor Party would take exactly the same laws and they have done it all again.

Now we have Storm Bay. When the expert scientists were on the panel, the reason they knocked back Storm Bay in the first place was because it was going to put too many pens, with too many different companies of fish, in the same locked controlled environment. There is not enough room for them all to be there.

Sometimes it is just not possible to get everything you want when you are in business. That is the way the market works; unless you get a special handout, like you do in Tasmania, and you get to do whatever you want, regardless of the biosecurity risks, and regardless of the impacts on the environment.

Petuna got their tick. They might have been happy to get that tick, because it meant they can go ahead, but it will be a stain on their company's reputation if they put fish there. This information is on the public record. It is known that it is a risk to biosecurity. It is a risk to the marine environment if they operate there. It will affect their brand, and it affects all of us. It affects our clean green brand as a state.

I also want to turn to the importance of retaining our carbon sinks, which Ms O'Connor raised with the minister responsible for forestry. The Premier made a number of statements, and has a very strong understanding that our carbon sink, quote, 'does provide a significant net benefit to the state'. He used the words 'carbon sink' four times when he was talking in the Climate Change session. The minister needs to internalise and understand what that means for his responsibilities and for native forests in Tasmania.

The swift parrot is now more critically endangered than it was last time we talked about this. There are now only 300 birds remaining in the world at the moment. The ANU has provided this information and it is devastating news. There is nothing that this Government can do to protect those birds except to stop native forest logging and destroying their habitat.

### **Time expired.**

[3.51 p.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** - I thank my colleagues for their contributions regarding the Estimates and the Government's Budget and plans in my portfolio areas. I appreciate your feedback and contributions. We have big plans to create more jobs, grow our economy, build confidence and support our community.

I will kick off with a couple of the reflections and contributions during this debate on something we can all agree on, and that is Teddy Sheean and the Victoria Cross that was granted yesterday in Canberra. I had the honour of being invited and participating in that event to support Garry Ivory, the nephew of Teddy Sheean, and the Sheean family. It was so much fun being there with them. They were so pleased and proud they almost exploded with pride as Sheean family members and as fine Tasmanians.

The Royal Australian Navy was in fine force because the Victoria Cross for Teddy Sheean is the first for the Royal Australian Navy, the fifteenth for Tasmania and the 101st for Australia. The Governor-General presented an outstanding opportunity for that presentation and spoke so well with the Prime Minister and others. It was a great honour and a privilege.

Today I advise the House that Garry Ivory, on behalf of the family, is donating that Victoria Cross medal to the Australian War Memorial into perpetuity. I pass on a tribute on behalf of us all to congratulate Garry Ivory and the Sheean family for such a generous act to allow that to be made available to the Australian people through the War Memorial in Canberra.

Thanks to Matt Anderson, the director, and those who have helped participate. I am in discussions with Matt Anderson and the War Memorial regarding the visit of the Teddy Sheean

VC to Tasmania next year, at a convenient time, subject to relevant protocol security and funding arrangements.

Back to the Budget. It is a fantastic result in creating jobs, building confidence and supporting our community. After such a challenging year with COVID-19 it will help our state recover and rebuild with an unprecedented infrastructure spend over the forward Estimates of some \$5 billion to underpin our growing economy.

I will touch on each of my portfolio areas. They are critical, productive industries and we back them to the hilt. They have our full support and they create and provide valuable jobs, particularly in regional and rural parts of Tasmania.

With regard to Tasmania as a renewable energy powerhouse for Australia, we are not just leading the nation but leading the globe. Last Friday we announced that at Granville Harbour we have hit 100 per cent fully self-sufficient in renewable energy. I am pleased and proud on behalf of the Government and I know the people of Tasmania are likewise proud. We have what the rest of the nation and the world wants and needs: affordable, reliable, clean electricity, and we are now progressing our certification process with the federal government in the months ahead.

With respect to agriculture, of course water is liquid gold; I have said that many times. Just a week or so ago the Scottsdale Irrigation Scheme in the state's north-east was opened by the Deputy Prime Minister, Michael McCormack. It was good to meet with Michael McCormack and share with him our plans to grow our prospects for agriculture and to access more funding support for water. I also had the opportunity to catch up with Keith Pitt, the federal minister for Water, during my short visit to Canberra. Those plans have progressed.

**Ms O'Connor** - Minister, are you going to address some of those questions I raised about water use?

**Mr BARNETT** - I have and I will respond in terms of water to some of the concerns of the Leader of the Greens, but let me just go through some of the key initiatives we discussed in terms of agriculture.

We are on track to get to that \$10 billion by 2050. The Agri-Food Plan is taking us to the next level and we have hit that 7 per cent growth. We are on track with the Agri-Growth scorecard and that is really encouraging, with the total agri-food value from 2017-18 at \$1.9 billion now, a 7 per cent increase which is just terrific. I am pleased with that outcome of 4.5 times more food produced in Tasmania than we consume. In terms of packed and processed food production, there has been an increase of 5 per cent to \$4.86 billion and our exports have also hit a record high.

There was a question about Scottsdale Pork and I will respond to that. To make it very clear, as I did on the day, we want to secure the future for the pig industry in Tasmania. There were a number of questions about that from Labor and the Greens and I made very clear that that is the objective behind that funding support.

With respect to the workforce resilience program, \$1.9 million over the next two years for Tassie's harvest jobs and Take your Pick campaign, I have announced five agricultural peak bodies receiving strategic industry partnership program funding support of \$430 000. These

are very important partners. We have Fruit Growers Tasmania, Wine Tasmania, Livestock Transport Association, Sprout Tasmania and the Tasmanian Hemp Association, and having spoken with each of those entities and stakeholders, they are delighted with that support.

Agfest and Rural Youth are gaining \$300 000 support, not to mention the plan for Tasmania's research farm capacity. All in all, there is \$8 million of investment over the years ahead for our public research farm assets, particularly at Elliott in terms of the dairy assets, and Forthside in terms of our agricultural assets, with a \$7.4 million joint investment with UTAS and the Tas Institute of Agriculture. We are very pleased about that initiative. Cressy Research and Development Station is also upgrading the core infrastructure assets there. In terms of fruit growers and the Grove Farm research facility in the Huon, we are looking at a feasibility study, working with the fruit growers.

I have mentioned water being liquid gold and I will touch on the water concerns of the Leader of the Greens. We are standing here very tall with the 15 irrigation schemes in the last decade, more than double the number completed across the rest of the country in the same time and \$30 million in the Budget to continue our nation-leading investment in irrigation across the state. Together, with the federal government, we have \$185 million to deliver irrigation infrastructure to support rural and regional Tasmania.

The Leader of the Greens asked about water and I would like to respond specifically to the query she had about the megalitres in the last 12 months. For 2019-20, the total amount of water licensed for irrigation purposes grew to 870 000 megalitres, an increase of 34 000 megalitres. The prognosis for the next financial year is another 30 000 megalitre increase.

**Ms O'Connor** - So what happens to places like Brumbys Creek?

**Mr BARNETT** - Just bear with me. Pause and let me respond.

**Ms O'Connor** - I do not think you have the balance right, minister.

**Mr BARNETT** - Let me give you an answer to Brumbys Creek. Hydro Tasmania is required to maintain a minimum flow along the Macquarie River downstream at Brumbys Creek, and continues to meet these requirements. This is the advice I have received. Hydro routinely publishes the flow levels in Brumbys Creek on its website and, based on the current data, the flows have increased over the past few days in response to rainfall and changing electricity demands. It is also important to note that with the excellent start to the season we have had so far this year, it is only now that farmers are starting to irrigate.

Regarding Carl Hyland and the theories the member raised about the condition of Brumbys Creek, Hydro Tasmania visited the creek last month and found that anglers present at the creek commented on the good condition of their catch. The dead fish were pest species - redfin and tench - that had been discarded by anglers. Further, Hydro Tasmania contractors have recently been out to mow the long grass. In September, they worked with the Northern Midlands Council to instal a rubbish bin at the boat ramp, and they continue to promote the responsible use of the land and encouraging people to take their rubbish with them.

Brumbys Creek is an important part of our water assets, and I have had many days and evenings fishing there. I know what it is like.

We have done so much and Tasmania definitely has a brilliant track record with water and big plans going forward. The Opposition's budget reply did not mention water. The only reference to water in the little red booklet of debt was in the shadow minister's title.

There were a few queries about deer. The short answer is we have done more about this as a government than any other previous government and have delivered many commitments. We are developing a wild fallow deer management plan for the future. We have cut the red tape. We have done so much and I would like to outline more about those initiatives, because members are acting as though nothing has been done.

The overarching policy objective is to get the balance right between managing the impact of deer on our important primary industries, our natural resources, and maintaining a deer herd as a traditional hunting resource. It is an important part of the Tasmanian way of life and that should be acknowledged. We have formed the Tasmanian Game Council. We have established the new Game Services Tasmania within my department to support landholders, hunters and farmers in managing deer and we have made more reserves - in fact, a record number of reserves - available for regulated recreational deer hunting.

In addition, we have put in new measures to cut the red tape and streamline the process to allow farmers and recreational hunters to manage deer. These include the extension of the hunting season for antlerless deer; the introduction of a five-year crop protection permits for antlerless deer; the removal of quotas and tags for both game licences and crop protection permits for antlerless deer; and the aerial survey that has been referred to during the debate this afternoon.

Now we are in the process of talking to the public and getting feedback on the way forward. We look forward to further consultation and feedback. I am pleased and proud of the effort that has been made and I am looking forward to progressing those plans into the future.

There is no stronger supporter than our government for the iconic seafood industry. I take this opportunity to encourage all of us to eat more seafood, especially this Christmas time. We have invested half a million dollars in the budget to support our seafood industry growth plans and we will continue to support this very important sector.

We backed them in right at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic on 23 January when the Chinese markets abruptly closed. We have provided \$5.5 million in direct financial support for the two stimulus packages announced by the Premier. Licence fees for rock lobster, giant crab, finfish fishers and abalone divers, as well as levies for shellfish growers, will be waived. We have done a lot, not to mention streamlining the process, cutting the red tape for fishers to make it easier for them to fish. That is a \$5 million commitment over the forward Estimates.

There has been a reference to salmon and the Sustainable Industry Growth Plan for the Salmon Industry - well, that is what it is all about. As a government we back them in sustainable growth for -

**Dr Woodruff** - I did not mention the Sustainable Industry Growth Plan because it is a rubbish document; I would not have wasted my time on it.

**Madam CHAIR** - Order, Dr Woodruff.

**Mr BARNETT** - We are very supportive and we have every confidence in the process going forward.

There was a reference to Biosecurity Tasmania and our border control, and I would like to address that issue. We have locked in another \$6 million for the continued delivery of traveller assessment and border control across the state, along with the continued operation of the G2G PASS and the Tas e-Travel System - which I used this morning on my return to Tasmania from Canberra. Should COVID-19 situations change in other states, we will not hesitate to increase it if required. As the Premier consistently says, 'the safety of Tasmanians is our top priority, and of course rebuilding our economy'. That is on top of the \$2.6 million for border control to keep Tasmanians safe, free from pest and disease. There is never a zero risk of course as Lloyd Klumpp and others would confirm.

I will address the *Ruby Princess* accusations, which are based on inaccuracies. Let me be very clear: we have many challenges and we have responded to those based on the best advice possible. On behalf of the Government, I pass on condolences to those who lost friends and family members during those early days of the pandemic. We have stood with Tasmanians during this time and we know how difficult it has been for those families involved. From the Government's perspective, it is disappointing that the Labor Party continues to politicise the pandemic. The facts regarding the *Ruby Princess* have been on the public record and were sadly misrepresented by Dr Broad during the public debate.

The facts are that on 17 March the Director of Public Health declared a Public Health Emergency. On the same day, he directed that any person who had arrived from overseas on or after 16 March into Australia was to self-isolate for 14 days on entering Tasmania. Then on 20 March, we further strengthened our border arrangements and all arrivals into Tasmania - regardless of whether they had travelled internationally - were required to self-isolate for 14 days. From 29 March, we again further strengthened the border arrangements and placed non-Tasmanian residents arriving into the state into hotel quarantine for 14 days.

I could go into much more detail but the Government has made those decisions based on the information we had at the time, and sought to proactively act at every step. We led the nation in many measures to control the spread of the COVID-19 and that put us in a better position than that of many other states. We had an independent review that has been referred to publicly and in this parliament. Greg Melick, AO SC was our independent reviewer. That report is being considered right now and the Premier will have more to say about that in the very near future.

We have been very clear - no one is to blame. Dr Broad's assertions were wrong. His finger-pointing exercise is also wrong.

**Dr Broad** - I am asking for answers.

**Mr BARNETT** - I am putting that on the record.

There was a reference to potato growers. The Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association Tasmania has made its position clear. We have gone into further talks, Dr Broad. Please reach out to your stakeholders and ask them a few questions. Keep in touch with them. It is very important that we do that. We have had those discussions.



**Dr Broad** - It is quite ironic you saying that.

**Madam CHAIR** - Order, Dr Broad, this is not a time for debate.

**Mr BARNETT** - The Import Risk Assessment (IRA) is under way and the consultation processes are being tightened. As a government, we are responding to the needs of our stakeholders. We see it as a very important part of our agriculture sector and we will continue to support them in every way we can.

We are backing in recreational fishing. That is why we are planning a 10-year Recreational Sea Fishing Strategy. That is really important. I have made those points very clearly and responded to the queries at Budget Estimates. It is part of the Tasmanian way of life. We see it as very important.

There is such an opportunity for Tasmania in renewable energy. I have mentioned the 100 per cent target has been reached at Granville Harbour just last Friday. It is a watershed event on the back of enshrining in law - the fact that we want to go from 100 per cent to 200 per cent. We have big plans. We have our Renewable Energy Action Plan; our Renewable Energy Coordination Framework; and our Tasmanian Renewable Hydrogen Action Plan. We are all over it.

The sniping and criticisms from the sideline is very disappointing, because the community does not know where you stand with respect to these major projects in Tasmania. You need to declare your position, whether you support Marinus Link, Battery of the Nation and our big plans for renewable energy to create jobs, improve energy security and put downward pressure on electricity prices. The question is, do you support that or not?

**Dr Woodruff** - We've never said we don't support them.

**Madam DEPUTY CHAIR** - Order.

**Mr BARNETT** - We have heard some interjections from the Greens and I draw to members' attention Christine Milne's attack on our productive industries in her opinion piece last weekend. I do not know if she is speaking on behalf of the Greens, so the big question is, do the Tasmanian Greens support the views of Christine Milne? We will hear more about that shortly.

All I have to do with respect to the renewable energy project is to quote Michael Bailey, the CEO of the TCCI, who said -

The 100 per cent renewable target for Tasmania has been reached two years early, which is amazing, and for business this is amazingly significant. What it will mean is that more business will want to come to Tasmania as renewable energy becomes more and more important as part of a brand position but we also know that it will help to bring prices down for Tasmanian businesses as well. Today is a really important announcement and congratulations to Minister Barnett and the Government who have pulled this off two years earlier than ever was thought.

His comments are greatly appreciated.

**Time expired.**

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

**DIVISIONS 2, 5, 6, 7, 10 and 11**

(Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Building and Construction, Minister for Arts and Minister for Heritage)

[4.12 p.m.]

**Ms HADDAD** - I am happy to report on what was discussed at Estimates last week in the portfolios of Attorney-General, Justice and Corrections.

We discussed a range of different issues at Estimates last week, starting with Tasmania's electoral donation laws. I will not spend a lot of my time speaking about that because I have spoken about it a number of times through other forms of the House. We called on the minister to release the discussion paper prepared by her department and sought her assurance that she had faith in the work of her department, because it was recognised that the terms of reference and the discussion paper that was released ahead of the report were very thorough and covered some of the vital issues that are lacking in Tasmania's electoral laws. We do not have any electoral donation disclosure laws, meaning that candidates, MPs and parties have no obligation to report or disclose donations that they receive, from whom they receive those donations or for what purpose they use those donations.

Indeed, only the Commonwealth law applies in Tasmania and, even then, only to parties. The Commonwealth law, as members know, has a ridiculously high threshold. It is up over \$14 000 at the moment for single donations, so is not really a disclosure regime at all and the Commonwealth law itself needs reform. We started the Estimates discussion by talking about those issues and asking for a commitment from Government to act on Will Hodgman's commitment to reform our electoral donation laws.

We moved on to speak about the community legal assistance sector and recognised that there has been a change in the way that Commonwealth money for the community legal assistance sector is now distributed through the state rather than directly by the Commonwealth to the NGO sector. Previously, the Commonwealth would distribute the money to the organisations. They now distribute it to the state and the Department of Justice administers that money on behalf of the Commonwealth, in addition to providing the state component for the national legal assistance sector which includes Legal Aid as well as all of the community legal services.

It was pleasing to have confirmed by the minister and her department that \$12.86 million is received by the state, all of that component is distributed to the community legal sector in Tasmania, and that a separate allocation of \$352 000 is provided by the Commonwealth to the Department of Justice to deal with the administrative costs of distributing that funding across the sector. There was some worry across the sector as to whether some of the money anticipated for service delivery may be being retained by the state to administer those funds. It was pleasing to find out that is not the case.

That said, it was also recognised that while extra funding for Legal Aid was welcomed and we talked about some of the increase in demand for the services of Legal Aid Tasmania, they have had an increased demand on their services. So too have the community legal centres and unfortunately they have not received a comparable increase in funding. There was confirmation that the base level of the funding agreements for the community legal services are the same as their base funding from 2014, and although they are indexed, there has not been a real increase in base funding to the community legal services since the 2014 financial year.

I know that demand on those services has increased, just as it has for Legal Aid. In particular, we know that Legal Aid had a huge spike in demand for services for family dispute resolution conferences over the last financial year, up 85.14 per cent. They also had jumps in other areas, but that one really jumped out at me. We know that instances of family violence have likely increased during the pandemic and there is a lot of national research that indicates that is the case, so there is no doubt there has been an increase on demand across the community legal assistance sector.

We then moved on to speak about RTI. I spoke about that on the MPI this morning so I do not intend to spend a lot of time going back over my views, which the House is quite familiar with now. I have concerns that there is a culture of secrecy being promoted within this Government. I personally believe our RTI laws are very good laws. I do not believe they need to be drastically overhauled as some people are calling for, but I do not believe that our RTI laws are being adequately adhered to and applied by this Government. Certainly, the statistics speak for themselves, and in the Ombudsman's annual report we learnt that more information is being refused through RTI requests and demand on the services of that office, for external reviews have increased over that same period of time. Those things are now well known.

I wanted to clarify something in the *Hansard* when the Ombudsman was at the table. I was seeking information about the number of days it takes for an external review to be completed. I was quoting from a report that the Ombudsman gave to the Public Accounts Committee in March 2019, where he reported that the 2016-17 figure for external review cases to be completed was 230 days, in 2017-18 it was 318 days, and in 2018-19 to date - because that report was given in March - was 881 days. I asked the Ombudsman if I could have the current figure and he gave me a figure of about 480. I thought that meant that the backlog had gone down, but in fact I think my question was misunderstood.

I cannot find it quickly in the *Hansard*, but I believe the figure the Ombudsman provided to me at the table was the number of days open. I wanted to clarify the difference between those two figures: the number of days open and the number of days taken to complete an external review. I believe it is over 1000 days now, which is up to nearly three years' wait time. We covered some of those issues but I wanted to make it clear that it was that figure I was trying to clarify, one that is comparable to the reports we were given by the Ombudsman to the Public Accounts Committee on 7 March 2019.

We also spoke about the importance of the community legal assistance sector. I mentioned that last year during Estimates, the minister released the review that had been conducted into the Tasmanian legal assistance sector. One of the recommendations from that review was that legal needs mapping should be conducted in Tasmania. As far as I know, that had not been released, but the Attorney-General confirms that legal needs mapping has been done and that it will be released. One of the things that is hopefully being considered is that the state might go down the path of establishing health justice partnerships.

For people not familiar with what a health justice partnership is, it is described by Health Justice Australia, a national body promoting health justice partnerships, as a quiet revolution that is taking place across Australia and transforming the way that some of the most vulnerable in our community access legal services. It is a practitioner-led movement, with community lawyers moving out of their offices and courts and into the most unlikely of places - hospitals and community health settings. They are collaborating with health services and their patients to address unmet health-harming legal need. What their statistics tell us is that one-fifth of people in Australia experience three or more legal problems in any given year, many of which are associated with increased risk of physical or mental illness.

Many people do not seek advice for these problems, but when they do, they are more likely to ask a non-legal adviser, such as a health professional, than a lawyer. Taken together, the health and legal research points to common groups of people who are vulnerable to intersecting health and legal issues, but who may access health services with symptoms, rather than seeking out legal services for solutions.

Speaking to advocates within the community legal sector, it is clear that these kinds of cohorts of people exist in Tasmania. Quite often, people do not realise that they have an unmet legal need. It may not be immediately apparent to them that an issue that is facing them in their life is one that could be addressed through a legal pathway, so it might not occur to them to seek the assistance of a lawyer, or walk into the office of a community legal centre.

If it is combined, or there are other issues in their life that lead them to be seeking health services, quite often people will describe what is going on in their lives and, in fact, often it will be identified through health professionals that there is an unmet legal need there.

The way that health justice partnerships work is that lawyers actually co-locate themselves with health professionals, working in health settings. Where they are established in other parts of the country, it is a totally new way of thinking about how to make sure that people who need legal services receive them, and they are really starting to fill some of those gaps of unmet legal need.

I have not seen the results of that legal needs mapping, but the Attorney-General indicated during Estimates last week that she would release that legal needs mapping, and that health justice partnerships were not off the table in looking at new ways of addressing legal need in Tasmania, which I was very pleased to hear.

People working in the community sector who have been starting roundtables and discussion groups with health professionals, social workers, lawyers and policy workers advocating for the need for health justice partnerships in Tasmania will be similarly relieved to know that this is something that is within the thinking of the Justice department.

After we had spoken about those things, we reflected on some of the Estimates in *Hansard* from the previous day, and some of the questions asked by my colleague Josh Willie in the upper House, specifically on the changes that were made in 2019 to the Births, Deaths and Marriages Act and other acts. The question was asked whether the Attorney-General would commit to not repealing the intent of those laws. The Attorney-General gave a very general answer that legislation from time to time needs to be amended, and that it would not be right or proper for her, as the Attorney-General, to rule in or out any legislative changes of any type to any act.

I understand why the Attorney-General would answer in that way. I agree that administrative changes occur to legislation, and no member of parliament could rule in or out the idea that anything on the statute books may or may not one day need to be amended - but that was not the point of the line of questioning upstairs, and it was not the point of the line of questioning downstairs either.

We were seeking an assurance that the Attorney-General would not seek to repeal the intent of the changes that were made, which were hard fought for, and which were passed through the upper House as well, and reflected the will of the parliament. They have vastly improved the lives of transgender and gender-diverse Tasmanians. They have had no effect on anybody who has not needed to access the changes that the act now allows, which essentially allows for an administrative change to a birth certificate - to an identity document.

There have been, I think, about 70 Tasmanians who have accessed those laws since they came into force. As I said, despite the heartbreaking hate campaign that was waged against transgender and gender-diverse people during the time we were debating those laws in this parliament, the world has not stopped turning. The sky has not fallen in. All that has happened as a result of those legislative changes is that a small number of Tasmanians who needed an administrative change to the law to make their lives liveable, have had that administrative change to the law made. They can now safely go about their lives with identity documents that reflect their correct gender and their correct name. I, for one, am proud to have been a part of those changes to that law.

I also asked - and this was the line of questioning begun by Dr Woodruff - questions around the state's obligations to implement the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the OPCAT legislation. That has been ratified, Australia has signed up to it, and the states each now have an obligation to become OPCAT compliant. The minister confirmed that Tasmania has signed up to becoming OPCAT compliant, and that will happen through legislative change.

The question that I raise came to me through Civil Liberties Australia, who noted that in the preliminary material that has been released, it is anticipated that the Ombudsman will wear yet another hat, and hold that new jurisdiction once that is set in place through legislation. It was noted that the Ombudsman wears a number of hats. The Ombudsman is the Health Complaints Commissioner, he is the Custodial Inspector, he is the Youth Custodial Inspector - I am not sure if that is a separate hat, or the same hat. He wears a number of hats.

There was a recognition that resourcing in his office is quite tight. There was a question through Civil Liberties Australia to put on the record the fact that increasing his jurisdiction, giving him a new jurisdiction under that convention, will require resourcing. It would be very important, in terms of Tasmanian's obligations to become OPCAT compliant, that there is resourcing allocated to his office to undertake that work. The people in that office work very hard, and by and large are already fully occupied in the different jurisdictions worked on in that office.

After that we moved onto the Corrections portfolio and started with the issue of double-bunking, triple-bunking and overcrowding at the Risdon Prison Complex. It was acknowledged that last week there were 11 prisoners sleeping on mattresses on the floor, that double-bunking and triple-bunking occurs predominantly in the medium- and maximum-

security parts of the prison. With the prison population continuing to rise, there is a risk that this will continue.

Building the new southern remand centre will have a significantly positive effect on reducing the need for double-bunking and triple-bunking and mattresses on the floor. We welcome the commitments the minister made to building the new southern remand centre. It is important from a criminal justice perspective that remandees are not held in the same place as sentenced prisoners. While we welcome the extra injection of funding, another \$15 million for the southern remand centre, there are some big questions about why the budget blew out so much so quickly before there are even walls and roofs and structures in place there at Risdon.

**Ms Archer** - Why didn't you ask at Estimates? I kept waiting for the questions.

**Ms HADDAD** - I did ask it at Estimates. That is why I am covering it now.

**Ms Archer** - You didn't ask why.

**Ms HADDAD** - I asked a lot of questions about the southern remand centre and the minister confirmed that all the things that were in scope for the first job are still in scope. That is something I will continue to monitor through the parliamentary process. It is surprising that it blew out by \$15 million when the scope itself has allegedly remained the same.

**Time expired.**

[4.32 p.m.]

**Ms BUTLER** - I will start by talking about the Arts and theatre capacity. With Queensland now operating at 100 per cent capacity - and that has been in place for the last four weeks - the practical guideline is that patrons wear masks when entering the venue, they remove them while seated and then put the mask back on when leaving the venue site.

New South Wales is now operating at 85 per cent capacity, but these are today's figures so they could change tomorrow. Western Australia is now operating at a 60 per cent capacity and Tasmania still remains at a 50 per cent capacity, even though the practical application of that capacity is a lot less, probably 30 per cent to 35 per cent because the fine print states regulations still comply with social distancing guidelines.

The theatre and entertainment industry needs some advocacy and communication in this area. There are plans in other states about returning capacity. I raised this in the scrutiny committee and would like to see some more work in this area. I raised the disproportionate acceptance of the capacity for sporting venues as opposed to theatres - and that is without taking anything away from the sporting industry. Standards that apply to arts and theatre performances across the country are different from standards that apply to sports and that is simply not fair.

I was advised that this is health advice but there is really little communication about how Tasmanian theatres can have high capacity. There does not seem to be a clear plan about how we can get them back to that capacity. Through my conversations with some of the funded theatres I know they are keeping quiet even though they are enjoying a rollover of funding, which is a really good idea, but they are hesitant to speak out about this because they do not want to jeopardise future funding arrangements. That is just some feedback.

Other states are opening shows such as *Pippin* and *Frozen* with an 85 per cent capacity and this is what New South Wales has just started -

**Ms Archer** - What do you mean? What are you alleging?

**Ms BUTLER** - It is interesting the minister has just said that, because the information I have here is from people in the theatre industry.

**Ms Archer** - It is an independent process.

**Ms BUTLER** - I am happy to go back to them and say that, apparently, I am making this up, because that is what you say every time you are caught out, minister.

**Ms Archer** - It is an independent process. You should know that by now.

**Ms BUTLER** - This is what New South Wales has just started. They understand the important contribution theatres make to the economy, and other states are also moving to provide exemptions. I do not know if you are over this part of it, but they are providing exemptions with COVID-safe plans for big shows such as *Moulin Rouge* in Melbourne for next year to ensure the industry can thrive. I am sure the people from the theatre industry watching this at the moment will be impressed with the performance because it is not funny. This is their livelihoods.

**Ms O'Connor** - This is the first time I have heard you in here talking about the value of the theatre industry, Ms Butler, just for the *Hansard* record.

**Ms BUTLER** - Well, you are not in here often enough. This is to ensure the industry can thrive and the thousands of people who work in the industry can get back to work. *Moulin Rouge* will be opening in Melbourne next year and they are organising that through an exemption with COVID-19 standards to get this up and running.

Apparently, our Government is not willing to enter into these kinds of discussions at the moment. There is one group in particular that wants to run *The Rocky Horror Show*. I do not know whether you have seen *The Rocky Horror Show* but it is fantastic, and hopefully it is going to be at the Theatre Royal in October next year. That production will employ 80 people and will run for 10 weeks. It needs a greater capacity than 35 per cent or potentially 50 per cent to be profitable. If other states are capable of entering into these negotiations, it would be great if we could enter into those negotiations as well and start that communication and dialogue. We need to do more for the industry. We always have to be mindful of the health advice but they need an advocate and they really want to get back up to capacity and know what they have to do to get there.

I am pleased that the minister confirmed during our scrutiny committee that there has been correspondence in relation to Australian content quotas which have allowed Tasmania to produce amazing animations through companies such as Blue Rocket, and television productions such as *The Gloaming* and *The Kettering Incident*. We must do what we can to ensure that quota system is maintained because it is vital for the Tasmanian economy.

In the Building and Construction Estimates, I asked a question on mediations and the number of people who had entered into mediations; that is mediations between renters and

landlords and there had been a number of successful mediations. I asked about the mediations that were not successful and ended up in court. Apparently, there is no record of those people. If we are creating policies and systems that are meant to assist people, it would be good to know what the outcomes are of those new bits of legislation. That is a last step of the process and I was surprised that that information is not kept.

**Ms Archer** - They're private people so you can't get the information unless they volunteer it.

**Ms BUTLER** - That was the response during that committee. I will now talk about the northern prison, which is an Achilles heel -

**Ms Archer** - That's interesting because you weren't even there.

**Members** interjecting.

**Ms BUTLER** - I raised it last week and I also raised it again this morning. I am sorry to ruin your dialogue. I love this Greens-Liberal alliance that I am sensing a lot at the moment. It is fantastic.

**Ms O'Connor** - Oh, you've got us again!

**Ms BUTLER** - You have been on their side all day. It is fantastic. It has happened before, hasn't it, a Liberal-Greens accord? You can see it all the time.

It was interesting when we were talking about the northern prison. The community consultation on the original site was after the announcement of the Westbury location as the preferred site and we learnt there were no other sites preferred; it was just marketing and there was no consultation until after the announcement. The community has petitioned for another town hall meeting. They have had some problems about that with their local council, as I am sure you would be aware.

The building and construction sector and industry stakeholders also think it is an absolute joke that you were not able to successfully manage that project. It is a slight on your government, and it speaks volumes about your ability to manage infrastructure projects because that was an absolute dog's breakfast.

I will continue with the northern prison problem, and the fact that you are looking at building it in an area that is prone to bushfire. I draw your attention to the case of Timber World Pty Ltd versus Meander Valley Council. I hope you know a bit about that case, minister, otherwise you are going to waste a lot more money. How much have you wasted to date on this consultation; about \$700 000? The ruling of Justice Blow set a precedent in relation to a proposal to build a rehabilitation centre in a bushfire prone area of the Meander Valley area. According to Justice Blow, the proposed rehabilitation centre was classed as a hospice service for vulnerable use under the bushfire prone area code. You must be aware of the bushfire prone area code, minister. It could end up being your Achilles heel when it comes to this new site, sitting in the middle of a bushfire prone area.

As a government, you have to comply with the bushfire prone standard. There was a decision; it was appealed to the tribunal on the grounds of a code statement that only in



exceptional circumstances should vulnerable users be located on land which is within a bushfire prone area, and that was unsuccessful.

Under the bushfire prone area code for a vulnerable use, proposed for location in a bushfire prone area, it must be demonstrated that there is an overriding benefit to the community; there is no suitable alternative low-risk site; and that the bushfire risk can be managed to an acceptable level. The code saves lives, minister.

**Time expired.**

[4.42 p.m.]

**Mr STREET** - Ms Butler, I really admire your level of self-confidence.

**Ms Butler** - Thank you. Are you saying that I should not be a confident person?

**Mr STREET** - The problem is, that it is backed-up by so little knowledge. It brings to mind my mum's favourite quote, 'Sometimes it is better to remain silent and be thought a fool, than to open your mouth and remove all doubt'. Ms Butler, quite frankly, every time you come into this place and make a contribution, you dig a bigger hole for yourself.

I did not have a chance to speak on the MPI today, but RTI processes are listed in the dot points, so I will reflect on Ms Butler's questioning at Estimates; her questioning then, in question time today, and her follow-up on the MPI of the Attorney-General about the listing of RTIs on the RWM. If you go back and watch question time Ms Butler, you will notice that the member for Bass, Ms O'Byrne and the member for Franklin, Mr O'Byrne, who have both been ministers in a previous government, were staring at the floor while you were asking those questions. They know full well that if we went back to 2013 and had a look at the agendas for their RWMs, RTIs would have been listed on them as well.

As Ms O'Connor, the Leader of the Greens and also a former minister, pointed out during question time, that is standard procedure. There was no 'gotcha' moment. Anybody with any self-awareness, Ms Butler, would have asked themselves if this really was the 'gotcha' moment that was going to bring down the Attorney-General's career, would the Leader of the Opposition have let me ask the question? The answer is no, they would not.

**Ms Butler** - Is that the best you guys have on this?

**Mr STREET** - I am staggered. You asked the questions in Estimates as though you are some ace investigative journalist. You got nowhere in Estimates, nowhere in question time, and then for some reason you decided to triple down on the MPI.

**Ms Butler** - Let us see how it plays out.

**Mr STREET** - Yes, we will see how it plays out. My very firm guess is nowhere. That is where it will play out. If you want speak to Mr O'Byrne and Ms O'Byrne, they will tell you exactly the same thing.

You also feigned an interest in the arts sector as well. During my budget reply contribution, I noted that in your budget reply contribution, you said the arts sector had been neglected by this Government, notwithstanding the fact that the Labor Party has accepted

99.7 per cent of our Budget. Two weeks ago, I challenged you to point out in this glossy photo album/brochure/piece of garbage where there is one dollar of extra money that Labor had guaranteed to the arts sector, on top of our Budget. Do you know what? There is nothing; a big fat zero. There is money for hospitality, there is money for events. Arts is under the same sector but, unfortunately, they are not the same thing, are they - the Leader of the Opposition is the shadow minister for events and you are the shadow minister for the arts. You secured not one single dollar for the sector you claim you supported.

In the Justice section of the Estimates it was revealed that over the next two years we will be spending \$1.8 million on video conferencing equipment for courts. The reason I mention this is that video conferencing in courts came about because of - I cannot remember the right terminology - a notice under the COVID-19 bill to the Subordinate Legislation Committee to allow that to happen. The question was raised in the Subordinate Legislation Committee meeting as to why it was not already available in the court system and it seemed to be something that should be extended. I am glad to see that the use of those video conferencing facilities is now going to be standard practice. Hopefully, it streamlines the process, and helps with court backlog which is an issue we are still trying to deal with.

In Corrections - \$79.9 million for the completion of the new southern remand centre, which Ms Haddad correctly pointed out will ease the pressure on the Risdon Prison.

Dare I even mention the northern regional prison with Ms Butler sitting here? As I said by interjection while you were talking, Ms Butler, when you were asked 'if it should not be built at Westbury, where should it be built?', your answer, famously, was, 'Not there'. If your position from Opposition, Ms Butler, is that the Government has it wrong, it is incumbent on you to come up with a better location than, 'not there'. You cannot build anything in 'not there'. 'Not there' does not exist as a site.

**Ms Butler** interjecting.

**Mr STREET** - Yes, exactly. What is the postcode of 'not there'? I know exactly where that postcode is.

**Ms Butler** - That one has really hurt you guys, and it still does. It is a shocker. You can do a lot better than that.

**Mr STREET** - I am continually staggered by your contributions in this place, Ms Butler.

**Ms Butler** - I am glad you enjoy them.

**Mr STREET** - I should not reflect on a previous minister's hearing but the comment that the Tasman Bridge was underbuilt when it was built has to be the prize for the dumbest thing I have heard said in this place in a very long time -

**Ms Butler** - Why are they having to expand it now?

**Mr STREET** - Ms Butler, the bridge is 55 years old.

**Ms Butler** - Exactly, it was built for the future.

**Mr STREET** - For the last 45 years it has had five lanes on it. How many lanes would you have expected us to build on a bridge in 1975, do you think?

**Ms Butler** - The Sydney Harbour Bridge is your example - built for the future.

**Mr STREET** - An absolutely ridiculous comment. Honestly, it speaks volumes for your knowledge about infrastructure as well.

[4.48 p.m.]

**Ms STANDEN** - I rise to contribute in relation to this Estimates Committee A examining the Minister for Heritage - my shadow portfolio. I pass on my thanks to the minister for making time available, and all the people who were involved behind the scenes providing comprehensive briefs and so on. As I said in an earlier contribution, it is a valuable process. It is the opportunity for us to examine in depth the expenditure and also the priorities of government. It provides, through elected members, an opportunity for members of, in this case, the cultural heritage sector, to examine questions that have been troubling them for some time.

The minister will think that this is rather strange, but I want to congratulate her on her handling of this portfolio.

**Ms Archer** - That is a turnaround.

**Ms STANDEN** - She comes as the latest in a conga line of Heritage ministers, having taken on the responsibility at the end of January this year. She follows after three ministers, Groom, then Hodgman, then Gutwein, who were serial buck-passers in relation to serious and ongoing issues of culture and governance within Heritage Tasmania in particular.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIR** - Order.

**Ms STANDEN** - I have to say by all indications, I had my doubts there for a minute in the middle of the year, but I truly believe that this is a minister who is at last prepared to take the serious issues of heritage into account and make sorely-needed changes.

I noted in the Estimates committee that there had been some serious issues plaguing Heritage Tasmania since the change of government in 2014 and following that, shortly afterwards, the resignation in 2015 of Mr David Scott, former manager of assessment and registration in Heritage Tasmania. He very courageously passed on a copy of his resignation letter and widely publicised it because he passionately believed at the time that he had been trying hard to raise ingrained issues of culture and management within Heritage Tasmania and that those pleas were falling on deaf ears. At the time it did not appear that those concerns were being taken seriously by then minister Groom and then Hodgman because in Estimates of 2017 the then deputy secretary of the department, Tim Baker, said:

I can tell you that the matter was reviewed and dealt with and there have been some structural changes in Heritage Tasmania.

Yet in a recent RTI I was dismayed to see that, and I quote, 'there are no records in relation to investigation by DPIPWE' in relation to those historic issues around culture and mismanagement. I am still not satisfied as to whether there was an investigation.

I am satisfied that some action has now been taken in relation to this. It has not been without cost in relation to a culture change plan that has taken 12 months or longer. There has been considerable expense attached to that and, the highest cost of all is to the staff themselves, the dedicated people within the Heritage sector who are very passionate about this area and have wanted to see change occur. I will leave it at that in terms of the culture at Heritage Tasmania. There is not too much to be gained in looking in the rear-vision mirror.

Looking forward, there are still some challenges. It is clear that with the 5000 or so listings on the Heritage Register, there needed to be some changes made to it. Had I been minister at the time I would have embraced that change as well, but I do not think I would have set a significant target without justification. I do not think I would have insisted on a pace of change that meant it was inevitable that there would be errors made in relation to the amendments to the register.

Minister, I say to you as the first law officer that you are well placed to understand the implications of what I believe to be mismanagement at the time. I cannot see evidence that there have been additional resources and a time frame set for righting those wrongs of the past. I am not satisfied that you, as minister, understand the scope and implications of those errors, including how many of those places are now open to legal challenge. I am talking about things as simple, as if the boundaries are not clear on my property and I make renovations and changes to that property and I subsequently find that those boundaries were in error, what does that mean for property owners and the liability of the Crown?

I believe that substantially more work needs to be put into that to get to the bottom of it and clean it up. I have heard that it is potentially a 10-year project, so serious are the estimations of the errors made on the Heritage Register, but I really hope not. Cultural heritage is of deep concern and interest to Tasmanians and I know the minister understands that. I urge her to take those concerns of the sector very seriously indeed and act within her responsibility to ensure that the department, which knows what needs to be done in order to rectify those issues, is well resourced and supported to make those changes.

I examined issues of governance under an MOU, which I believe is rather outdated, between the Heritage Tasmania and the council. There have been serious and ongoing concerns about the openness and transparency of the operations of the council and its subcommittees, so I asked questions about how often the registrations and subcommittees are meeting. I will be keen to talk with those in the sector to look at the answers provided in Estimates and see whether that satisfies the concerns there.

There are other concerns about delegations and that some of the power and independence of the experts within the Heritage Council has been watered down through alteration of delegations over time. I asked questions and I think they were taken on notice. I have not seen responses to those, but I will be keen to see what that log of delegations is and what changes have been made over time to understand what that means. Although it is a fairly small part of my shadow portfolio, I take it seriously and I know this minister wants to and I hope she looks into these matters as well.

In relation to public building maintenance and moneys invested for stimulus in this space, I flagged within the Estimates process that it was over a year ago that National Trust Tasmania wrote to the Leader of the Opposition outlining a request for the estimated cost of outstanding capital works of \$4 million of which \$3.2 million was immediate and the balance required over the next four years. Clarendon House was included within that proposal. I note that the Budget provides \$350 000, but that is a fairly small contribution compared to the \$1.5 million that was sought within this proposal.

The National Trust of Tasmania manages some high-profile assets on behalf of the state and it would be good to see the minister, where there is discretion within the Budget, really explore the potential for urgent restoration and conservation projects outlined within this proposal, because I dare say under last year's budget and this year's, there has been fairly small progress against the range of projects that were outlined. It would be good to see not just the important outcomes in terms of heritage, but also in relation to job creation and so on, a real investment in cultural heritage in this state.

[4.58 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** - We had a very interesting Estimates process with the Attorney-General. I want to speak about the Attorney-General's role as Minister for Justice and also Corrections. One of the issues I raised at the beginning was concern that had been brought to the Greens about the lack of access to proper justice for young people who are arrested and brought before a night court that is operating out of hours in either the north, the north-west or in Hobart. It appears that young people who are brought to night courts around the state do not see a magistrate.

**Ms O'Connor** - They do not have a lawyer.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - We have been told there is no legal representation. The minister said she was not able to answer that. We will follow this matter up. It is a deeply concerning allegation that children are going to night courts and appearing before a justice of the peace or a bench justice, which is not a magistrate, and a police prosecutor, and that those two people are deciding to, in cases, detain children and send them to a place of detainment. For young people in Tasmania that means Ashley Youth Detention Centre.

We have heard the evidence - more and more evidence is coming out, and we understand more will come out - about how unsafe Ashley Youth Detention Centre is as a place for young people as well as being completely ineffective in its function of attempting to provide restorative justice and rehabilitation for young people who so much need thoughtful and careful care, education, training and support. It is appalling that we have a situation where young people can be picked up by the police - often these cases are minor theft or petty offences - and taken at any time after 5 p.m. to a night court. They do not appear before a magistrate. They have a hearing before a police prosecutor and a JP or a bench justice, which is the same sort of person, and then they are taken away. We understand from information given to us that it can often be on a Friday night and they are sent to Ashley all weekend. They get to be sent to that place which has the most appalling information coming out about child sexual abuse, about violence, about cultural and ongoing and systematic degradation of children and totally inappropriate so-called behavioural techniques like leaving them alone in isolation for, well, the allegations in some cases are days.

This is utterly inappropriate. We are deeply concerned. We asked the minister some questions about the numbers - and it is true that, in the last five months, the figures for the last month included one child from the Burnie night court, one child from Devonport, six children from Hobart, and two from Launceston. These children were detained as a result of night court proceedings where, it is alleged, they may not have had legal representation and were not taken before a magistrate.

What other country in the world, Mr Chair, allows children to be taken away and incarcerated without legal representation or without being brought before a proper magistrate and form of justice? It is really deeply concerning that this is a normal practice. The minister says there is no magistrate who is funded. Well, fund one - fund a magistrate to be in a night court -

**Ms Archer** - No, I did not say that.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - You said there is no magistrate that is funded.

**Ms Archer** - You said that I said that at the hearing, and I did not. I urge you to quote from the *Hansard*.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - You confirmed that magistrates do not work -

**Ms Archer** - No. I think you will find that it was the administrative Magistrates Court, because it is a matter for the court that answered the questions on that.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Yes, there is definitely a funding issue, though.

**Ms Archer** - I confirmed that we provided an additional magistrate. It is up to them -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Okay. The minister is right. There is a funding issue here; it has to be fixed. The bottom line is it has to be fixed. If it means the minister needs to have a conversation with the Chief Magistrate and work out what the impediment is to having a magistrate working after hours, that should happen.

I also spoke to the minister about the Commission of Inquiry Act and the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute's recommendation report about changes - a 17-year-old report - and the minister has said that she will be looking at the recommendations from the TLRI report. It is important that its recommendations are included in any consideration to amendments to the act that need to happen before a commission of inquiry is formalised in Tasmania.

I will briefly mention a robust and useful conversation I had with the minister about non-fatal strangulation standalone offence law for Tasmania. This is a really critical priority, and the minister confirmed that she referred this matter to the Sentencing Advisory Council in May, so it has been sitting with the Sentencing Advisory Council for six months now.

It is a critical issue. It is about protecting women's lives. Often non-fatal strangulation is used as a form of power and control, obviously, but it can also be a precursor to homicide. There is no doubt about that. It is the case that other states have this law, and the TLRI, the Women's Legal Service Tasmania and women's support services all agree that it is past time for it to be a standalone offence in Tasmania.

I believe that the minister made her strongest statement of intent at the end of our long conversation, that she is committed to introducing this law and it is a matter of organising how it will fit in with the existing laws of the state and to make sure there is no overlap or duplication. I believe, and I really hope, it is her intention to proceed to this standalone offence as soon as possible and to encourage the Sentencing Advisory Council to be as quick as it can.

**Ms Archer** - I can clarify that because I do not think I said it in those words.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - You said it in lots of different words -

**Ms Archer** - I will do whatever I can to ensure -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - You did not say 'I will do it.'. That is what I was hoping you would say, but I think you came very close to saying -

**Ms Archer** - I just said we have to be careful of diverse - I do not want a diverse outcome. That is all I said. There was a qualifier there.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - No-one wants a diverse outcome. I understand that.

The other matter I want to mention is Westbury. It is pretty clear that no due diligence was done by this Government, by this minister, on the second choice of site. It is also clear that the community consultation process is a pathetic way to make a decision on a hundreds of millions of dollars proposal.

**Ms Archer** - That is what they called for.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - No. It is required, but it is not sufficient. It is essential that all the other issues like the environmental impacts, like the road costs, like the huge bushfire risk of putting a prison in the middle of a forest and a Forico plantation as well; all these things were never considered. There was no due diligence. It is on the record. It was never done. At least we have that one and put it to bed, and the community can keep fighting it and we will be behind them.

**Time expired.**

[5.08 p.m.]

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Mr Chair, thank you for the opportunity to speak on this output matter which was discussed in Estimates. My contribution and engagement in Estimates was predominantly about workplace safety, so I will turn to that.

First, I want to flag with the Attorney-General our concerns around a right to information received in Health which we raised in the Health Estimates. I have already spoken about that. When we put our RTI in, it took a month before we had anything back from the department. That first conversation suggested we speak to the Government's media office to get an answer. This was a question around locum costs, something that is not available on the public record and not something I think the Government wanted to talk about.

In the context of the broader conversation around RTIs and how they are treated, I am keen to hear if the minister had any advice to RTI officers about whether that was an appropriate response.

We talked in Estimates about a number of things around workplace safety. We raised that issue of a presumptive acceptance of COVID-19. The minister gave us some very valuable information on the number of claims that have been made for workers compensation and the acceptance rates of those. I guess the concerns are broader: longer-term concern around where this issue ends up for us, where this disease ends up for us, and the capacity to have an acceptance for frontline workers in areas exposed to COVID-19, in the same way that we do for our fire officers in presumptive cancer, because of the types of fires they attend.

We mainly talked about industrial manslaughter, but I did want to mention, minister, that I have received in my office in Launceston a copy of the quotes for the Workers' Memorial Park. They have previously been forwarded to the Premier, but I will, if the Attorney-General requests it, send those on to her. It is an interesting commitment. The park in Launceston is a beautiful small park, and for the families who gather there every year on Workers Memorial Day, the fact that it is has not had the kind of commitment that similar parks in other jurisdictions have had does cause them some distress. I want to point out that the author of the words that are written in stones around the park in Launceston had those words picked up and used in the park in the ACT, where they spent substantial amounts of money. It is important to them, and I appreciate that the minister was happy to receive that quote. It has been delivered to my office, late yesterday I understand, so I will physically get it and ensure that the minister receives it.

We spent some time discussing industrial manslaughter. The minister made it very clear that her view was that these are not things you rush into, that you need to understand where it fits. She wanted to see where the national conversation around industrial manslaughter would end up. My concern is that by the time ministers physically meet, it will be two years since the Boland report came into play. It will be two years since that recommendation that we have industrial manslaughter provisions that Marie Boland, an expert in this field, has said are necessary. I understand that officials meet tomorrow to look at some papers in relation to this issue.

There is a concern in the community who are interested in this issue that there is an attempt to push this off, to make it a bit of an administrative decision, and that it will never see the light of day to have a proper conversation about the need for cohesive national legislation. It is true that there are two jurisdictions that are not signed up to those laws. However, it is not true to say that the level of protections they offer around workplace safety broadly are not consistent with the intent of that process.

What I really want, predominantly for families who have lost someone, but also for workers who go to work each day and should come home safely, is a recognition and commitment that there is no such thing as a workplace accident. Accidents do not happen at work. Things happen at work where people are not safe, and where it can be established that that lack of safety has led to their death, then there should be consequences.

We talked about the family of one young Launceston boy. Matthew was 16 when he died in the first week on the job where he was working in Launceston. It was the first court case for that family, and they have been distressed ever since. They were effectively being



treated as if it was a common traffic offence, because of the nature of the court that it was held in, the kind of conversations that were had at the time, and the fact that only a \$25 000 fine was levied against the company for Matthew's life. Matthew's parents have been some of the strongest campaigners for workplace safety, and for the introduction of industrial manslaughter laws. The minister was upset that I used their name. I promise you that I use their names with their permission; not just their permission, but their desire for us to take this issue on.

In fact, that evening after we met, Matthew's dad spoke at a forum. I do not think I have ever listened to Matthew's dad without crying, or met Matthew's mum without crying. He has been campaigning for industrial manslaughter laws for 16 years - the same amount of time his child was alive. That is a damning indictment on all of us in terms of how little we have done.

One of the issues we talked about was the increase in the rate of people who are dying, and the reality is that our workplaces are not getting safer. We have had increases in workplace deaths in the last few years, and that has caused significant concern. What concerns me is that at the same time as we are dealing with those kinds of numbers and those kinds of increases, we are also seeing an inconsistent response around the country. I would like to see a better one. From 2003 to 2018, there were 3751 people who went to work and did not come home. In 2018 alone, it was 144. By 2019, it had got to 183, and to last week's date, there were 147 people. These figures increase because there are many who are subject to a coronial inquiry, or there may be some catastrophic events that take some time to end in death, so these numbers do increase, and that concerns me a lot.

I am worried that, in the absence of having that national cohesive change to industrial manslaughter legislation, we have not done anything in Tasmania, whereas other jurisdictions around the country have introduced industrial manslaughter laws, not because they are not committed to a national framework, but because they believe that in the interim there should be something. There should be something that tells employers that the safety of their workers is vital, and that the safety of their workers matters - and that if they do kill somebody in their workplace, they will be held accountable for more than a \$25 000 fine, or in some cases, much less.

The ACT already had industrial manslaughter legislation. Queensland, Victoria, the Northern Territory and Western Australia have introduced them. New South Wales did increase some of their penalties, but there has been a very long time since they increased penalties, but they do not have industrial manslaughter provisions.

What we want from this minister is not a commitment to ignore the conversation they are having nationally, but to say that if we cannot get to a point where we have nationally cohesive industrial manslaughter laws, signed up by every jurisdiction, then we will act to introduce them here. We will act to send a message to employers that the safety of their workers is an obligation that they cannot ignore. We need to make it so that the punishment for killing someone is worse than the punishment that we give now. At the moment, it is easier to cop an insurance claim than it is to take on the kind of ramifications that happen in other jurisdictions. That is why we raised it.

If a worker dies, it is because a something went wrong. There should be consequences for that. It has been two years since the Boland report. There has been plenty of time for this Government to indicate that in the absence of nationally cohesive laws, that we would take action. This Government has chosen not to do so.

They should not say that it is about protecting employers, because if the employer is doing the right thing in providing a safe environment, then they have nothing to fear. What we want to say is that if you go to work, then you should come home at the end of the day. We should be making that a priority in our workplaces and in our community.

[5.18 p.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Mr Deputy Chair, my colleague, Dr Woodruff, covered most of the issues that it is possible to cover in 10 minutes in her contribution. I thoroughly endorse every statement she made, particularly in relation to young people who wind up either in remand or on sentence at Ashley Youth Detention Centre. This is a matter of the human rights of these young people. They are entitled to legal representation, and we believe they are entitled to have a magistrate to hear matters that come before them but relate to young people.

I will speak particularly today about heritage matters, and the conversation we had at the Estimates table. I also remind the House that under Ms Archer's predecessor as minister, Mr Groom, a program was undertaken to cut 30 per cent - one-third - of the properties from the Heritage register. What it meant is that in places like Launceston and Hobart, whole streetscapes were removed - 37 properties from Balfour Street in Launceston, 10 properties from Charles Street in Launceston, 10 properties from Elphin Road, and on it goes. The fabric of our heritage register has been fundamentally altered because of this Government's decision to cut so many properties from the Heritage register. In North Hobart, a streetscape in George Street, Little Arthur Street, Newdegate Street, Smith Street, and on it goes again.

One of the problems is that in the Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995, there is no provision for preserving streetscapes that add to our culture, our heritage and our character, which has allowed the removal of so many streetscapes from the Tasmanian Heritage Register.

One of the other issues with the legislation - I've just had another look at it - is in the establishment, functions and powers of the Tasmanian Heritage Council. The first thing I want to say is I acknowledge the great work the Heritage Council does. It is really important work, but if the Heritage Council is to fulfil its obligations under the act to encourage public interest and understanding of issues relevant to the conservation of Tasmania's historic cultural heritage and encourage and provide public education in respect of Tasmania's historic cultural heritage, there is no argument for having closed Heritage Council meetings. That was a matter that was raised by the Greens at the table. We also note that it is increasingly difficult to find the minutes of Heritage Council meetings. You need to be a bit of an IT specialist to find those minutes.

We encourage the minister to have another look at the Historic Cultural Heritage Act to contemplate how there might be better protections provided for streetscapes that are part of the fabric of our European cultural history, because at the moment, given the under-resourcing of local government in protecting that heritage, there are question marks over the status of those Heritage properties that are part of the streetscapes that are part of our European cultural identity.

We asked about the potential politicisation of decisions from within the former senior management of Heritage Tasmania, and I have to say we still have not had answers as to whether or not a decision was made, for example, to change the listing notice about former Australian Greens leader Bob Brown's property at Oura Oura at Liffey to remove reference to the previous premier's father in an historical recounting of a story which has become known as the chainsaw massacre but relates, as I understand it, to macrocarpa trees. There is also a

question over whether or not reference to the Hobart Walking Club's opposition to the expressions of interest process and private development in public protected areas was removed from the listing at Mt Field. You cannot have heritage listings and decisions being politicised, if that is indeed what has happened, and it is our information that that is indeed what happened.

We also asked a question about the former Scottsdale radio station that has gone onto the real-estate market which we understand is one of the last intact radio stations in the country that contains records, materials and technologies which should be preserved for their heritage value. There is still a question mark over what happened to the interior at the Scottsdale radio station and whether or not any effort has been made to preserve some of that unique recent European heritage.

The Greens were also concerned about the state of the National Trust's funding base and the fact that because of its funding base it needs from time to time to send some parts of its collection out to an auction house to raise funds while all over Tasmania really significant European cultural heritage properties are falling into disrepair. One that comes immediately to mind, because I have been there most recently, is the beautiful former mine manager's home at Queenstown, Penghana, which is an outstandingly strong structure, but you can see as you walk through that lovely building that it is in sore need of some significant heritage works.

We want to see Heritage Tasmania's advice to the Heritage Council on Reg Hall's hut on Halls Island at Lake Malbena in the Walls of Jerusalem National Park in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. Reg Hall's hut, which was built in the early 1950s from memory, is a place that is very dear to Tasmanian lovers of wilderness, to bushwalkers and to fishers, and the hut and the island it is on have been completely privatised by this Government which has signed over in two lease and licences exclusive possession of Reg Hall's hut and Halls Island itself to a single private developer who is working to profit from that publicly protected area and destroy wilderness values through around 240 helicopter flights over the wilderness every year, should his development get approved.

Tasmanians should be able to see the advice Heritage Tasmania has provided on the heritage values of Reg Hall's hut. There is no reason to keep that secret, so we will be requesting a copy of that advice and hope that the minister supports us in obtaining that advice from Heritage Tasmania to the Heritage Council. It will certainly be of significant interest to the now thousands and thousands of everyday Tasmanians from every walk of life, all points of the compass and all cultural backgrounds who love the wilderness and who are furious about this Government's privatisation of public protected areas and its capacity and willingness to give away Heritage treasures like Reg Hall's hut and island treasures like Halls Island at Lake Malbena. I might add, Mr Deputy Chair, that all of that was done in secret out of the public's view by, in fact, the minister's predecessor in the Heritage and Parks portfolio, Mr Groom.

There needs to be much more openness in relation to European cultural heritage. It raises a much bigger question here about how we treat heritage generally, whether it is Aboriginal or European cultural heritage, and you cannot help but feeling that for a long time for developers and complicit governments, heritage treasures have been seen as something simply in the way of progress and we are worried that is what we are seeing at Eaglehawk Neck at the site of a likely massacre, according to historian and author, Lyndall Ryan.

There needs to be a whole recalibration about the way we think about this island's history and the human history of this island that goes back 40 000-60 000 years and the European

history of this island which goes back about 217 years: that is the established European history of this island. As we know, the French came here before the English invaded.

We encourage the Minister for Heritage to look at the Cultural Heritage Act and talk to the Heritage Council about making sure that their meetings are more open and to provide us with the advice on Reg Hall's hut.

**Time expired.**

[5.28 p.m.]

**Ms HOUSTON** - Primarily my comments will relate to the child sex abuse allegations relating to James Geoffrey Griffin. What I had hoped to hear from the minister was that reviews had been undertaken into Working with Vulnerable People registrations and that the system could be improved to ensure that those issues with Working with Vulnerable People cards could be quickly identified if they were the subject of allegations, that their employers could be immediately informed and that other organisations they were associated with notified and their registrations revoked.

This is what I had hoped to hear, but it was not the case. I was astounded to learn that the first law officer was not informed when a serial child sex offender was revealed to have been preying on children not only in the health system but in other departments across the State Service. In fact, we learnt she found out in the media.

I was also surprised to learn that Working with Vulnerable People registrations sit within Building and Construction. I was distressed to learn that given the failures of the system of managing notifications of perpetrators, nothing had been done to review or refine the process or system for managing notifications of offenders to employers, organisations, social clubs, and sporting associations.

This was not even a possibility, because the minister responsible for Working with Vulnerable People checks and registrations was not informed about the activities of James Griffin. This is particularly distressing to the community service sector. The Working with Vulnerable People registration is an essential element and requirement for anyone working in the sector. The idea that someone could have allegations made against them and have the card revoked, while organisations and employers were not told, was an absolute outrage to many in the sector.

I would like to think that, had the minister been made aware of the serious allegations against James Griffin at the time, that the past year since his death and the end of the police investigation could have been used to review the process around Working with Vulnerable people registrations. Action could also have been taken to ensure information about misconduct and allegations was better communicated to employers and organisations, so they could act appropriately and protect vulnerable people - and especially children.

This type of review might restore some of the faith in the system that many in the community sector tell me has been compromised by this entire situation.

[5.31 p.m.]

**Ms ARCHER** - I rise to speak on the Budget Estimate Committee B hearing from last week.

Referring to that very thoughtful last contribution, I do not disagree that many issues about procedures will come out with the commission of inquiry. We know that. As I said in question time yesterday, the registrar is not permitted to advise me regarding working with vulnerable people checks. That may be something that needs to come out of the inquiry; how we can improve that system. The grey area is the privacy aspect, and how all of that is balanced; but it is a subject for proper review and looking into as part of that commission of inquiry process. I make that brief reference to my answer to your question in question time yesterday.

Turning to Budget Estimates, I was pleased to talk about a variety of initiatives and investments that support my important portfolio areas of Attorney-General, Justice, Corrections, Building and Construction, Arts and Heritage.

Building and Construction has WorkSafe Tasmania within it and also consumer building and occupational services. All of those used to sit with the Attorney-General in any event, so the whole of the Justice Department now sits with me - apart from Planning. I do not need that as well. It does give me that broad oversight of all of those areas.

I thank members for the variety of their questions. I make the observation that the Greens definitely outperformed the majority Opposition; my observations in my various portfolios was that they scrutinised the Budget in a better manner. There was not as much politicisation of some very serious issues.

I will remark on Ms Butler's contribution. I found it quite galling that she comes into the House and even mentions the northern regional prison. She did not even show up to my Corrections portfolio allocation so she did not ask one question at Budget Estimates. I simply make that observation.

**Ms O'Connor** - Too much bush, too many birds.

**Ms ARCHER** - I really do not know. Some of the allegations from this morning too; my colleague dealt with that.

First, the Justice portfolio. I am very pleased that over the years there has been an increase in funding. Of course, there are always pressures in the Justice and indeed Corrections portfolios, but there has been an enormous amount of additional funds in the last few years. One initiative I will briefly comment on: our proposal, by the way of draft legislation, to allow for the option of criminal trials to be held without a jury in the Supreme Court, but with appropriate protections. By that, I mean ensuring that the defendant or any co-defendants agree to it. It is either their idea or they agree to it if the prosecution proposes it for whatever reason. Other jurisdictions that have this, are the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia. They all provide for judge-alone criminal trials in certain circumstances, and also require the consent of the defendant.

They provide an alternative to jury trials, and they assist in helping to reduce court backlogs, together with a range of reforms already passed through the parliament in the Magistrates Court reform package and more recently the court backlog bill. As I have said, there is no silver bullet for dealing with the backlog issue. However, I do feel there will be a significant positive impact as we move forward with these initiatives.

Of course, they can also allow for better access to justice, while also taking account of physical distancing requirements as a result of COVID-19. A number of key legal stakeholders have indicated broad support for the concept of judge-alone trials in Tasmania as an option. I will be looking to consult on the instances in which the option for a criminal trial without a jury may be considered, mainly based on work already commenced in other jurisdictions. We plan to commence targeted stakeholder and public consultation on the draft legislation before the end of the year.

During Estimates hearings I was also pleased to talk about the significant Budget investments and there are quite a few including support for the legal assistance sector. We are providing \$2.6 million over four years to help the sector support more Tasmanians. This comes on top of the \$614 000 we provided the sector earlier in the year. The funding will provide much needed certainty and maintain core service levels under the Australian Government National Legal Assistance Partnership that commenced this year and runs to 2025, when I presume it will be updated again.

It must be noted that the sector received significant COVID-19 funding from the Commonwealth Government. I know that that was welcomed by the sector, because of their significant workloads still throughout the COVID-19 period in the family law sector in particular and, in the criminal sector as well.

I outlined the \$2.3 million over four years for Tasmania Legal Aid serious cases fund to support its work in reducing the backlog of complex criminal cases before the Supreme Court, as well as bolstering the Director of Public Prosecutions recurrent budget of \$3 million over four years. This is in addition to the \$2.7 million of additional funding that we provided to the DPP over four years in the 2019-20 State Budget. There are significant amounts of funding that have gone, not only to the courts, but also to Legal Aid and the DPP. If you put money into one sector you really do need to put money into the others as well, because an increase in one will increase the work elsewhere.

I turn now to Corrections. I was pleased to spend Budget Estimates outlining how this year's State Budget demonstrates our government's continued commitment to community safety by investing in both the operational side of the portfolio and, indeed, the significant investment in our infrastructure in the Tasmanian Prison Service. I was asked - and responded to - questions about the prison population. I outlined to the Committee that prison populations are trending upwards across the country. Tasmania is not immune from that trend, and we also see pressures in our minimum- and maximum-security areas.

I will briefly address the issue of using bunks and even mattresses. They are used for surge capacity. The amount of time that someone sleeps in that scenario is of a short duration. That was confirmed by the Director of Prisons during Budget Estimates hearings. Sometimes when members report back to the House they conveniently omit the reasons behind the situation. The week before, for example, I had a report that no mattresses were being used. On the actual day of the hearings there were 11, so that shows that it fluctuates. There is a quick turnaround to try to ensure that people are placed in single cells as much as possible. The simple fact is the reason we are building the southern remand centre and another facility in the north of the state is to deal with this capacity issue with modern facilities that not only provide a safer environment for prisoners and the community at large but also for our hardworking Corrections staff.

The Government is committing \$14 million over four years to meet increasing demand in the Tasmania Prison Service catering for increased prisoner numbers and costs relating to staffing, hospital and transport requirements and investment of \$3.5 million per year will also support prisoner reintegration activities, education, and therapeutic support services that support essential rehabilitation and reintegration programs. The Budget also reinforces our significant funding for the northern regional prison facility with \$111 million committed to completing stage 1 of the project. This vital project will support more than 1000 jobs and deliver an economic boost of \$500 million into the region and that is confirmed by the SEIS report that was conducted in relation to community consultation and on the economic benefits or otherwise to the area.

During Estimates I was also asked to outline progress of the new southern remand centre and I confirmed the additional funding whereby this Budget commits \$79.9 million to the overall \$85 million facility. To confirm what Ms Haddad said, we guarantee that all of the things in the original scoping design will be built.

Budget Estimates also allowed me to talk about Tasmania Prison Service's response to COVID-19, which was extraordinary. I expressed my extreme dissatisfaction at the contribution Ms Haddad had made in this place the week before the committee hearing in her budget reply speech where she said that luck had nothing to do with COVID-19 not entering our prison system. It was not good luck, it was as a result of good management and I thank the Director of Prisons and all his staff for their commitment and the strategic way they went about managing this process, which they continue to do. We are not through COVID yet.

I am going to move very quickly to Building and Construction. The Estimates hearing allowed me to announce our quad bike use initiatives. Sadly, there have been 14 quad bike fatalities in Tasmania since 2011 and I must express our sincere condolences to the friends and families of all those Tasmanians who have lost their lives as a result of a quad bike incident. When I was at school I lost a dear friend's sister - she was also a friend of mine, close in age - on a farming property and it is absolutely tragic for any family or friends to go through.

Because of these tragic events the Government is continuing to take a range of steps to improve the safety of quad bike users, including provision of training and information and education resources. That is really important. There is also a public awareness campaign, progressing amendments to relevant regulatory frameworks and the launch of a rebate scheme to assist business operators to purchase safety devices. During Estimates I announced that our Government will amend the Work Health and Safety Regulations and road rules to improve quad bike safety in workplaces and on public roads.

During my hearing in the Legislative Council Estimates I also announced that the Government would be extending the protections afforded to landlords and tenants until the end of January. There have been significant economic impacts from the pandemic and I have spoken about this on a number of occasions in this House and so, due to time restraints I am not going to go into this other than to confirm that our Government recognises that circumstances associated with the pandemic can change very quickly, as seen in other states already. However, it is not our intention to extend the protections beyond 31 January unless circumstances change.

I hope that provides some comfort to landlords. I know it is a difficult situation and that is why we set up the Landlord Support Fund and the Rent Relief Fund. We have allowed access

now and an extension to the Rent Relief Fund three times, so tenants can apply on three separate occasions for different rental arrears periods and landlords can have their second application. We are trying to help them through this difficult and challenging time.

It should also be noted that a landlord is still within their right to vacate a tenant from their property under some circumstances, including a notice to vacate that has been served for a non-fixed-term lease because the property is to be sold, have major renovations or to allow the owner or a close family member to move in; or a notice to vacate has been served due to the tenant using the property for an unlawful purpose; or whereby a court terminates the lease; or where the lease has been terminated for severe hardship by the Residential Tenancy Commissioner. I remind both parties that they can apply to the Residential Tenancy Commissioner in that instance. If a tenant causes damage or is using the property for an unlawful purpose, a landlord or their agent can apply for a notice to vacate from the Magistrates Court.

The Arts is an important portfolio for me because I really enjoy it and have always had an interest in the arts, as well as the law and other things. Heritage is near and dear to my heart as well, having served time on Hobart City Council. Built heritage, which comes under my portfolio, is something that I had the opportunity to learn about in that role and I continue to learn as minister as I regularly visit and speak to major stakeholders and people with an interest in the Heritage area.

Regarding the Arts portfolio, I was very happy that this Budget has an additional \$4 million funding. It is amazing what arts individuals and practitioners, groups and organisations can do with an amount like that. It is exciting that we remain committed to our cultural economy. We recognise that a productive cultural and creative sector provides both economic and social value to the community by enhancing lifestyles and creating opportunities for those in the industry. Prior to COVID-19, the cultural and creative industries were one of the fastest growing employment sectors in Tasmania and I want that to return and be the case again.

It is very exciting that we have now released the Cultural and Creative Industries Recovery: 2020 and Beyond. As I have explained, COVID delayed that and then there was no point in releasing the strategy we had, so we updated it to address the recovery from COVID but also the enormous opportunities. I encourage members to have a look at that publication. I am very proud of Arts Tasmania and all our staff who worked on that publication. I thank my advisory council for their work and input as well. It has been extremely well received and the fact that we were able to attach funding to it as well was also extremely well received.

Before I finish on the Arts, I emphasise that out of the \$4 million, \$1 million over two years is there to support a new focus program of community arts and cultural development. I am particularly excited about that because that very much fills a gap I have been wanting to fill for quite some time now involving community arts with education, justice and health. There is another sector, but there are about four different things it can address within our community and interconnect with, in regard to our community arts and also having relatively junior or emerging artists pairing up with other more established artists. The recovery strategy outlines a lot of those sorts of principles and concepts as well. Again, I encourage you to have a look at that.



In closing, to talk about Heritage. We have put significant funding into the Port Arthur Historic Site. It is one of Tasmania's iconic visitor attractions. The Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority, for which I have oversight as minister, did approach the Government, and we have been able to provide a total of \$20 million in equity contributions over the next four years to support recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. That is essential, given the status of that site and its importance to Tasmanians, but also to our visitor economy. It is an amazing site.

The Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens is an amazing site as well. It will receive a funding boost of \$4 million as part of this State Budget. This is in addition to the \$3.6 million our Government had already committed to the gardens in 2018. It will see their long-held vision of a new visitor centre become a reality. They also received \$302 000 out of our Public Buildings Maintenance Fund for various projects around the site, the convict wall being one of them. That work was carried out using all local contractors during COVID-19.

### **Time expired.**

**Estimates of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Building and Construction, Minister for the Arts and Minister for Heritage agreed to.**

## **DIVISIONS 8 and 9**

(Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, and Minister for Local Government)

[5.52 p.m.]

**Ms BUTLER** - I rise to speak on Estimates on the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management. During our scrutiny committee, it was revealed that biosecurity officers had released *Ruby Princess* travellers when they arrived in Tasmania. Mr Barnett's committee was at the same time as we were in committee with the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management. Mr Barnett stated that it was the decision of the State Controller. A question was asked during that committee as to who made the decision to allow the passengers from the *Ruby Princess* to disembark. This was not provided in the response from the minister, which we received today.

Other states have been able to pinpoint decision-makers around the *Ruby Princess* debacle, and how so many people were let to mingle back into New South Wales and other states as happened in Tasmania. We know that the issue was raised by biosecurity staff. We know that at the moment it does not look like any accountability for this decision is going to be made, and that leads again into this ongoing situation that we find with this Government of secrecy and not providing full information.

Other states have been able to identify accountability, and it does not look like we are going to be able to be given any answers on who was accountable for that decision. Once more we are given lies, once more we are given protocols, but we are not actually given a direct line of accountability.

During our committee we sought answers from the minister in relation to his knowledge of police investigating a complaint of child abuse against James Griffin, and also asked when the minister was first made aware of the alleged crimes. We know that a complaint was first

made on 1 May, and that police investigations subsequently followed. Mr Shelton has stated that he was advised for the first time on 23 August, and that charges were laid on James Griffin on 3 September 2019, and that the police investigation concluded upon Mr Griffin's death on 18 October 2019.

We know a number of other complaints were also made in the lead-up to Mr Griffin's death. It is a horrendous breach of trust, and my sincere thoughts and wishes go to those poor victims. I do not think the Government has handled the situation appropriately. It seems there are gaps in the chronology, and we have had to drag the Government kicking and screaming to finally agree to this commission of inquiry. Because of the secretive nature of this Government, and the culture and the lack of accountability, the propensity for marketing and slogans over ethics and integrity, I am actually dubious about the accounts that have been provided to us at the moment.

I note that Commissioner Hine stated in that particular scrutiny committee, and I quote -

I have now been informed that a commission of inquiry is being established. It isn't yet, just to clarify, and I accept that, but I don't wish to prejudice any further investigation, and any information required of us will be given to the commission of inquiry once it's established.

I have faith in Tasmania Police, and I suggest that the investigation into this matter would have been very difficult for those officers as well.

I believe we will learn much more about that situation as time progresses, and we are not going to stop asking questions. It is a real breach of many situations where, especially with children, younger people, it is in situations of health care. It is something that we are not going to sit down and not continue to prosecute.

Moving on from that, I would like to discuss the Tasmanian Government Radio Network and the \$464 million price tag on that radio network. We know from the Public Accounts Committee that cost blow-outs are expected, and we are already looking at nearly \$0.5 billion for that radio network. The forward Estimates only accounts for just over \$120 million. The Tasmanian Government Radio Network case identified the average annual cost for the managed service feeding the agency requirements contained in the reference design and subsequently included as part of the RFT would be in the vicinity of \$40 million per annum, on the basis of a two-year build period, and a 10-year operational services period.

In August this year it was announced that Telstra, in partnership with Motorola Solutions Australia, won a contract to supply the Tasmanian Government with a new radio network. I asked the minister whether he was aware of some of the problems experienced in other states, namely Victoria and Queensland, with the network provided by Telstra and Motorola. These are significant issues, where it is alleged that firefighters in Queensland do not consider the Motorola radios provided to be reliable. This problem has also occurred in Victoria with firefighters, as well as the police. Apparently, the firefighters have taken to putting those Motorola radios just one per appliance, just in case they do need to access the radio network. They do not feel they are a safe and reliable radio, and that they are actually putting their lives at risk.

We are looking at \$0.5 billion investment, and I do not want us to go down that track and be locked into a 10-year budget. Half a billion dollars. We are a state of 500 000 people. It is important that we get this right, because it is going to be very hard to get out of if things go sour. I am also concerned about whether the Tasmanian government will own the Government Radio Network as an asset once it is complete.

It is a half a billion-dollar investment and we do not even know whether we will have ownership over it. I asked this question during the scrutiny committee and was advised that the negotiations are still under way so we do not even know at the moment whether we will own our own government radio network once it is complete. Will it be owned by Telstra or Motorola? Where will that put us as a state when we do not have control of our own government radio network? I know that there are lots of cases with Motorola if you look at places like Cincinnati where Motorola have sued the state, so we have to be very careful because we cannot afford to have these kinds of issues with ours. I do not think it is a simple matter of let's give it a crack and see how it turns out. We have to be 100 per cent sure because it is \$0.5 billion.

Regarding our emergency service network providers, it is also the ownership of the towers at those particular sites on top of each hill. They are apparently very valuable to providers. They are a sought-after commodity and I want to make sure, before we potentially sign over all our assets, that those questions are asked. It is going to require some really good scrutiny and I do not think we can be wined and dined by Motorola or Telstra on this. I know we do not have the capital outlay that other states have. We have a large area for coverage but we have a small rate base. We have 500 000 people and we do not have that initial capital outlay so I really hope that is not skewing the decisions the Government is making on this. Just because we do not have the capital outlay does not mean that we have to pay off a half a billion-dollar debt on something we might not even own and might not even be effective.

I asked the minister through a question on notice which radios will be provided by Motorola. Thank you for getting this back to us before we came back into the House; I appreciate that, minister. I asked whether we would be receiving the APX8000HXE and the APX8000 radios. The response was -

As a result of a workshop conducted with some 79 personnel from the eight user organisations over the period 15 February 2020 to 13 March 2020, the majority of users have selected Motorola APX8000 or Motorola APX8000HXE. Portable terminals for use on the network was part of the initial terminal allocation.

The APX8000 terminal provides the features sought by user organisations including dual band capacity, Wi-Fi ability, encryption and duress capability. The APX8000 is proven technology in use throughout the world. Terminals will be subject to acceptance testing prior to the use of the network.

The Tas GRN project team is aware of the issues in Victoria ...

So we cannot say we were not warned -

... however network configuration in Victoria differs to that at Tas GRN.

I will seek some further advice on what that actually means because there is a lot of radio talk and a lot of lingo that gets thrown around. It is meant to bamboozle and confuse, but I have some good advice in relation to this area because I am very concerned about a half-a-billion-dollar spend. The response concluded with -

The Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management will continue to monitor these to ensure that there are no implications for the successful implementation of the Tas GRN.

We know that the APX8000HXC and APX8000 radios are problematic in Victoria. I am advised that Victoria Police have had to recall all of the APX8000 due to faulty boards, so I am not sure if you are aware of that but I have sought further advice on that and it does stack up. Victoria Fire has also stopped using the radios except maintaining one per appliance just to make sure they are connected to the network. They are simply not safe.

Queensland Fire has totally rolled back the Motorola radios and are now using original radio-to-radio analogue technology. They are not even using them anymore and we are about to head into something that Queensland and Victoria have both had really big problems with and it is the same radio. That is the problem. I was hoping that the advice that came back was that it was a different radio, but we are going to be using the same radio by the looks of the response.

We were advised in the scrutiny committee that the contracts are under negotiation and I really hope that part of those negotiations are going back and really digging down into what the faults are in Victoria and Queensland. I do not want us to have to be the poor cousins and end up with half a billion-dollar debt here.

Coverage is a major issue for Telstra in Victoria where coverage indoors is something that keeps putting emergency service workers there at risk. There are examples where police have been unable to call for backup from inside a shopping complex to outside a shopping complex, and where firefighters in basements of buildings have not been able to radio to firefighters outside the buildings. There is also a series of radio transmission site faults as well. There was information provided that the existing radio structure network in Tasmania will be redundant by 2022-23 and I think that is why we are putting all our eggs in the one basket with this, but we know that the duress buttons on those Motorola APX8000s are faulty. They are really difficult and there were examples where they gave permanent hearing damage to either police or firefighters when the alarms went off in people's ears.

There are also problems with those duress buttons. Apparently if you go from inside a building to outside a building and go out of range they cut out and then they have to be reactivated. They had another problem with the duress buttons as well where they were spontaneously going off and that was triggering the whole duress procedure and protocol around that. They have had really big problems with the duress buttons.

I know there have been four or five other options, other ideas about how we could link our current radio network through without having to invest this half a billion dollars, outlaying some spending to make do with what we have in the interim because there is really good technology which is just around the corner. By the time that half a billion-dollar investment is up and running with potentially radios that do not work properly and coverage which does not work effectively either, other technologies will be in place and other states will have surpassed

us. It is really important that we have radio technology which is compliant with the rest of Australia.

If you have Victoria and Queensland moving to find other providers because they have had so many problems with this, that could end up with us having a half-billion-dollar debt with a potentially fraught system. I will keep prosecuting on the radio network though because I think it is extremely important and I know how expensive it is and how important it is to Tasmania to have one in place that works well.

I would like to discuss the Sorell emergency hub that was part of the capital investment for Tasmania Fire Service. The Sorell Police Station is inadequate. We had a tour of the Sorell Police Station and they do an incredible job out of that facility but it should have been replaced a long time ago. St Helens needs replacing as well. I know Tania Rattray MLC always puts a plug in for a new St Helens Police Station as well because that also is really inadequate.

That said, I think the new Sorell emergency hub is fantastic for police. It has been very generous of Sorell Council to provide that land to the Tasmanian Government. The problem is that there is no proper foresight at the moment into where TFS and SES fit within that emergency hub.

At the Public Works Committee hearing, I asked whether there was any data, or evidence or maybe a recommendation from one of the fire reports to support whether Sorell needed a dedicated career firefighting force or a volunteer force. I was advised by TFS during that committee, that there is no such evidence.

We were trying to understand why they are being placed there. We still do not know whether it will be 24-hour capacity or a day capacity station. The Midway Point, Orielton and Wattle Hill volunteer fire brigades are all very concerned about the future, because Midway Point is the call-out for Sorell and they also look after the Causeway from Midway Point to Sorell; and Clarence looks after the Causeway section from the airport side to Midway Point.

There are concerns it could make the Midway Point volunteer fire brigade redundant. There was no consultation with the Midway Point, Orielton or Wattle Hill fire brigades around what it could potentially mean for them. I know there is now, but it was only after we raised it publicly. They are things to be mindful of.

There is no forward allocation of funding for equipment or staff in the Budget for the SES or TFS components of that emergency hub. There is an allocation for equipment and resourcing for police and that is a good result. It is going to be a fabulous facility, but there is still a lot of uncertainty as to why TFS and SES are actually part of that hub and certainly there is no money allocated at the moment for those sites.

**Time expired.**

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### **Recognition of Visitor**

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIR** - As you are coming to the microphone Dr Woodruff, I will acknowledge Ms O'Connor's guest in the reserve. I believe he is an overseas student at UTAS studying criminology. Welcome to Parliament House.

**Members** hear, hear.

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[6.12 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I will speak to some of the questions that I raised during Estimates hearings for the Police, Fire and Emergency Management and Local Government portfolios.

The central issue which determined a lot of the questions the Greens asked of the minister for Police in Estimates hearings related to the role of the minister for Police and Tasmania Police in providing information to different departments about the child sex abuse that occurred at the LGH and the abuser, Mr Griffin. The information was known to police on 1 May 2019.

We learned from the Minister for Health that she only heard about this on 31 July, on the same day that the Working with Vulnerable People card was revoked for that man who had been a nurse at the LGH. He was stood down on the same day, 31 July.

However, the trail of evidence shows that Tasmania Police commenced an investigation in early May and during the Estimates scrutiny in the Legislative Council, Deputy Commissioner, Mr Higgins -

**Mr Shelton** - Acting.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Acting Deputy Commissioner, Mr Higgins provided evidence to the committee indicating that during July, in his words, a certain CIB became aware that Mr James Griffin was working at the LGH, and then the matter was communicated by Tasmania Police to the Health minister and the LGH.

Although Tasmania Police had commenced an investigation, it took almost three months for the Working with Vulnerable People card to be revoked, and for that man to be stood down from his position and removed from having access to children in the paediatric ward.

It is very concerning. I asked the minister a number of times about what he knew and when he had information in relation to this matter. I also asked what he had done, and what he would do now to change the systems, policies and processes in place in Tasmania Police, to make sure the gap between a police investigation commencing, and police finding material and subsequently charging a person with child sex abuses, could be reduced to, ideally, one day. On the day that a person is charged, an investigation is commenced on child sex abuse. There must be a mechanism for making sure that the Working with Vulnerable People card is either suspended or revoked, depending on the circumstances.

It is a matter of deep concern. The evidence shows that the police minister is completely disinterested in taking responsibility for what happened. The minister announced today that there will be a review into police processes. That has happened after the Estimates hearing and after the Greens and Labor Party members asked questions of the minister this week in parliament; after the blow torch was turned right up. That is exactly the problem with this minister: he does not act; he does not look; he is not interested in the overarching obligations of his role as a minister to protect, in the case of being the Police minister, to protect Tasmanian children, women and men from a whole range of issues; to keep them safe, especially

Tasmanian children. He ought to have had an interest in investigating this matter from the very beginning when he found out about it on 23 August 2019.

The first thing I would have said if I was the Police minister is, who knows about this? Where was that person employed? Did that person have a working with vulnerable people card? Have actions been taken to inform the relevant employment agencies?

**Mr Shelton** - At that point he had already lost his card and had been stood down.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - The fact is that the minister showed no interest in looking at the processes. The point, minister, is the Netball Association of northern Tasmania did not find out about it until this year in May. He did not find out about it, despite the fact that the first person who made a complaint was from the Northern Tasmanian Netball Association in May the preceding year. It is really distressing and disturbing that the Police minister still does not get that there is a possibility - an obligation - for a Police minister to get involved in policies and processes to keep people safe. It is not about operational manners. It is about the policies and processes to keep people safe, and that is normal operating work for a minister.

The minister continued repeatedly to say, 'I will not contribute, I will not say anything because there is a commission of inquiry'. We know from the experience of these things that they will not just be wrapped up in a year. I do not believe it. It would be great if that were the case, but it is much too optimistic to imagine that the scale of what we are coming to understand can be fully and forensically investigated as it has to be in a year.

The Police minister must act, must do everything he can, to change the policies and processes to make sure that appropriate ministers are informed and do have that information. He cannot just wash his hands and say, 'These are operational matters.'. It is not good enough. That huge gulf in time between when the Minister for Health knew and when all the other ministers knew - it is not just the Minister for Health: she was the first; the rest had to find out because of the hard work of a journalist who did that background work and the podcast that came out subsequent to that.

The minister also put on the record that he has no commitment, will not be doing anything in any time at all, and has no budget commitment following the recommendations made in the firearms inquiry report that came down in July last year. The minister has not even referred it to Cabinet; he has not had a conversation with anyone about it. He says, 'Oh well, COVID-19 has been around, it has been so busy'. Despite the fact this was about improving situations and processes to make sure that women and children and partners in domestic violent situations are kept safer by having appropriate mental health background checks, by having engagement between the Tasmania Police and a formal review with the Health community, work recommended in the firearms inquiry, the minister is not even interested in looking at it. Shame on you, minister, because that work has to happen, and it is not up to you as a minister to decide you are not going to further this project. If you are not going to do it, we will keep raising it and we will keep talking to all. It is not just the medical professionals and the Health community that wants this to happen.

The other recommendation the minister is not interested in furthering is putting some funding into Tasmania Police Firearms Services so that firearm owners can have licences given to them in an appropriate time, so we will keep following that matter.

### **Time expired.**

[6.22 p.m.]

**Ms DOW** - Mr Deputy Chair, my contribution on the Estimates deliberations held last week will particularly reference Local Government with the minister, Mr Shelton.

I think you would be forgiven, Deputy Chair, for thinking on the day when we had the Local Government Estimates that not a lot was happening in local government. That is quite the contrary. We had two hours, but we probably could have had one-and-a-half. We could have covered the information we gleaned within one-and-a-half hours.

A number of issues in local government have not been resolved by the Government and it would appear that the Government's commitment to local government reform and working with the sector around that has changed a great deal over the last 12 months, and that it is now more focused on legislative review and on the new Local Government Act. We learned that the funding in last year's Budget was fully expended in the last financial year and that the money allocated this year would be fully expended, and that we would see the completion of the review on legislation coming to the parliament in the new year, which is good. It would be good to get an understanding of what is included in that legislation and to do some further consultation on that at the time.

I took the opportunity to discuss with the minister the reason why amalgamations and changes to municipal boundaries, and the roles and responsibilities of mayors, deputy mayors, counsellors and general managers, were not included as part of that review. We had further discussion about that.

We also spoke about the role of councils as planning authorities. It was interesting to note that the Minister for Local Government felt that there would not be any changes to that role as a planning authority. However, when I raised it in Estimates with the Minister for Planning, there seemed to be an interest from the Minister for Planning in looking at how we could work more regionally around planning assessments across municipalities, and there would be encouragement for collaboration across councils. I found that quite interesting as well during our discussion with the Planning minister.

I again asked a question about charitable rates remissions. This is an ongoing issue and the sector has been seeking a decision to be made by the Government for some time; that dates back to the previous minister.

I acknowledge, and on the day we spoke about, the principles of equity being a very important part of that. Through my discussion with the sector and with other stakeholders, I understand it is a complex matter, but I urge the Government and the minister to make a decision on it. Many councils want to understand what the Government's position is because it has the potential to impact on their rates income. Given the year we have had and the pressures on local government, maybe there are some concerns about financial sustainability across the sector. It is important to address this issue. I strongly encourage the Government - I believe the minister is having some further meetings; she could not provide me with a date around that - to resolve this issue and make a decision on it.

We then moved to the Local Government Code of Conduct and in particular the Code of Conduct Panel, its roles and responsibilities and the fact that appears to be some dissatisfaction



across the sector and the community with the way that the code of conduct process is undertaken across the state. The minister and I discussed the effectiveness of the current code of conduct. The Government and the minister gave a commitment that there would be a review and that the Government is working with the sector around making improvements to it. The code of conduct and the panel process has been described by some elected representatives as a kangaroo court. There are some serious concerns about it and this issue needs to be resolved. I urge the Government to work with the sector to find ways to improve the current process.

We talked about some of the changes and the impact of COVID-19 on the local government sector. We spoke about JobKeeper and the disappointment that it was not made available to the local government sector when there was a need, particularly across council business units such as childcare centres, swimming pools and other municipal facilities that were heavily impacted by the Public Health restrictions.

A number of casual employees across the local government sector lost their jobs during this time. Local government is a particularly important employer in regional Tasmania and in some communities provides services that in other settings are provided by the private sector. However, local government steps up and provides these services. One example of that is childcare services, which are, I am sure you will agree, minister, vital services for rural communities. We had some discussion about that. We also referred to the fact that 10 councils still have their council meetings closed to the public, which is concerning. We discussed the need for the Government to work collaboratively with those councils to ensure those meetings are able to be publicly accessed.

That led us to discuss the local government grants process, and the minister revealed that an amount of money still has not been allocated as part of the loans process. It was interesting to note that the minister thinks he had written to councils explaining this, and a suggestion was made during Estimates that perhaps some of that loan program could be used by councils to enable them to reopen their meetings by the use of audiovisual equipment and that type of thing. It will be interesting to see whether any further progress is made regarding that.

We spoke also about the recovery from COVID-19, the role of local government and the fact that local government did not have a representative on the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council. I understand that the sector was disappointed about that. We also referred to the Local Government Association of Tasmania's submission to PESRAC and some of the ideas LGAT put forward.

A critically important issue for the local government sector is the current shortage of skills across engineering, environmental health officers and planners. There was a model suggested in that submission to PESRAC and an invitation extended to the state Government to work collaboratively with the local government sector around perhaps funding a model where we look at pooling planners across the state to help with some of those resource shortages across the state, particularly where local government has a tremendous workload with the number of planning reforms the state Government is undertaking at present. It was disappointing that that was not included in the Budget and the minister was not able to provide an explanation as to why that was not funded.

One of the initiatives that has been raised with me by members of the community is the introduction of a ratepayer advisory board in Tasmania to provide advice and work constructively with the state Government on issues related to local government and the

concerns of ratepayers. We had some good discussion about the value of ratepayer associations across the state and the good role that they play in local communities but the minister was pretty clear that the Government had not given any consideration to the introduction of a ratepayer advisory board in Tasmania.

We also had some discussion about the waste levy. Waste is obviously an issue that is very close to local government considering it plays a very important role in managing waste across the state and a waste levy is something local government has been advocating for for a very long time in this state. I was seeking some definitive time lines around the introduction of the waste levy in Tasmania and to date that has not been provided by the minister or the Government, so we look forward to gleaning some more information about that and encourage the Government to work cooperatively with local government around the introduction of that levy and that they be involved in that process.

We also had a look at the number of complaints to the Director of Local Government and the director committed to providing a breakdown of the number of complaints for the last period of time that is documented. We had some discussion in relation to that and particularly around the code of conduct process and the fact that a number of complaints are dismissed in the first instance and about the validity of some of the code of conduct and complaints process and whether that is working as it should across the state. The other thing that is important -

#### **Time expired.**

[6.32 p.m.]

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to progress some discussion in the area of the minister, Mr Shelton. Mr Shelton, it is no surprise to say that I have been extremely disappointed with the way you have conducted yourself as minister. I like you as a person, I think you are a really nice person, but I have been genuinely disappointed in you as a minister. That makes me sad, because out of most of the guys on the other side, I like you. I have been disappointed for a number of reasons, particularly the lack of ability to get across your brief, I find extremely disappointing but also concerning.

There are a few areas I want to talk about. First, we will start with Mr Griffin, and I look forward to a day when this is not the conversation. It is very distressing, particularly for anyone who lives in the north because we all know people who have been very severely impacted very severely. In Estimates we asked when you knew and you pointed out that you did not know until early August - 2 August, I believe, you were first briefed. A couple of things concern me. First: the actions that took place from then through to the end of the police investigation, which ended with his death, and the things that took place from his death and onwards in the way we have responded. What concerns me the most is whether there is a level of culpability for anyone who was hurt from the time you knew. From the time the first allegation was made, anyone who was hurt by Mr Griffin in that period, lies on all of us. That is really frightening and distresses me very much, given that I know people who are impacted directly by this.

You have relied very heavily in your commentary in Estimates and in this House that because there is a live police investigation there is nothing you can do. In the main, in the normal course of events, that action makes sense. People are entitled to be presumed innocent until found guilty, or until charges are laid. I accept that, but evidence by Mr Higgins in that Estimates committee says that there are times that if police believe that children or someone is

at risk, they will act in order to ensure someone's safety. What concerns me is that that did not take place.

From May through to the working with vulnerable people card removal that did not take place at the hospital, and it is not clear to me that Mr Griffin ended his relationship with any other organisations with which he was involved. I am not sure that they were advised or how they were advised about his removal of working with vulnerable people check. That falls very much at the feet of the people investigating it who made that decision.

I know you have announced a review which will go through police practices, but fundamentally as a minister of the Crown, these things come down to us as individuals as well. I hope that you also take on that this is not a political gotcha thing we are doing. I am genuinely distressed about what has happened and genuinely frightened that there has been a time since revelations were made that people have been hurt that we could have acted to prevent. That is the reason we are pursuing this so vigorously.

We all want a better system in the future. We want to understand that our processes are working well but we also need to understand the scope of the damage that has been done; the damage that was done before we knew, the damage that was done from people making complaints in the hospitals that were not listened to and a formal investigation actually taking place, all of that period. We heard in evidence in Sport and Recreation that there were concerns raised that there is no documented evidence of the damage that was done from then through to Mr Griffin being charged, but also Mr Griffin was able to still be engaged of outside of the hospital from the time of his working with vulnerable people check to the time of him taking his own life. Those things we all have to take responsibility for.

I know it can seem really unfair because you are not the investigating officer and no-one came to tell you about these allegations directly, but the Westminster system holds that ultimate responsibility and culpability lies with the minister of the day. As a former minister I know that we take these things very seriously but that is where the ultimate liability lies. That is the reason we have pursued it, because there are too many inconsistencies and too many times the ball was dropped. This was not a bouncy ball. This was a crystal ball that clearly shattered for many people, and that is a terrifying thing. I put on record again how concerned I am about that process and we did pursue that within the Estimates conversations.

The other area we talked about - and Ms Haddad raised issues - was around training and family violence. It was made clear that there is initial family violence training provided to new recruits but there seems to be a less than consistent approach to ongoing training for family violence. What we know about attitudes to family violence is that they are ingrained for a very long time in the way we are brought up. From the time we are children we have views around people's conduct in violence and people's supposed acceptance of violence, which means that we have to continue to work on those unconscious as well as those conscious biases, which means constant training.

We have raised in Estimates before, directly with the commissioner, and I am sure the Chair would be aware of this in her previous role, that there are times women present at police desks telling their story and they are asked things like, 'What did you do to provoke him?'. One woman - and I raised this at the time - was told that he had not actually really done anything and maybe if she had pushed him a little bit further and he had hit her then they would be able to do things. The amount of time that women are not given the appropriate response is

appalling. I do not believe that you, as a government, and we as an opposition and when we were a government, do not fundamentally abhor family violence. I have so much respect for the commissioner in this space and the work that he has done, but the reality is we need to provide that training all the time because our unconscious biases are huge.

I am the wife of someone of colour, I am the parent of children of colour, and I check my unconscious racial bias all the time because of the environment that I was brought up in. We have the same kind of unconscious bias when it comes to women. We talk about what they were wearing, where they went, what they did, and we ask why they don't leave. Those are the things that permeate your first initial contacts when the issues are raised, and the police are not immune to that.

There is also the issue that police work in highly confronting circumstances, which do often act as triggers for certain behaviours. There is a reason we need to continue training, so I was disappointed to get the answers on how irregularly that training occurs now. If an incident occurs and it is investigated and training is required, they offer it, but the damage has been done. In the evidence it said that when people do progress, we often provide training at that point. Once again, it is day-to-day interactions that need that unconscious bias training all the time with regard to family violence protection. It is not that the police want to be like that, not that anybody wants to be like that, but the reality is that we were all brought up in certain ways, and it is hard to unpick the behaviours.

All the work with Our Watch that the Government does fundamentally says that we learn these things through small bits of messaging we get throughout our entire lives, so we have to train all of the time to unpick those.

I will not have time to talk about my other two issues as much, but I have been visiting a number of fire stations and I have been concerned that so many of them do not have purpose-built airlock areas to store their PPE. That is a significant concern. Apparently in Estimates, there is a \$560 000 budget for the airlocks, but only 65 out of 226 volunteer stations actually have those facilities. In the main, there may be the odd station that might not ever have a structure that requires this kind of response, but the fact that we do not have a more dedicated response to that concerns me.

The other issue that has been raised with me is that they only have one set of turn-out gear, which as you know, has to be cleaned. If you are a volunteer fire brigade, you want to be available, you want to be on call, and you want to be there when your community needs you. If your turn-out gear is not clean, we know that it is a human behavioural instinct to go 'it's okay, I will turn out anyway in the dangerous equipment', because it takes days, to get your gear back, and very few stations have the capacity to have a second set of gear. Minister, I ask that you address that issue as soon as you can because that has been a significant problem for brigades.

They are also very concerned about the changes to training. It was explored in Estimates, and I want to explore this with you further, because some of the feedback I have had on access to training, particularly the delays because of contractual obligations with the training providers, and then COVID-19 and then more delays, is that people are not getting trained when they need it, and that is concerning.

We ask these people to fight fires for us. We ask them to run towards something that we would flee from with every human instinct. They need to have the training they require, and there should also be more investment in training for fire wardens.

**Time expired.**

[6.43 p.m.]

**Mr TUCKER** - I thank Mr Shelton for the good answers he gave through that committee. Mr Shelton provided information on how the Government is rebuilding a stronger Tasmania for investing in our police and emergency services. As Minister for Local Government, Mr Shelton updated on council performance relating to concerns where there has been significant interest by the community regarding the performance of individual councils, and how they are being compared to other councils across the state, and the steps being taken to increase the transparency of the performance of local government in Tasmania.

It was good to hear the minister say that as well as the significant benefit to the public, in terms of improving overall transparency and accountability for policy and funding decisions, regular performance recording helps councils benchmark their own performance and identify focus areas for improvement as part of their ongoing strategic planning processes.

Delivering a better council performance monitoring and reporting framework is a joint and ongoing priority for both the Tasmanian Government and local government sector. As part of the Local Government Act Review, what we have consistently heard is that stakeholders want information presented in a way that allows for comparisons between councils on key measures that residents and ratepayers care about and can readily understand.

The minister was able to inform us that he is keen to leverage the full potential of the council performance information we already collected, by pivoting to an online council performance reporting interface, similar to those that have been developed in some other jurisdictions.

It is important to note that the Local Government Division has been working with KPMG to develop a prototype council performance reporting dashboard. I support the minister on this improvement, as the dashboard will be a significant addition and improvement to Tasmania's council performance reporting framework. I was very pleased to also see in the report that you gave us, minister, that the Break O'Day Council was performing fairly well, and I was fairly proud.

It was pleasing to hear the update of the Government's commitment to the police large-vessel replacement program. Our marine police are vital for the safety of all Tasmanians: fisheries enforcement, protecting state marine resources, and saving lives in sea rescues. This is why it was reassuring to hear that the larger replacement vessel is under construction, and has progressed to the stage where the hull has been fully fabricated. It is expected to be delivered in mid-2021. This will enable Tasmania Police's first-class marine and rescue service to be better equipped, with the Government's investment of \$12 million in this year's Budget. I congratulate the boatbuilder, Hart Marine, for having the opportunity to design and construct the new 12 metre fibreglass, fast-response patrol vessel to replace PV *Dauntless*. It will be fitted with the latest technology to allow our marine police to effectively and safely operate in all weather conditions and at night.

I agree with the minister in saying that this represents an excellent opportunity for Tasmanian companies, especially as the current economy is rebuilding from this year's disruption.

It was fantastic news that the Government has committed \$5 million to build a new police station at New Norfolk. The new station will give police more capacity to meet the New Norfolk community needs. This Liberal Government is committed to keeping Tasmanians safe, and to deliver on promises to support our rural and regional police, enabling them to get on with their job to keep Tasmanians safe. The replacement New Norfolk police station is a major infrastructure project, and an important one for the Derwent Valley community. I congratulate the minister on being able to announce that the contract has been awarded to construction company, Hansen Yuncken, and the new station was designed by HDV Architects. This facility will service expected growth in the New Norfolk area following the announcement of the proposed residential community-based infrastructure developments in the Derwent Valley area.

I commend our hardworking police officers, and to be able to boost numbers not only benefits our officers, but also benefits our communities.

Mr Shelton was also able to point out how the work of the Forensic Science Service Tasmania is assisting Tasmania Police to tackle crime and keep Tasmanians safe. It provides a range of chemical, toxicology and biological forensic science services to Tasmania Police, Tasmania Fire Service and other key stakeholders. The service provided by Forensic Science Service Tasmania is instrumental as it helps puts criminals behind bars. It helps our hardworking police officers identify new suspects. This is all because Forensic Science Service Tasmania performs confirmatory drug tests on blood and oral fluid samples taken from drivers by police, manages the DNA database and attends crime scenes to assist in gathering evidence. As Tasmania Police conduct more and more oral fluid tests, the workload of Forensic Science Service Tasmania increases.

Forensic Science Service Tasmania has also implemented an extensive drug screen into the routine casework testing for 288 drugs. This is a significant increase from 150 drugs. This analysis is faster and more sensitive. It checks samples from drivers involved in crashes, driving under the influence of drugs cases, and coronial and criminal cases, for example unexplained deaths, sexual assaults and drug trafficking.

Mr Shelton was able to point out how drones benefit Tasmanians and assist the police force. We need to find new and more efficient ways which benefit us all. Tasmania has so much potential and so much to offer. I agree that introducing drones into our police force is nothing but beneficial. Drones are an example of how cutting-edge technology can help fight crime and keep our communities safe. This is why the Government is investing \$400 000 in the drones program as part of our commitment to providing Tasmania Police with the best technology.

It was good to hear confirmation from the minister that Tasmania Police has had a number of successes where offenders in stolen and evading vehicles have been apprehended with drone support. In addition, Tasmania Police has also located a number of stolen vehicles in bushland by using drones and has deployed drones to assist in searches for missing persons. Drone operations are specifically targeted at an incident or occurrence and are not used for general surveillance.

It is important to note that police drones can only be used with authorisation and are governed by strict rules so as not to cause a hazard to other aircraft, people or property. Tasmania Police is also subject to strict guidelines set by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority.

I know Mr Shelton is very passionate about the safety and wellbeing of Tasmania and helping people to feel more secure and protected in life, just like I am.

[6.51 p.m.]

**Mr SHELTON** - I appreciate the opportunity to make some comments on my first Estimates process. To everyone who has made a contribution this afternoon, I thank you for your feedback, both positive and negative. It is wise to take things on board.

This was my first Estimates and first time sitting on that side of the chair. Ms O'Byrne has been there before. It is quite different. Prior to this I have mainly chaired the meetings and the Chair has also been there. The contrast between the two Houses is quite different as well. You appreciate once you have been through it the amount of work and effort that goes on behind the scenes by everybody looking at the process. I say to my staff in the ministerial office and the departments who did the work thank you very much for all the effort that goes into that. It is an extraordinary amount of effort that goes into it every year.

I am proud this time to be a minister in this Government that has taken on the responsibility of COVID-19 and has, to date, managed that process and has brought down a budget that aims at rebuilding the Tasmanian economy. I am proud to be part of the Government and proud to be here today replying to the Estimates process. I am here as the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, and Minister for Local Government.

The Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management continues to deliver the highest level of policing and emergency management services to the Tasmanian community through Tasmania Police, Tasmania Fire Service, State Emergency Service and Forensic Science Services Tasmania. As Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management I am constantly impressed by the high calibre of work undertaken by the department and never more so than this year. 2020 will be remembered for the most serious public health emergency of our time, COVID-19.

The first state of emergency in living memory was declared in March 2020 with the Commissioner of Police also undertaking the role of State Controller. The contribution by the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management has been significant in keeping Tasmanians safe from the spread of this virus.

For some months we have been in a fortunate position with very few restrictions on our activities. However, we have seen restrictions on our movements that were necessary but unprecedented. Tasmania Police's commitment to educating the community and ensuring compliance is to be commended. The high level of compliance and support they encountered from the community while undertaking these duties is testament to the high regard and trust in which they are held by Tasmanians.

Police were well supported by the State Emergency Service and Tasmania Fire Service volunteers who undertook thousands of welfare and compliance checks on those people required to quarantine at home. We are fortunate to have a department with such committed staff and volunteers serving our community and I thank them for their work.

The Government continues to rebuild the police service with the employment of 125 new frontline police officers over this term. We have further announced that another 20 additional officers will be recruited. Initially these police officers will enhance the COVID-19 response capability and will then transition to support the implementation of the enhanced full-time Special Operations Group.

The Special Operations Group is a highly trained response team available 24/7 for planned and unplanned high-risk police operations. This Government acknowledges the need for police to have access to real-time intelligence systems and to that end we are providing \$46 million over the next four years to continue the development of Project Unify. This builds on the initial \$13 million invested for Project Unify's first stage in 2017-18 and will include the development of an online crime reporting function and increased interrogation across a range of systems.

The Government has also extended its commitment to the upgrade of police housing. We acknowledge the need for contemporary accommodation for our officers and their families stationed in remote and regional areas and have invested a further \$8.7 million over two years to upgrade the final 29 houses.

Tasmania Police is responsible for marine search and rescue operations and the protection of our marine resources through compliance and enforcement activities. We have committed an additional \$12 million through the forward Estimates to continue our progressive police vessel replacement program that will see two new vessels delivered, enhancing Tasmanian marine enforcement and rescue capacity.

The 35-year-old PV *Dauntless*, which Mr Tucker has already mentioned, will be replaced by a 12-metre fast-response vessel which will be delivered mid next year. The procurement project for the new offshore police vessel is also under way to replace the 25-year-old PV *Van Diemen*. Tenders for this project will be advertised in the coming months which will present an exciting opportunity for Tasmanian businesses to compete for.

Recognising the need for contemporary fit-for-purpose facilities, the Government has committed \$7 million to the refurbishment of the Launceston Police Station. This funding will be used to undertake urgent infrastructure upgrades and accommodation renovations to the station to provide members and the community with modern fit-for-purpose premises well into the future. This builds on the previous investment to deliver on new police stations in New Norfolk as well as the provision of a new police station at Longford and an emergency service hub in Sorell on which work currently continues.

Interoperability across agencies and ensuring a reliable and contemporary radio network has been an ongoing priority for this Government. The Budget commits funding to progress the Tasmanian Government Radio Network. This will replace five existing separate radio networks and will initially be used by eight organisations including Tasmania Police, Tasmania Fire Service, Ambulance Tasmania, State Emergency Service, Sustainable Timbers Tasmania, the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, TasNetworks and Hydro Tasmania. This year, has seen the most concentrated period of government investment in our emergency services. We have increased firefighting numbers, upskilled 30 volunteer firefighters in remote area firefighting and increased our aerial firefighting and intelligent aircraft capability.



We have committed \$8 million over two years to support the State Fire Commission's activities, and increased capacity to respond to bushfire and support volunteers by developing a new organisational structure within the Tas Fire Service. Complementing this is the \$9.3 million to add two new burn crews and launch the Red Hot Tips program to manage bushfire risk and reduce fuel loads. Red Hot Tips is a one-stop service for landholders on matters relating to bushfire, including advice on effective bushfire management planning, guidance on developing fuel reduction burns, and opportunities for training and mentoring.

The funding will result in a combined total of 31 new positions for the Tasmania Fire Service including a new Deputy Chief Officer, responsible for planning and capability; fuel reduction teams; a volunteer support role; and experts in bushfire planning and response. The backbone of being able to respond adequately to significant fire events is a fit-for-purpose operational centre and we are investing \$3.5 million for a brand-new modern State Operations Centre from which major incidents will be managed.

The State Operations Centre will accommodate the strategic elements necessary to manage significant incidents or multiple events occurring across Tasmania, predominantly from fire or flood perspective. Our state emergency response is supported by 800 SES volunteers around the state. In 2019-20 they provided a record 19 000 hours of emergency contact in responding to floods and storms, road crash rescue, search and rescue, and operational support to the Tas Fire Service in bushfire.

In addition, our TFS and SES volunteers contributed more than 10 000 hours in assisting police with quarantine compliance duties since 25 March. The commitment of our SES and TFS volunteers has been invaluable in checking on those in-home quarantine from a welfare perspective, and ensuring they are complying with their directions. Funding of \$2.7 million is being made available over the Budget and forward Estimates, to support the ongoing provision of an emergency warning system - Emergency Alert.

Emergency Alert is a national telephone warning system used by emergency management agencies, which sends voice messages to landlines and text messages to mobiles, in a defined area about likely or actual emergency such as fire or flood. These and other initiatives form a package of measures that are part of the government's plan to make Tasmania the safest state in the nation.

I thank those staff, members and volunteers who have not only contributed to normal business, but also enabled such a professional coordinated and reliable response to the COVID-19 emergency. The ability to respond and adapt to the pandemic while at the same time dealing with ongoing regulatory and business priorities has been demonstrated across all levels of government.

As the Minister for Local Government, I acknowledge and commend the Tasmanian local government sector for its response to the pandemic, and for the important role it is playing in supporting our local communities and our regions, to respond and recover from the impacts of COVID-19. Local government plays a critical role in our state's economy, and I commend the local government sector for its proactive approach to rolling out its own local initiatives and relief measures to help Tasmanian communities to get back on their feet.

Many councils have brought forward capital works projects as a means of stimulating the local economy. All councils have now agreed to adopt a zero percent increase on their general

rates for the 2020-21 financial year, and financial hardship policies have also been adopted to provide further financial assistance to those who need it most.

To support councils in their recovery effort at a local level, the Tasmanian Government introduced a local government loans program in May. So far, 21 local council authorities have had a total of \$144.3 million in no interest loan borrowings approved under this \$200 million program. A large number of projects have been rolled out by councils using the program, including a total of \$59.3 million on property improvements; \$42.8 million on road, bridges and jetty improvements; \$16.7 million on rate relief programs; \$14.7 million to cover operational purposes; and \$10.8 million to improve stormwater and infrastructure.

The Government has also been working closely with the local government sector throughout the course of the pandemic, to identify and respond to priority business continuity and regulatory compliance challenges for councils. Ministerial notices have been issued under the COVID-19 emergency legislation to allow councils to modify some of their activities and responsibilities, in order to accommodate public health restrictions and social distancing requirements. Councils have been given more time to complete their annual reporting obligations and hold their annual general meetings.

The local government division within the Department of Premier and Cabinet has tirelessly liaised with councils, to respond to the needs of the sector, and I thank the team within the division for its dedication and flexibility throughout the course of COVID-19 and over the course of the previous year. In addition to responding to challenges of COVID-19, the division has supported the Government's work agenda in relation to a number of other significant projects and priorities over the past 12 months. As part of the major review of local government legislation, we undertook extensive consultation in the last half of 2019, and earlier this year we announced 48 approved reforms which we will be progressing to draft legislation for further consultation in 2021. There is an allocation of \$300 000 in this year's Budget to enable that critical piece of work to be finalised.

The Government delivered on its commitment to strengthen and clarify Tasmania's regulatory framework for cemeteries and crematoriums with the Burials Cremations Bill in 2019, coming into effect in December 2019.

We also saw successful amendments made to the Dog Control Act, which also came into force last December. These amendments have strengthened protections for sensitive wildlife from the threat of dog attacks, and provided councils with greater flexibility around the management and integration of greyhounds within the community.

In closing, I acknowledge, as we all can agree, that 2020 has been a year like no other. COVID-19 has delivered us challenges, disruptions and uncertainty, the likes of which none of us have ever experienced in our lifetime.

In response to the extraordinary circumstances, Tasmania has rallied and shown that we are a community that rises to the challenge, that works together and shares the load. As a government, we have done our very best to support Tasmania through this unprecedented period. We have acted quickly and decisively, and we have also continued to drive our agenda for the state wherever possible, despite the setbacks of the pandemic, because we are fully committed to improve the lives of all Tasmanians.

It has been a pleasure, privilege and an experience to go through my first Estimates process and I thank everybody who has been involved.

**Estimates of Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management and Minister for Local Government agreed to.**

**DIVISIONS 2 and 10**

Minister for Racing and Minister for Sport and Recreation

[7.11 p.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** - I rise to speak on this portfolio output. As the shadow minister for racing and sport, for the sake of *Hansard*, I was present for the Racing output, but had a clash with the hearing in another place dealing with the Minister for Energy. The member for Bass Michelle O'Byrne, a former sports and recreation minister in her own right, was able to step in and deputise for the Sport section of this output.

I must admit having experienced an hour with Racing and having read the transcript of *Hansard* from the Sport and Recreation output - and this is not a reflection on the minister personally - it was very clear this was a minister really struggling to grasp the details in her portfolio. That was clear from her inability to answer questions, to respond in a way which was clear, and her inability to articulate answers relating not only to the questions but also to the Budget detail.

Much time was wasted in trying to clarify for her some of the questions we were asking. In reading the Sport and Recreation section of *Hansard*, I pay my respects to Helen Langenberg from the department. She was very clear, and able to respond to a number of the questions that were put to the minister. Over those two hours, it became clear that this is a minister who is grasping with the details and the significance of the work that she has to do. It reflected poorly on the Government, not only in being accountable but having a minister who is able to prosecute a policy agenda or an argument.

The first question about Racing concerned the announcements by Government around the COVID-19 support package. For those who are not aware, Tasmania was the only state that shut down their racing industry during the COVID-19 pandemic. That had a significant impact on the industry. In fact, industry is still recovering and is still bearing the scars of that decision.

Racing is a contested sport, and there are people who are very strongly against racing. The Labor Party is a strong supporter of racing, not only because of the employment but because of the economic activity it creates in the state. Also, it is the livelihood of many people and many people are very passionate about racing. We are very supportive of it. The contested issue around racing in the community is that it should not be receiving Government support and it should not be receiving taxpayer's money. We know a whole range of sports, activities and industries receive Government support for a very good reason, as does the racing industry.

When the Government announced during COVID-19 that millions of additional dollars from the taxpayer were going in to the industry as a support package, that brought the racing industry into controversy. People criticised that. We know from the Budget Papers, and also from the industry, that there was no new money from Government; they were using the stakes

money that had already been sitting on the Tasracing balance sheet. They had used the industry's existing money as a support package, while the Government portrayed they were providing extra money to the industry to support the COVID-19 shut down decision. We waited for over a month for the Government to explain why Tasmania was different from every other state in the country, in terms of being shut down.

We were waiting for that explanation, and everyone in the industry knew that there was no new money. However, the Government was saying there was this extra money because the Budget Papers were clear in articulating the COVID-19 response. I asked what I thought was a pretty simple question. In fact, I debated whether I was even going to ask it, because it is one of those things that, politically, you can bat away. It took eight minutes, and me asking five or six times, for the minister to finally acknowledge that there was no extra money. She read out a prepared brief on the grant money that the Government provides the racing industry but nothing relating to the question. It was a frustrating eight or nine minutes. I look at it again and it demonstrates that the minister was clearly confused as to my question. We need to have ministers who are across their portfolios to respond.

It is very clear there was no extra money for the industry. The industry did not receive a bail out or a support package. Existing money was redistributed and stakes money was lost. We know that race fields were lost, and income and general economic activity in the industry was lost.

There was a real debate and the Chair who is in the Chamber was straight down the line in terms of what is in the capacity of the committee to investigate. I felt that the minister was trying to avoid answering those questions purely because she could not do so. That was very frustrating for the committee. Every time I asked a question about Government funding the minister wanted to pass it to Tasracing and pass it to the Estimates hearings that are in a couple of weeks in the upper House - not face the scrutiny of the committee, which is what it is designed to be.

We raised questions about the so-called COVID-19 bail out money; we discovered that there was no money. We asked questions around stakes, because the Government had made an election commitment to a stakes increase. At the time they made that commitment, there was talk of a point of consumption tax on the industry, but at that stage, the Government ruled that out. They said there would be no new taxes. The two previous ministers for Racing, ministers Archer and Rockliff, had both ruled out implementing a new point of consumption tax on the industry. When there were discussions with industry about the point of consumption tax, it was made very clear that a fair proportion of that would be extra money, not only to deal with infrastructure and animal welfare but also for stakes, over and above the 4 per cent committed as a part of the election commitment by this Government. Again, the minister was confused about the question and tried to avoid answering it, but it was made clear that the point of consumption money was effectively not going to extra stakes. It was a new tax to fund an old promise that was a breach of faith with the industry.

We also discussed the lack of an updated corporate plan. The CEO of Tasracing had made the comment at an annual general meeting that the minister's office had asked him not to circulate the updated corporate plan. The minister made it clear that she had not instructed that; so who instructed him to withhold the updated corporate plan from the industry? That will no doubt be prosecuted and discussed at the upper House Estimates in a couple of weeks.

In the time that we had, the fourth question I asked was around the tri-code facility. There was an announcement of \$8 million for the tri-code facility, and that is obviously closing the Devonport harness and greyhound tracks and relinquishing that lease with that facility. In the Premier's Budget Speech, he made it very clear Spreyton is being chosen as the venue for the new tri-code facility on the north-west coast.

While we welcome the investment in creating the tri-code facility, there are a number of questions in the industry around the suitability of the Spreyton track, I know they need to do some work on that, but remarkably, when I asked the minister about it, the minister said yes, they had allocated money, but the planning and the track design and engineering reports had yet to be done. When I asked the minister where the \$8 million came from - what was the plan they based it on - her initial response was that the \$8 million was provided by the Government in the Budget. Yes, I know that it was allocated in the Budget, but how was the figure decided on? Where was it from? The minister was none the wiser. She said it was a rough estimate as to what money there was to put to a track.

We know the Elwick track upgrade - a turf track - cost \$12.5 million. When you are looking at a tri-code facility, with harness and greyhound and all the kind of infrastructure that would be required, surely it would be more than \$8 million? The minister, first of all, could not identify the work that had been done to identify where the \$8 million came from, but then said that is okay, we are going to get a blank cheque from Government.

Or, given the form of this Government, what they will do is announce the \$8 million and expect Tasracing to pick up the tab. That will impact on stakes. That will impact on the revenue for trainers. That will impact on income for jockeys, and revenue for owners, revenue for the tracks themselves. This will have a massive impact.

It goes to the chaotic decision-making of this Government in the racing industry. You shut them down, tell them you are giving them a support package - giving them their own money back and saying it is a support package. The fraud that was committed against the industry: giving them \$8 million saying you are going to get a track, but we know full well that it will most likely cost more than that, and then saying you are going to have to make up the difference. That is not a way to govern an industry as important as racing. That is not a way to govern an industry that employs thousands of Tasmanians, and creates a whole lot of economic activity in the state. It is a disgraceful way.

The confusion in the industry is that you have the Premier saying Spreyton, you have the minister not knowing how much money it is going to cost, and then the CEO of Tasracing, in an update to industry, saying we are looking at three venues: we are looking at Spreyton, another venue at Latrobe, and another one that was unnamed. What is this chaotic nature of management of an important industry? These are people's lives. It is all very well and good for members of this Government to go around to all the trainers and do the glad-handing and the meet-and-greet, but this is a government that backflips on its promise for a significant increase in stakes off the back of a new tax the industry argued for.

You backtrack on that, you shut them down, you make them pay their own COVID-19 support package, and this farce of an \$8 million figure for a tri-code facility that they do not where it will be or how much it is going to cost. That is no way to treat an industry; an iconic industry like racing in Tasmania.

The minister is showing her inability to answer the most basic of questions in this portfolio. She is providing answers to questions we did not even ask. At the end of one question I asked she said, 'Can we talk about animal welfare?'. 'Yes, we can talk about animal welfare, but that is not the question I was asking, minister. That is not the information that I was seeking from you'. It was very frustrating and disrespectful of the industry to have a minister - and again I will make it clear, I am not reflecting on her as a person, I am reflecting on her ability in terms of her ministerial responsibility - it is clear there are major question marks about this.

When working through the Sport and Recreation portfolio - and I know the member for Bass, Ms O'Byrne, might make reference in her question - it seems that the \$2 million savings from the Hawthorn deal is like a magic pudding. It is funding for the Silverdome, it is funding for the Collingwood netball team deal, it is funding everything - but once you see it in the transcript and you start to add up the money, it was far more than \$2 million, but the minister could not answer those questions.

I recall asking the Premier in his output where that \$2 million was saved, and effectively he said it went into consolidated revenue. You have a minister spending \$2 million, treating it like a magic pudding. I started to add up some of the money, and it was in excess of \$3 million to \$4 million by the time I finished, but there was absolute confusion from the minister about that \$2 million and where it went and what it was paying.

In reading the transcript, Helen Langenberg, the head of Sport and Recreation, was very clear as to a whole range of matters and a whole range of allocations in major grants. We also found out that - and I think Ms Langenberg cleaned it up in her answer - but the minister basically put in doubt the hosting of the Women's World Cup soccer in Launceston because there was an issue around infrastructure in the north. The way she answered it gave the impression that it is at risk, and it is not going to work, and there is no infrastructure there. Reading the transcript, it is quite concerning. I am hopeful that is not the case, and I think Ms Langenberg cleaned that up, but that is a legitimate concern when you have a minister articulating that in a public hearing.

Also, we discovered that the Community Support Levy, which is money raised from gaming revenue, has been delayed and pushed back. We do not know when that is going to be allocated in the Minor and Major Grants programs. All we find out in asking questions is that the minister said she will be provided with a minute in January. There will be a minute in January. A number of sports that rely on these programs getting out into the community at various points, it is not something that they just go, well, we might make an application this year. They rely on that money coming out at key points during the year to support their activities. The minister has unilaterally delayed the rollout of that, and has said, 'I am receiving a minute in January'. What does that -

**Ms O'Byrne** - She had to be told she was receiving a minute in January.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - That is right. What does that mean for the clubs that rely heavily on applying for that money? Clubs have raised it with me already, saying we have our application ready, we are ready to roll, but the the department has told us it has been pushed back.

None the wiser. No public announcement about it whatsoever. You have a whole lot of community sporting clubs on tenterhooks waiting for a minute to the minister, and then who

knows what will happen after that? Maybe they will get some money from Tasracing and pay it to other sports and call it a support package.

In terms of this output, it was an hour each, and at times it is probably not the most high-profile of committees during the Estimates process over the years but it is important, and you have a minister who cannot answer the most basic of questions, who gets confused about detail, and is really doing the portfolios no work and no value. We were very disappointed with the performance of the minister, and the information we are getting is confusing.

No doubt it will be clarified and cleaned up eventually, but it is a messy state of affairs and the racing industry and sporting clubs and recreation clubs across the state do deserve better. They expect better and they deserve better.

[7.29 p.m.]

**Ms O'BYRNE** - I appreciate the opportunity to rise. I have to say that in many Estimates committee hearings you will disagree with the minister, you will have different views about how things should be done, and you will question and challenge some ideas.

Ms Howlett in the performance of her ministerial duties at Estimates was frankly a disgrace. She displayed an absolute lack of understanding of her portfolio and an inability to read her briefs. All I can say that during Sport and Recreation Estimates committee, is that Ms Langenberg in particular did an amazing job at being the minister because that was the only way we were able to get any clear understanding of what was going on.

I sat in for the first bit of Racing, and - I checked the *Hansard* - it was seven pages before the minister was able to admit that the \$2 million support package for maintaining Racing was in fact drawn from existing stake money within Tasracing. It took seven pages for the minister to admit that the commitment given to the industry was not in fact a new commitment at all. Whether she knew that and obfuscated, or whether she did not actually realise until the process was teased out of her, I honestly could not tell.

We then went to the subject of Sport and Recreation. I really enjoyed the opportunity to talk Sport and Recreation again. I do not profess to be an expert on sport. I am passionate about it and I loved my time as Sports minister. I know the chair of that particular committee is also passionate about sport. It was good to have some people at the table who were as committed to sport as the staff at Sport and Recreation are. They do an amazing job and I commend their work, particularly because they had a very difficult role on Thursday afternoon.

We went through a number of issues. I will go through them sequentially using the *Hansard* of that hearing because that seems to be the best way to explain how poorly the minister conducted herself. When Mr Shelton was in the room, I said that while I was disappointed by his performance, I like Mark Shelton - he is a nice human, but he is a bad minister. I do not know Jane Howlett very well, but I genuinely think she is a nice person in every interaction I have had with her, but she is not competent as a minister. She has been Minister for Sport and Recreation for long enough to be able to answer some of these questions and to understand what was going on. She clearly did not.

We talked a little bit about the issues surrounding Mr Griffin. I was disappointed that the minister was not prepared for these questions. She was examined on these issues in the other place. You would expect her to have a level of understanding, but regardless of the

questions we asked, she answered using the written paper she had been given. It was the same evidence given upstairs. At one point I could even read along with her because it was just such a set response, but it did not answer the question.

When she provided answers to the questions, they really did leave us quite cold. The fact that the Minister for Sport and Recreation says she did not know until 22 October, she remembers being told on 22 October because it was, '... Show Day ...; ... No, I was heading north, which is why I remember the day so perfectly well. The secretary and Minister for Health and the Premier announced an independent investigation into the matter'.

I cannot believe that the minister for Sport was not aware of this before then. I cannot believe that. She either misled us by saying that, or she failed in her duty find out. She failed in her duty as a minister to understand what was going on. It took pages to get through to work out when the minister and the department were finally advised. There was no ability to identify when Mr Griffin's working with vulnerable children's check removal applied to the sports he was involved in, the sports the minister is responsible for. She did not seem to be able to answer that question whatsoever.

Then eventually she told us that really all the issues around netball, which are very concerning, were okay because they would be dealt with at a meeting on Friday. I do not think she meant to tell us about the meeting on Friday. I think that was a mistake. I think she meant to keep that one secret. In question time when we asked about the meeting on Friday, she still could tell us about the meeting on Friday or anything that occurred. She said -

I have done my best and I will have more information on Friday night. There is a meeting being held.

She cannot tell us what happened at that meeting on Friday. She says there was another conversation on Monday. She still cannot tell us about that. Frankly, that is really concerning.

We then went to a Dorothy Dix. I do not profess to be an expert on sport, but you have to say there are not many people in the world who would not know who Diego Maradona is. The fact is that the minister struggled with that. All of us have forgotten names at some time, but it was a dorothy dixer question presented to her with a written answer, and she still got it wrong. It was not the only name she got wrong. Apparently, Ken Martin is very involved in South Hobart Football Club. That must be a shock for Ken Morton. That sort of thing is simply not okay. Don't get dorothy dixer questions and stuff them up. I am sure it was a great shock to Diego Mirando's family to find he had passed away - that is just outrageous.

We then went to other questions, which again she could not answer. One of them was about netball and was to do with information released in the podcast that indicated a significant change in policy at Netball Tasmania, which you would have to draw the conclusion was the result of some kind of report, some kind of allegation. Ms Howlett actually asked me when it all changed. I was asking her as minister and she asked me when it all changed. She was aware of the podcast but clearly not aware of these concerns. Frankly, that is an absolute dereliction of her duty. Once again, there was going to be a conversation on Friday that she now cannot tell us about.

We were not able to get information on how often people working in sports can get an exemption from their working with vulnerable children check. Given we know that grooming



of young people happens from people in positions of authority, people in positions of seniority in clubs, organisations, community groups, hospitals - obviously as with Mr Griffin - and in schools, all of those things, we know those sorts of things need to have a level of scrutiny. A working with vulnerable children check does not protect you from a predator unless that predator has a conviction, but there may be a significant time lag from when that working with vulnerable children check was removed and Mr Griffin actually finished up working in netball, and that is frightening.

Once again, pages of Ms Langenberg answering questions. I really appreciate that, and she did an excellent job of being minister.

We went to the Hawthorn deal and the Government said that the \$2 million plus CPI from the Hawthorn deal would be hypothecated into Sport and Recreation. This should not have been a hard question: 'Minister, how was it spent'? The minister misunderstood it a couple of times, starting with listing everything in the Budget. We tried to clarify that we only wanted the hypothecation of the money. She checked with a staffer who encouraged her to keep reading the prepared brief, but it clearly was not the answer to the question. The Chair stepped in, very helpfully, to try to clarify for the minister what the question was so we might get to the bottom of it. Eventually the minister had to take it on notice because she could not say how the \$2 million plus CPI had been spent. She had listed everything that was being spent.

We put it on notice to give her some help to try to work it out. We now have a written answer, which is the same answer she tried to read in; if that is the case, and if that is what the Hawthorn \$2 million has been spent on, it is going to be spent on for the next year and so on - what happens to the Hawthorn deal? Has the Government walked away from the Hawthorn deal? That \$2 million is clearly not going to be paid to them again. The minister has no idea about how the money, limited though it is, that comes into her portfolio, is actually spent.

We saw that again with the Community Service Levy. The minister could not tell us what was happening with the Community Service Levy. It took some work to even find out how much was going to be in the CSL this year, and then the minister admitted that during COVID-19, when clubs were a bit constrained, they delayed the application process.

Everything else is back on track, but the application process for the money for Sport and Recreation is still not open, and it is not going to be opened. The minister cannot tell us what it is going to look like when it is opened because she is going to get a minute in January. What is that minute going to say? What are you doing with this fund? How are you planning to spend it? What are you doing to clubs which you know plan and work hard to get that money? They plan what their needs are, they know those minor and major grants exist and they do not know what is going to happen with it, and that is appalling. I am convinced some political game-playing is happening with that bucket of money as well, because it simply is not good enough. It took the minister some time to work out what was happening with that.

She could not explain what was happening with sporting events. The process that sporting events now need to go through in order to host a sporting event is ludicrous. The framework they have to fill in has changed three times. They get it; they work really hard; they fill it in - it changes. It looks nothing like it looked before so you cannot even edit, or cut and paste. It is a completely different document. The three documents are still based on work done

by the Australian Institute of Sport for elite sport activities in May. There has been no update of any of that work.

Sporting clubs are supposed to know not only who is going to be doing the cleaning at the place they are holding the event, but also what kind of products they are using. The minister needs to work to support sport and she needs to get across her portfolio and do her job.

**Time expired.**

[7.40 p.m.]

**Mr FERGUSON** - Chair, I rise to speak on behalf of the Government and my ministerial colleague, Ms Howlett. For the purposes of the housekeeping of the House no-one should think I am summing up. That is not how this process works. I wish to represent comments from my colleague minister and address some of the points, but I will not be attempting to address all the points that have been raised by members who have already spoken.

**Ms O'Connor** - Will you be taking more than 10 minutes?

**Mr FERGUSON** - We will see.

**Ms O'Connor** - That is really polite of you. I have a guest downstairs and it would be nice if you would let members who are going to speak on this know.

**Mr FERGUSON** - I have waited here patiently for 40 minutes for my turn and you can wait accordingly. That is how this place works. You do not own this place.

To bring the House back to some good sense, in responding to this debate the Estimates process needs to be understood. It is there to study the Budget that is printed in the Budget Papers.

I have been sitting here listening to Mr O'Byrne and Ms O'Byrne and they repeatedly say it is nothing personal against the minister but it has been personal. The tone I have picked up has been a constant theme of personal derision. That does not help anybody or address what the budget process is about.

I was not in attendance at the committee but Mr O'Byrne is an experienced member of this House and as a former minister - I am not sure if it was ever for racing - is aware of the fact that the Estimates session is not an examination of Tasracing, which quite properly is a GBE that as soon as next week can be examined and scrutinised. The operations of things like the Office of Racing Integrity, government policy more broadly and the regulation of racing generally are all fair game in the budget Estimates process, particularly when you would be in the overview section perhaps. I understand as well that a lot of time was spent on Tasracing as an entity.

Ordinarily, but not as a cast-iron rule, you would have thought that the GBEs broadly would be revisited at a later time at the scrutiny hearings, but it is up to Labor where they choose to direct their questions.

I understand there was criticism as well in relation to stakes and yet the industry has welcomed the Government's increase in stakes. I am also advised, and am happy to be

corrected if I am not right, that Mr O'Byrne made no mention of Racing in his budget reply speech. It is certainly my advice that in Labor's attempt to do a budget response document, which as we all know is a lengthy toner-heavy document with lots of photos, made no reference to Sport and Recreation and Racing. If that is true, I am very surprised, but it does point out that if you accept 99.7 per cent of the Government's Budget then I suppose portfolios will quickly drop out of your area of interest.

I am going to make a couple of other comments before I go to the substance of what has been provided for me. This place all too often has these mean-spirited contributions that we have been listening to. I have noticed a particular method that has been engaged which is that you praise up some people like Ms Langenberg constantly and repetitiously, so that you can then switch and pivot and run down the Liberal minister in what can only be described as quite mean-spirited. It was also done to my colleague, Mr Shelton. A Labor member wants to say they are probably a nice human but then go into derision and rudeness. I ask you, the Chair and the House, what is gained by this push-down/pull-up approach that we are seeing occurring? It is avoiding the point that you failed to deliver a budget alternative in the area of Racing and Sport and Recreation but then you come and have your whinge.

I will turn now to the substance of what the Budget is really about in these areas. I understand that there was genuine interest from Government members in relation to these portfolios. In Sport and Recreation, the Government is investing more than \$19 million in the 2020-21 Budget to strengthen our regional communities. As we know, sport has been caught up in the pandemic and for the very reason that nearly every other portfolio has been substantially affected as well and Tasmanians' way of life has been affected like no other year, 2020 has been a huge challenge in the sporting community.

A major strain has been placed on the many community sport and recreation organisations right around our state and minister Howlett has been working intensely with the peak bodies, the sporting organisations and leagues and individual clubs. I have seen it. I have been with her in my electorate of Bass and she shows a genuine interest in getting to know and support our sporting organisations. So she should and so should the Government, because these clubs and organisations are major in our way of life, in the way our community functions and the important community inclusion that occurs on the sporting field, to say nothing of the health benefits when young people, in particular, starting out their lives with physical activity and teamwork.

As a government we have responded very quickly to keep competitions alive wherever possible and sporting administrators in their jobs - I heard no mention of that - so that participation levels can be maintained when a return to play became possible. As part of the Government's response we allocated around \$1.9 million to state sporting organisations under tranche 1 to keep 186 Tasmanians employed in the sport and recreation sector, keeping them alive for when reopening could occur. Tranche 2 had a focus on supporting grassroots clubs to return to play in accordance with Public Health requirements and providing small grants of up to \$3000. Also in tranche 2 more than \$900 000 was granted to 431 clubs across more than 40 sports to support their return to play.

In recognising the need to improve community sporting infrastructure across Tasmania and to help stimulate the economy and create jobs, we have committed \$10 million over two years to Improving the Playing Field which is an upgrade to the earlier policy which was enormously successful and pioneered by this Government, Levelling the Playing Field, which

has been widely supported and embraced. This grant program supports amenities upgrades at sporting facilities around the state. The program has funded 31 projects around Tasmania with \$1.2 million to projects valued up to \$50 000. In brief, some projects that have been supported include funding for the Bridport Football Club; funding of drainage works; funding for the Deloraine Pony Club; a refurbishment of the Devonport City Soccer Club; a heating system for the Hobart Gymnastics Academy at Bridgewater; and funding to improvements to cricket wickets across Hobart.

The second tranche of grants for larger projects has now closed with a value for grant applications between \$50 and \$250 000 and it is envisaged that around \$3.8 million will be made available under this tranche. That sounds like very good work by my colleague minister, Jane Howlett. She should be supported and those policies endorsed. As the minister stated a few weeks ago, applications under this tranche were through the roof, which is a positive sign that the initiative is what the community needs.

We have also extended Ticket to Play, our sports voucher program, by allocating funding for the next four years. Our Ticket to Play program has been a great success, allowing thousands of young Tasmanians the opportunity to get involved in their chosen sport. I know it has supported families in every part of our state. Since it reopened in July, 3087 participants have registered and 2341 vouchers have been redeemed.

Another very successful budget allocation was made to Football Tasmania, raising the annual allocation to this peak body to 500 000 per year for the next two years. This will leverage the interest and excitement in the upcoming 2020-23 FIFA Women's World Cup which will be hosted by Australia and New Zealand.

As part of this year's Budget, and to support the surge in the popularity of basketball, the government is also providing \$1 million over four years to Basketball Tasmania, to deliver NBL school clinics through the state.

The Tasmanian Government has been a strong supporter of Australian Rules Football at all levels over many years, and supports the game from grassroots through to the highest level. I heard a bit of commentary earlier, which again was in the same derisive tone. The Government has been very clear about our future Budget allocations for AFL in Tasmania. It does not need to be repeated over and over again but, as part of the Budget, the Government has committed funding of \$2 million over four years to AFL Tasmania to support grassroots development of football in the state. Furthermore, there is a total of \$2 million over four years to go to the Launceston Silverdome to assist with meeting additional costs.

This funding will allow the facility to continue hosting numerous local, national and international sporting events, including NBL matches, which is very exciting. I do not know about other members of the House, but I have joined as a member of the JackJumpers. I am not sure what rights that provides to me other than a cap and the T-shirt that I wear to park run and it gets a few interesting looks from my son. The JackJumpers name and brand is fantastic for our state and people are coming around to it.

**Mr O'Byrne** - It is a good pick.

**Mr FERGUSON** - It is a good pick. It says that you might be small but you can be very powerful. It is a memorable name.

Tasmania's racing industry injects around \$103 million a year into the Tasmanian economy including in rural and regional areas. This year's State Budget recognises its importance through further support and investment. I am advised that from this year's Budget, a total of \$42.2 million is being invested into the state's racing industry with a further \$8 million to be provided -

**Mr O'Byrne** - Sorry, you will have to deal with that in the GBEs.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Thank you, Mr O'Byrne. - over the next two years to underpin the relocation of the Devonport Greyhound and Harness Tracks. This is good news for our economy. These are investment decisions for the state's valuable racing sector which directly involves more than 5500 Tasmanians.

We understand that this year has been very challenging for the racing codes. For those in the House who were at the recent Tas Breeders dinner, the feedback was very consistent. It has been very tough, but there was a strong level of enthusiasm and belief in the re-emergence of the racing industry in Tasmania. We want to see it come back with strong field sizes, racing quality and also, as my colleague minister has been talking about, the stakes increase of 6 per cent announced by the Government in recent months. I emphasise that has been strongly supported, and vocally endorsed by industry. It would be good if members of this House could come to the same opinion.

In conclusion, the 2020-21 Budget was clearly framed in very difficult circumstances, during a global pandemic that created uncertainty and dislocation in virtually all aspects of our lives. That includes the portfolio responsibilities of my colleague minister, Jane Howlett, in Sport and Recreation, as well as Racing. I commend her, and we say thank you to Ms Howlett for her work and for her dedication to this role. It was her first Estimates as a minister, and she performed extremely strongly and no doubt will continue to do so. She should enjoy the support of members opposite and a bit more encouragement and less of the derision that comes with pronouncing somebody's name incorrectly when you are actually trying to say something nice.

I commend the Budget from that point of view on behalf of the Government and Ms Howlett.

[7.54 p.m.]

**Mr STREET** - I do not need to make a long contribution. As Mr O'Byrne indicated when he was on his feet, I was in the chair for this particular session. When we started in the Racing portfolio, as he also indicated, we started with a range of questions on Tasracing. The minister politely told Mr O'Byrne he was outside the scope of the particular Estimates hearing that we were in. I ruled them as such as well. As he said, this went on for a while and I kept ruling the same way. About 15 minutes in, Mr O'Byrne made the accusation that I was running a protection racket for the minister from the chair. I have been called worse, and I am sure I will be accused of worse in the future.

However, I take the opportunity to touch on this particular issue because it is offensive to be accused of not being impartial. I did my very best over the course of four days to be as impartial as possible in the allocation of questions and allowing things within the hearing. I am not interested in being derisive or vindictive about this. It was in the cut and thrust of what was going on.

**Mr O'Byrne** - You were a very good Chair.

**Mr STREET** - I appreciate that as well, Mr O'Byrne, but that is not why I am making this point. After the session had finished, I began to question whether my ruling had been correct. I went back to last year's Estimates hearing where Mr Bacon was the shadow. He asked 22 questions that were declared by the Chair at the time - I cannot remember who it was - outside of the output because they were Tasracing questions.

In fairness to Mr O'Byrne, he did not even crack double figures. He only asked nine questions that sat within Tasracing. The minister last year, Ms Archer, indicated that she was not going to answer Mr Bacon's questions either because they fell outside of the portfolio. During this, and she is not here right now, Ms O'Connor made a comment about Mr Ericson having always been at the table for Estimates. I did not realise that either. I went back and checked and at no stage has the Tasracing CEO appeared at the Budget Estimates for Racing for the simple reason that, as I keep saying, it is outside the designated outputs. She also indicated it was not like this last year. I checked *Hansard* and found it was exactly like that last year.

I am a fair and balanced person, Chair; perhaps every shadow racing minister plays this game of trying to get Tasracing questions during the Estimates. I went back to 2013, our last year in opposition, and I found this quote from Mark Shelton who was the shadow minister for racing at the time, and I quote, 'Minister, I know we cannot go near Tasracing in this session'. Then he went on to ask a question about the Office of Racing Integrity. It would appear that it is only the Labor shadow racing ministers who cannot quite work out what they are allowed or not allowed to ask about Tasracing. Then they say that the minister is not across the portfolio, the minister is not this, the minister is not that -

**Mr O'Byrne** - And I still will.

**Mr STREET** - I beg your pardon?

**Mr O'Byrne** - I disagreed with your ruling because it was a question on the COVID-19 support package, which was mentioned in the Budget Papers.

**Mr STREET** - No, I am sorry. Mr O'Byrne is trying to rewrite history via his objection, Chair, and he is not going to get away with it.

Before I finish, in the Sports portfolio, the fact that cricket is mentioned in the dot points allows me to make a comment about a news story that has appeared in the last couple of days, and that is the Tasmanian Government being folded into a story involving Cricket Australia and Channel 7. The sporting director at Channel 7, I think his name is Lewis Martin, has made some derisive comments about Tasmania, its venues, and Tasmanian cricket. In the last 25 years, only two states have provided the permanent men's Test captain of this country's team, the first one being New South Wales, the biggest state. Can you guess the other state that has provided two captains?

**Mr O'Byrne** - Hear, hear.

**Mr STREET** - Yes, that is right, it is Tasmania, including the current captain. I find it interesting that probably our greatest sportsman, Ricky Ponting, has become Channel 7's lead

commentator since he retired from cricket. I say to Mr Lewis Martin, before you make another comment on Tasmania or Tasmanian cricket and its worthiness for hosting matches, ring your lead commentator and ask him for his opinion on Tasmanian cricket. Educate yourself on the situation here. There is no cultural cringe in Tasmania anymore, and that is not due to the Liberal Party or the Labor Party. The whole of Tasmania is a very different place from what it was 20 or 30 years ago. We are all immensely proud of this state and what it means to us. For people on the mainland, and I am not just talking about Channel 7, I am talking about the AFL and some other sporting organisations that think they can get away with making derisive comments about this state, the game is up. We want to be treated with respect.

The last point I will make on the Sport portfolio is that the two sports that have treated us with respect, cricket and hockey by giving us our own national teams, are coincidentally the two sports where Tasmania has provided above its per capita contribution to the national team. The games record holder and skipper for Australia in hockey, Eddie Ockenden, is Tasmanian. The current captain of the Australian men's cricket team is Tasmanian. Isn't it amazing what happens when you treat a state with respect? I say this to the AFL: if you want more people drafted from Tasmania to fill the lists, give us a team of our own and see what happens.

[8.01 p.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I thoroughly endorse the statements of Mr Street. It has been interesting to observe the way the attitudes to Tasmania have changed nationally over the last 20 or 30 years. We should all be immensely proud of the talent we produce, not only our sporting but our literary talent, people like Richard Flanagan, and the big-hearted people we send out into the world.

The Estimates session with the Minister for Racing, and Sport and Recreation was interesting. Ms O'Byrne has quite thoroughly covered the really disturbing revelations about the lack of processes around Mr Griffin's presence in the Northern Tasmanian Netball Association and the fact that a predator could be undetected within that sporting community for such a long time. It raises some serious issues about reporting and communication between funded entities and government. I hope that when the commission of inquiry gets under way some of those questions that still linger in the minds of people who care are answered.

I want to talk about the animal welfare issues associated with the Minister for Racing's portfolio. This year we again focused on the two major codes, horseracing and greyhounds. No-one in this House will be surprised to hear that the Greens do not support the industrialisation of animal cruelty for profit. That is what we are dealing with in the horseracing and greyhound racing industry. It was a real disappointment but not a surprise to see in this year's Budget Papers that \$8 million has been set aside to build a new greyhound racing track at Devonport. Because I was on the parliamentary inquiry that we helped to establish into greyhound racing and, in fact, was chair of it until I was sacked for calling for a ban on greyhound racing, we know that the Devonport track is not good for the dogs because of the design of the track. I understand that, but once you have \$8 million in public funds allocated towards the greyhound racing industry it is saying that government will back that industry through the next decade or two. That is a very sad story for the dogs. The evidence tells us very clearly that these beautiful animals are bred to run and turn a profit. They are bred in excess numbers. When they are no longer fast enough or not turning a profit, far too many of them are disposed of through various means.

We sought some information on the record in the 2019-20 financial year as to how many greyhounds were raced, injured, retired, rehomed, deceased by natural causes and were destroyed, and the total number raced was 9596. Out of a unique group of 701 of these beautiful dogs, 257 of them were injured and 356 were retired, and this is a key number because too rarely do the number that were retired add up exactly to the number that were rehomed or reported as deceased by natural causes or destroyed. The retired number in this past year was 356 of these beautiful dogs, 233 of them were rehomed, apparently 24 of them were deceased by natural causes and the number of what the Office of Racing and Integrity calls humane euthanasia was 90. As we know, euthanasia is a good death, a mercy killing, and invariably these dogs are killed because they are surplus to requirements. A positive out of this is that in 2015-16, the year we established the inquiry into greyhound racing in Tasmania, the total number of dogs destroyed in that year was 678, so it has dropped from 679 to 90.

As we know, this is an industry that has cruelty at its foundation. We all know terrific people who are trainers or owners of greyhounds. This is not about them. It is about the fact that this is an industry which has to produce an excess of dogs in order to turn an excess of profit.

It is intimately and horrifically connected to the horseracing industry because, as has been made clear now particularly by Caro Meldrum-Hanna, the ABC's investigative reporter, routinely, as it is with greyhounds, race horses, whether they be pacers or thoroughbreds on the track, are often sent to the abattoir as well. You have this terrible cycle where horses that are bred for the horseracing industry become surplus to requirements and a significant number of them, we do not know exactly the extent of it, are destroyed, many of them go to the abattoir and then those dead horses are fed to the greyhounds.

I will briefly talk about the Greyhound Adoption Program (GAP) and again point to this Government's reluctance to let Tasmanians know about a development that is not positive news. After greyhound trainer and former director of GAP, Susan Gittus, was suspended from racing because a dog she owned had a prohibited substance in it, there was a period of time where Ms Gittus was able to still engage in the racing industry because her husband, as we understand it, was racing the dogs. After a period of time Ms Gittus left the Greyhound Adoption Program, but it was six days after Ms Gittus left that we found out at Estimates that that had in fact happened.

It is a bit like the Government taking 10 days to tell Tasmanians that three staff members at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre had been stood down. This is communications 101. Whether the news is good or bad, it is always better to be upfront about it and in this Government's case, any time there is a bit of bad or uncomfortable news, invariably there is a choice made not to make a public statement.

Ms Gittus is no longer running the Greyhound Adoption Program and we put it to the minister that it is time to think about someone from outside the industry to run the GAP, an independent person, so that we can make sure there is no potential conflict of interest between the person who is charged with looking after and rehoming greyhounds and the job they have to do.

I will come full circle to the \$8 million that has been poured into a new track at Devonport and make the case again. This is an industry which is losing its social licence, an industry which an increasing number of Australians know has cruelty at its core and for \$8 million you



could fund an animal welfare commissioner. You could increase the funding to the RSPCA; you could give some funding to the Cat Centre; you could rehome every single greyhound that needs a home in Tasmania. Mr Deputy Chair, \$8 million is an extraordinary amount of money for an industry that is already heavily subsidised by Tasmanian taxpayers, and that is across the three codes.

It makes me sad that, time and again, it is the Greens in this place who are advocating for animal welfare. I do not say that in a 'we are the only ones who care' way. I say that in a genuinely sad way that there are not more debates in this place where animal welfare is prioritised, where we are thinking first and foremost of the wellbeing of animals - the sentient beings we are privileged to share life with on this planet.

Again and again, animals become purely a product for us, or a source of income, and it is so obvious they are regarded as disposable. I have no doubt that, in time, this gradual loss of social licence of industrial racing industries will lead to an end to these cruel industries, which are by no measure sport.

**Time expired.**

**Estimates of the Minister for Racing and Minister for Sport and Recreation agreed to.**

**Bills read the third time.**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

[8.13 p.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

### **Gender-Based Violence Queen Victoria Museum and Gallery Launceston Benevolent Society**

[8.14 p.m.]

**Ms O'BYRNE** (Bass) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I have three matters and I will be quick because I realise there a number of people who wish to speak.

Today is day seven of 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. As of tonight, 49 women have been killed this year due to gender-based violence; four in the last two days. My message today is if you want to keep women safe, do not kill them; do not hurt them; do not coerce them; do not shame them; and do not enable violence. It is not a joke. Do not laugh at it. It is not okay to belittle women. Call it out when you hear it. Do not remove our agency, and if we say we are scared, if we say we are hurt, if we say we have been hurt, believe us.

I also wish to discuss the hard work of Launceston's Queen Victoria Museum and Gallery (QVMAG) staff and volunteers during what has been a difficult year. The city of Launceston

is fortunate to have a council that owns and operates such an important facility, even though both the Inveresk and Royal Park sites closed during COVID-19 lockdown, your staff and volunteers did a lot of very nimble work adapting to working from home on a vital backlog of work, including the Audubon collection. Although we could not physically visit QVMAG during the lockdown, the staff were busy cataloguing, researching and digitising material and we will all benefit from their very hard work.

As shadow minister for women, I want to acknowledge the work of director, Tracy Puklowski, the second female director of the QVMAG. We are very fortunate to have her expertise in Launceston. The first female director, Isabella Mead, became director in 1951 and was the first female museum director in our country. She was a pioneer in collection management and alas, like so many women of the period, had to resign because she was engaged to be married. When I was minister for women, it was my great pleasure to induct Isabella into the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women for her contribution to our cultural heritage.

For those who are in the north, or visiting the north in the coming months, please have a look at the QVMAG website. There are a number of exhibitions worth visiting over summer. In particular I am looking forward to the exhibition *Herself*, which opens this week. The exhibition celebrates works by women in the QVMAG collection. They are female artists who participate in a global conversation about diversity of museum women and covers the period from 1820 to 2020. It is a particularly fitting exhibition, given the trailblazing role that women have played leading the collection in our cultural institution.

I also thank the Launceston Benevolent Society for their amazing work during 2020. As many would know, the Benevolent Society is an independent, non-religious, not-for-profit organisation providing emergency support for those in need. They have operated in Launceston since 1834. To put that in context, Europeans invaded the now city of Melbourne the year afterwards. The Benevolent Society has been witness to many events through our European heritage, and has been around longer than Melbourne.

I place on the record my thanks to the Society's CEO, Rodney Spinks. It has been a very difficult year with an international pandemic, and Rodney has gone above and beyond. I thank Chairman, Don Jones and the board, Robert Anderson, John Stephenson, Brian Faulkner, Don Leggett, Norm Hills and Rosemary Bingley, and the amazing volunteers who work there, including one of my very dear friends, Bev Catlin. It shows just how much we rely on volunteers, particularly in a time when we ask people to stay home and keep safe. COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of organisations such as the Launceston Benevolent Society, and the incredible role they play in the community.

Ray White in Launceston is running their Little Ray of Giving drive, supporting the Launceston Benevolent Society. Members of the community are encouraged to donate a wrapped gift, up until 13 December, and leave it in their offices in Charles Street. I thank Ray White for supporting this very worthy cause, and commend everyone for their hard work in this project.

## Tyenna River

[8.18 p.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Deputy Speaker, a couple of weeks ago I received a poignant email from Mr Peter Tyrell, who lives up the valley. I am going to read it to the House now. I am pleased that the Minister for Resources and the minister for Water is in the Chamber tonight. I am sure Mr Tyrell is glad you are here too, Mr Barnett.

Dear Ms O'Connor,

I am an elderly man who likes to fly-fish. Yesterday I was fishing the Tyenna River, which I know very well. The Tyenna is regarded by most fly-fishing people as being the premier stream in southern Tasmania, or at least it was. Over recent years I have noticed a steady decline in the health of the river. Some of this can be attributed to clear-felling of plantation timber by Norske Skog, but I don't believe that is the whole story. I am observing increasing levels of turbidity and sullyng, even in levels of relatively low flow. There are also disturbing growths of algae and slime on the substrate. My records indicate a decline in the trout population, as manifested in my catch rates (I am quite capable with a fly rod). Remember that trout can only inhabit clean, cool and well-oxygenated water. In that they are the canaries of the waterways. So far this year I have not seen one platypus, which is also really disturbing.

Yesterday when I rejoined the highway on the section between Newbury and Westerway, I got stuck behind an articulated log truck. This is a section of road where double lines predominate. I had no choice but to sit back, dodge the bits and pieces coming off the truck, and be content to drive at just over and under 60 kilometres an hour. I observed that even at such low speed, the driver had trouble holding his line on the road. On many occasions he had to veer out across the double lines. In no time at all, I had a gaggle of vehicles behind me, including a police car. Surely the officer driving the car would have seen the dangers and illegalities presented by the articulated log truck. Hopefully he reported back to his seniors.

The highway, which goes from New Norfolk to Lakes Pedder and Gordon, is an extremely popular tourist route, what with bush walking and skiing at Mt Field, mountain bike riding at Maydena and access to the wilderness beyond Strathgordon. Do tourists really want to see log trucks loaded up with massive old growth forest logs? Do they want to get stuck behind these behemoths? I very much doubt it. Unfortunately our Government entertains the misbegotten belief that Tasmania can be all things to all people - it can't. What Tasmania can do is preserve its wild jewels in an era where the whole world is facing serious environmental and existential issues. This nonsense must stop.

Yours faithfully, Peter Tyrell

There is not much more I can say to add Mr Tyrell's poignant and informed observations of what is happening to Tasmania and the Tyenna River. This senior Tasmanian is telling us

that we are not getting the balance right. Mr Tyrell is correct: Tasmania cannot be all things to all people and we need to understand what makes this place unique and precious and beautiful in the world. We need to look after it, not just for the current generations of Tasmanians but for those who come after us.

I encourage Mr Barnett to have a rethink about his whole approach to logging. We are hearing reports from all points of the compass in Tasmania that log truck activity is increasing and the size of the logs on the back of those trucks is also increasing. We will always argue that that is a crime against nature and future generations, but we have an opportunity in this parliament, in this generation, to do better and we must.

### **North West Community Market - Smithton Saleyards**

[8.22 p.m.]

**Dr BROAD** (Braddon) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about the outstanding success that the North West Community Market is. The North West Community Market are the people who run the Smithton saleyards and that has been something the community has supported and is a community asset. The last sale was on 30 November, which was Monday, and the community reported that it was another successful sale. The agents offered a yarding of 68 cattle with all cattle being weighed today. There was an outstanding run of vealers, with the best calves weighing between 350 and 445 kilos. These calves made between \$3.70 and \$3.91 a kilo, with strong demand from butchers. The next run of calves made between \$3.50 and \$3.70. Prime grown steers and heifers made between \$3 and \$3.42, while forward-conditioned steers and heifers made \$3.10 and \$3.62. This week was also the first time that pigs were offered at the Smithton sale. There were four porkers who made between \$200 and \$295, with store pigs that made between \$114 and \$122.

A reminder for anybody who may be paying attention, there is a special store sale this Friday 4 December starting at 12.30 p.m. and there are over 500 cattle. This sale is going from strength to strength. There will be another prime sheep and cattle sale on 14 December and you are asked to please advise your agents of the stock you would like to sell.

This North West Community Market has been an outstanding success. This was a sale that we were told the community did not need and would not support. I would like to say that the naysayers were wrong. There are a lot of reasons why this sale has been a success and why the north-west community has been able to rally together in the face of the closure of the Quoiba saleyards in Devonport. There is no doubt there has been a lot of moving parts that have made this work. There has been support from agents, especially Ray White and Elders, but primarily this is something that the community wants and has supported.

I will read from a media release put out before the sale on Monday that talks about how the committee was buoyed by the success of the Smithton saleyards -

At a Committee meeting held in Wynyard on Tuesday night, 24 November 2020, it was announced that the first four sales at the Smithton saleyards had grossed in excess of \$1.5 million in sales ...

Chairman Mike Badcock has been doing an outstanding job in his leadership with this committee -

With two more sales to be held before Christmas, being prime stock ... and a special store sale on Friday 4th December, this turnover will be in excess of \$2 million.

So much for a sale that people would not support.

The first store sale on Friday 13th November was nearly a full house with some store cattle reaching a record of over \$2000 per head.

Getting in on some of that action would have been good if you were a farmer.

There was a very large public gathering with all car parks filled to overflowing.

That was definitely the case with the first sale too. It is not only the first sale that has been a success, sales that have come after have also been a success.

Local farmer Wayne Wells is chairing a sub-committee for the running of the Smithton saleyards. Two other subcommittees have been formed to put up proposals for an implementation of another saleyard in the eastern end of the North-West Coast, one possible site in Minna Road at Burnie ...

which is behind where the former Tioxide used to be -

... and another one at Wesley Vale.

That is near where the paper mill at Wesley Vale used to be.

The next Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday 19th of January, which will include site visits and proposals for the Committee to make a decision on the preferred site. It is proposed that after a public meeting be held to gauge public support and possible participation in the development of one of these potential sites.

I urge the Government to get behind these proposals. The Government has been largely sitting on their hands when it comes to this. We heard before the Budget that the Government saw fit to give \$2 million to Scottsdale Pork for a \$3 million project for an abattoir at Scottsdale. There is no doubt that will keep the pig industry going. It shows that when this Government wants to act, when they want to support farmers, they can find the cash. This is something the Government should support because the community is supporting it and showing the way in the face of a government which is happy, it seems, to let the saleyards close and be forced to travel all the way to Powranna to sell their stock. The community does not want it and that is why they have done this.

We have to acknowledge the committee. The committee has grown from only a few when this first started and I was one of the participants. I recognise Mike Badcock and what he has done as chair but also Noel Hardstaff, Ray Sharman, Wayne Wells, Donna James, Clinton Sharman, Crighton Horton, Catherine Neville, Garry Clarke, Geoff Atkinson, Robbie Walsh, Tony Hine, and Deon Gibson, and I am sure there are others I may have missed.

I urge the Government, now is your chance to get behind something that the community is supporting. Buyers are coming from all over the north of the state and people are selling their stock from all over the north of the state. Here is an opportunity for the Government to do something to support what is being driven by the community and the community wants it.

Another saleyard at the other end of the north-west coast is also needed but they will need some assistance this time. They will not be as lucky to find a saleyard that is ready to go and will need some help. I would urge the Government to back this in. I am backing it in, Labor will keep backing it in and it is time the Government did as well.

### **Denison Canal Swing Bridge - Issues**

[8.28 p.m.]

**Ms BUTLER** (Lyons) - Madam Deputy Speaker, tonight I rise to speak about the Denison Canal swing bridge. Colloquially people call it a slip bridge.

On Sunday 29 November, for the second time in a month, the Denison Canal swing bridge at Dunalley jammed, leaving motorists stuck in a traffic jam spanning over two kilometres apparently for about an hour. The bridge is the only access point to the Tasman Peninsula and, in short, the community of the Tasman Peninsula need a reliable bridge.

We all know how essential the swing bridge is and especially how central it was during the Dunalley bushfires. It allowed emergency service workers to gain access to the area and gave the community safe passage when they were forced to evacuate. With peak tourist season around the corner, the bridge is even more of a concern and members of the community, Emergency Services vehicles and visitors all need a bridge that they can rely on. People who head to their shacks over Christmas need to have peace of mind that when they reach the canal, they will be able to cross it. I am aware the bridge has had recent improvements, but I understand that the hydraulics on the swing bridge are potentially the cause of recent failings.

I have met with the local community to discuss the bridge and I have written to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Mr Ferguson, asking for the issues to be addressed immediately. The importance of the swing bridge cannot be underestimated. It is the only access point for the Tasman Peninsula so many people rely on that and it needs to be fixed as soon as possible.

### **Home Hill, Devonport**

[8.31 p.m.]

**Ms DOW** (Braddon) - Madam Deputy Speaker, this evening I acknowledge the work of Devonport City Council in its outstanding management of historic Home Hill in Devonport. The museum house and garden was the home of former prime minister, Joe Lyons, and his wife, Cabinet minister, Dame Enid Lyons. When Dame Enid passed away in 1981, she bequeathed the contents to National Trust Tasmania, and the house and gardens to the Devonport City Council. To this day that bequest stands as one of Tasmania's most generous.

As a member for Braddon, I take this opportunity to thank former mayor, now Councillor Lyn Laycock, and Home Hill Manager Ann Teasdale for their ongoing advocacy. I recently

noted with concern the need for federal funding to assist with urgent works. I hope Senator Colbeck and the federal member for Braddon, Mr Pearce, are listening. Mrs Laycock and Ms Teasdale have gone above and beyond to see Home Hill receive the recognition it truly deserves.

Having lived on the north-west coast for the majority of my life, I am very aware of the importance of the Lyons family to our community. After Joe's early death, Enid's subsequent entrance into parliament speaks volumes about how much she cared about the north-west. I am told her solace after Joe's death was the house and garden they had created together. Home Hill requires an injection of funds to help maintain the property. It is one of only three prime ministerial homes across the nation which is open to the public. I want to see heritage places such as Home Hill thrive and be appreciated. A fundraising committee has the ambitious goal of restoring the garden and opening a visitors' centre nearby. I hope, as a community, we can achieve this.

In closing, I thank the dedicated team of staff and volunteers at Home Hill for their care and custodianship of this important place.

**The House adjourned at 8.33 p.m.**