

**Wednesday 13 November 2019**

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

## **QUESTIONS**

### **Bushfire Readiness - Incident Management Teams**

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

[10.03 a.m.]

The Government has made alarmingly little progress in implementing the recommendations of past reviews into bushfire emergencies. Yesterday it was revealed that recruiting and training volunteer remote area teams was only considered a long-term priority despite its being funded in this year's Budget and recommended in the 2016 Press inquiry and again in the AFAC inquiry into last summer's bushfires. In addition to this, there are worrying reports from within the Tasmania Fire Service that Tasmania is ill-prepared and under-resourced to deal with the current fire season.

Incident management teams are responsible for making decisions to manage fires on the ground. Can you confirm that during the recent bushfire emergencies at Lachlan and Scamander, TFS did not have enough staff to put together an incident management team and had to draw resources from other agencies?

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, please. We have not started yet. Allow the minister to start.

## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, the Hodgman Liberal Government has instigated actions to prepare for the 2019- 20 fire season in conjunction with the Tasmania Fire Service, Parks and Wildlife Service and Sustainable Timbers Tasmania. I implore people not to play politics with these fires over the last couple of days, even though I know it does not suit some political purposes.

**Dr Woodruff** - Listen to the people in New South Wales who lost their houses. They want us to talk about climate.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, Ms Woodruff.

**Mr SHELTON** - The actions we are taking include a nation-leading fuel-reduction program, public education programs, regional risk modelling, exercising emergency management plans and ensuring adequate resources are in place to respond to these fires. As the Premier said yesterday and I reiterated, as part of our fuel reduction program, spring 2019 has seen 20 strategically located burns conducted over 3350 hectares to date. Since the program commenced in 2014, 608 fuel reduction burns have been undertaken across the state, covering 86 000 kilometres.

From 1 December, we will have seven firefighting aircraft on demand in the state -

**Ms WHITE** - Point of order, Madam Speaker. It goes to Standing Order 45, relevance. I ask you draw the minister's attention to the question which is whether he can confirm that during the recent bush fires at Lachlan and Scamander, the TFS did not have enough resources to put together an incident management team.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Thank you. I ask the minister to try to be relevant, please.

**Mr SHELTON** - I will continue.

In addition, we have 36 aircraft on-call and we have more than 5600 firefighters and have invested more than \$13.1 million into new fire trucks and advanced technology. Our focus is on protecting lives, communities and properties.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order. Can I have some respect here, please. We have got off to a really rotten start this morning. I am not in the mood for it. Both sides are not to be talking across the Chamber. Could we allow this question to be answered in total silence?

**Mr SHELTON** - Our focus is on protecting lives, communities and properties. These are the facts and we will not be distracted by cheap politics.

**Ms O'Connor** - Wilderness, hello.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, excuse me, Ms O'Connor.

**Mr SHELTON** - I refer to the fact that when Labor and Greens were in government -

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Point of order, Madam Speaker. I do this through you and not across the Chamber via interjection: the previous point of order was on relevance. You called the minister to be relevant. He is simply reading the same script that has been prepared for him. This is about an incident management team and the inability of TFS to form one recently. This is a significant issue of safety for the community and the minister owes it to the Tasmanian public to address that.

**Madam SPEAKER** - As you know, with questions of relevance, I am not able to know what is about to fall out of the minister's mouth. I do hope he addresses it for everyone's sake. I ask the minister to continue.

**Mr SHELTON** - Thank you, Madam Speaker. The facts are, as I have indicated to the House previously, that a recruitment course has recently been completed. There are now 322 firefighters available in the state.

**Ms White** - How many incident management teams?

**Mr SHELTON** - That is the highest number that has been in the TFS for the last 10 years.

**Dr Woodruff** - It is not the question that has been asked.

**Mr SHELTON** - The TFS has another recruitment course going through and we are at the point where we have the highest number in the Tasmania Fire Service for the past 10 years.

**Ms White** - If you don't know the answer, sit down.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order. Excuse me.

**Mr SHELTON** - Labor and the Greens were in government when the Cabinet deferred a decision to considerably expand the burning program over five years, coordinated over multi-agencies. This was in 2011. That is on public record. It left Tasmania with no strategic fuel management plan. By not acting back then, Labor and the Greens allowed fuel loads across Tasmania to increase.

**Ms White** - Brigades are going to read this answer and wonder what you are talking about.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Yes. Can we try to be relevant, minister?

**Mr SHELTON** - Labor and the Greens government received the Hyde Report in October 2013 -

**Ms White** - Oh, sit down.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order. I make the decisions about who sits down or not. In this case, the minister has had five minutes. Thank you, minister.

### **Bushfire Readiness - Incident Management Teams**

**Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN**

[10.09 a.m.]

There are growing concerns across the community about the lack of action from your Government to implement the recommendations of successive bushfire inquiries. These concerns extend within the Tasmania Fire Service with reports that there were not enough skilled staff to fill incident management teams during the recent fires at Lachlan and Scamander. Your new and inexperienced minister for Emergency Management, Mark Shelton, has been unable to allay the concerns again today.

Given the seriousness of the impending fire season and the importance of our emergency service and management personnel, what have you done to ensure that the Tasmanian Fire Service has the resources and the expertise it needs to keep communities safe and to coordinate responses to fires?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. The Government is giving its full support to Tasmania's firefighting capabilities, the hardworking professionals within our fire service, the extraordinarily generous volunteers who contribute to the firefighting effort, and our agencies across government which are supporting the effort. We will not undermine confidence in their capabilities. We will stand up for them.

Labor, that so often lacks a position on anything, has simply adopted the Greens from yesterday and taken the opportunity to undermine the confidence of our communities who are watching with

horror, like the rest of us, terrible scenes interstate and fearing for the worst here in Tasmania. It is this Opposition that is wishing for it.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order. That was not called for, Premier. If you are going to ask a question and you want to hear an answer I suggest you have a little more decorum on this side. I would also like the Government to keep their answers to four minutes wherever possible and try to stay on message. I ask that you calm down. We are not even through the second question.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - Point of order, Madam Speaker. The last comment made by the Premier was reflecting on the Opposition, that we are wishing for a catastrophe to happen in Tasmania. I take offence at that and we ask for withdrawal.

**Mr HODGMAN** - I certainly will, but I sincerely hope it is not the case because you give every appearance -

**Madam SPEAKER** - A withdrawal with a bit of heart. please, Premier, and then we can move on.

**Mr HODGMAN** - I do.

**Dr Woodruff** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Please withdraw it wholeheartedly and move on, for my sake.

**Mr HODGMAN** - I am endeavouring to but Dr Woodruff is deliberately talking over the top of me to prevent me from doing it, which again goes to the point that it is more about showboating in this place and less about the facts we want Tasmanians to understand.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Point of order, Madam Speaker. Could the Premier please withdraw the offensive comment he made previously. It is a scandal that he would suggest the Greens and the Opposition would in any way want to do harm to Tasmania. We are trying to do the opposite.

**Madam SPEAKER** - I am sure that is not what he meant but it did sound like that. Premier, if you could please withdraw it wholeheartedly.

**Mr HODGMAN** - I will certainly withdraw it, as I did, as the member is deliberately denying.

The point I am making is that opposition parties, by the nature of their questioning in this place, are undermining confidence in our capabilities. It is a fair thing to be asked about what we are doing. I and the minister have outlined at great length what we are doing to strengthen our capabilities. It is only damaging confidence in our communities that will likely be looking to what could occur here. They are still recovering from what happened earlier this year. We have outlined in significant detail our commitment to better support our fire service, our team, off the back of what has happened in events past and moving forward.

As to incident management teams, it is a decision by the chief officer. It is an operational matter. It is not for armchair experts such as the opposition parties or others to make judgment calls about. I back our fire service to keep our community safe, as they have done this year. They have

not been under-resourced as Opposition members suggest. We have not ignored recommendations of reports that have been provided to this Government, nor those that were provided to a former Labor-Greens government but which were not acted upon. We will continue to strongly support our firefighting effort. We have every confidence in their capabilities. No amount of scaremongering by opposition parties will stop us from continuing to support them.

### **Lake Malbena - Federal Court Judgment**

**Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for ENVIRONMENT, PARKS and HERITAGE,  
Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.14 a.m.]

Your Government's corrupted and unpopular expressions of interest process for development in public protected areas has been dealt another blow. We have the Federal Court judgment here and it is damning. Will you admit you and your agency were complicit in engineering on behalf of the proponent a flawed Commonwealth approval to get around the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and deny Aboriginal Tasmanians, anglers, bushwalkers, wilderness guides, conservationists and everyday Tasmanians a say on the Lake Malbena proposal?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question and begin by first of all rejecting outright the assertions that she has made. I have read the judgment; it is obvious that you have not.

The judgment, in simple terms, sets aside the current federal decision to allow the parties to negotiate on the conditions that were brought forward voluntarily by the proponent in the first place. For the member to characterise it as anything other, quite frankly takes us to exactly where the Greens want to be. That is, they want to have a full-frontal attack on a young Tasmanian family that is doing its best to establish a world-class tourism venture that will create jobs and opportunity for Tasmanians. It is a full-frontal attack by the Greens, the Wilderness Society and those others who would join with them.

Let me put some facts on the table. First and foremost, Halls Island has had a lease on it for a long period of time. It is not pristine wilderness. It sits within pristine wilderness, but Halls Island is not. It has had human intervention for a long period of time. What the Hacketts have proposed is to ensure that the public and those who want to visit the island can visit the island under their management plan. They have allowed for more Tasmanians to see the island than have seen it previously and, importantly, not have to carry their waste out because they will be able to use the very modest facilities that the Hacketts are intending to put in place on the island.

I reject outright your assertions. You should be called for what you are attempting to do and that is to simply bully, to frustrate, to take on a young Tasmanian family that is doing its very best under very difficult circumstances to establish a world-class tourism asset that will enable more people to see the best of Tasmania under appropriate circumstances. For her to characterise it, as she has, is misleading -

**Ms O'Connor** - You are hurting, and you deserve it. On this issue, you deserve it.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - Did that sound like I was hurting?

## **Department of Education - Tender Processes**

### **Ms OGILVIE question to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.18 a.m.]

I refer you to the Integrity Commission's Operation Taurus Report which investigated that an Education department manager inappropriately awarded or influenced \$2.6 million-worth of tenders. Your department has now referred this matter to Tasmania Police. It appears that a number of Tasmanian businesses prepared tenders which were clearly never going to be successful. Has your department contacted all the unsuccessful tenderers who are commercial victims of this multimillion-dollar issue? What action will the Government be taking to compensate these businesses for the lost opportunity, time, effort and resources wasted on preparing tenders they had no hope of winning?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. The Integrity Commission identified that the resources that were ultimately acquired by the department, and we are talking about The Orb resource, were of good quality and suitable for the educational purpose for which they were intended. It is important to remember that it is a very good educational resource.

In relation to the misconduct allegations against an employee engaged in the procurement process, the Department of Education reported the matter to the Integrity Commission as soon as it became aware of it, and fully cooperated with the Commission while the Commission conducted its investigation and compiled its report. Of course, the findings of that report have all been accepted.

The Department of Education fully investigates allegations of misconduct. In addition to making a report to the Integrity Commission and Tasmania Police, the department commenced an investigation pursuant to Employment Direction 5 as to whether the employee had breached the State Service Act 2000 code of conduct and appointed an independent external investigator.

The Department of Education has a number of controls in place to identify irregularities in financial transactions. In this case, the Procurement Review Committee identified the issue as part of its regular operation. Although required to scrutinise procurement matters to the value of over \$250 000, the Department of Education PRC handles all relevant procurement matters above \$50 000, providing a higher level of scrutiny than the minimum required.

Following identification of multiple lower-value transactions for a single supplier, the Department of Education undertook an external review to assess whether procurement was being undertaken in accordance with the principles of the then Treasurer's Instruction T1-110. As a result of the audit, further action has taken place and controls have been implemented, including that payments over \$10 000 must be certified as correct by the manager of financial services and a completed monthly summary submitted to the procurement review committee as part of the committee's oversight function.

It is important to note that this Integrity Commission report is the result of a request by the Department of Education to investigate. This in itself clearly shows that the checks and balances in our systems were working. It was the Department of Education's internal procurement measures that specifically identified the procurement review committee which identified this matter, as we

have alluded to. The Integrity Commission report highlights that the Department of Education takes its procurement obligation very seriously and has controls in place to detect misconduct, actively works with the Integrity Commission and has been responsive to external advice, further strengthening its controls.

The Department of Education takes these allegations of misconduct very seriously and the department commenced an investigation pursuant to Employment Direction 5 as soon as the information came to light. As a result of the matter, the department undertook an external review of the procurement processes and has introduced, as I have said, increased internal controls around procurement processes.

### **Royal Hobart Hospital - Redevelopment and Job Opportunities**

#### **Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Ms COURTNEY**

[10.23 a.m.]

Can you please update the House on how the Hodgman majority Liberal Government's delivery of the Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment is creating jobs and supporting Tasmanian businesses, and is the minister aware of any alternative plans?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. The Hodgman majority Liberal Government has a long-term plan for all Tasmanians for a strong economy and for better health care and we are focused on delivering it. We have been clear that health is a top priority, which is why we are devoting a record \$8.1 billion for health care services over the next four years. That is hundreds of millions more than last year's budget and \$2.3 billion more than the last Labor-Greens budget. This commitment to increased investment is part of our long-term plan that we took to the Tasmanian people.

We are investing in more services and building more physical capacity through stage 1 of the Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment, which is approaching completion, Tasmania's largest-ever health infrastructure project. Last week's helipad testing marked an historic occasion for health service provision in Tasmania, the first aeromedical retrieval helicopter to land at the Royal. The K Block helipad will also allow us for the first time to provide an integrated trauma system between Tasmania's major hospitals, facilitating access to the state's tertiary trauma care centre.

The Royal redevelopment is a critical component of delivering improved patient outcomes and over the life of the project so far it has also injected around \$1.6 billion into the Tasmanian economy, creating an estimated 4000 jobs. This is a project that the Labor-Greens government ran off the rails but the Hodgman majority Liberal Government rescued it and is now going to bring it to completion.

It has been 13 years since the former Labor government started talking about the new hospital, but it took a majority Liberal government to get on track and deliver the Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment. Let me be very clear. Labor failed to lay a single brick on Tasmania's largest-ever health infrastructure project at a time that Tasmanians will remember that the state was bleeding jobs. This failure by Labor not only held back our health system, it also punished our economy.

We have hundreds of millions of dollars more in health infrastructure coming down the pipeline, with projects around Tasmania, including a new ambulance station for Campbell Town, the new \$92 million Launceston General Hospital redevelopment, the \$35 million redevelopment at the Mersey Hospital, as well as \$15 million of upgrades to rural hospitals and ambulance stations. We have turned the Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment around, we are investing more critical infrastructure and we have turned around the economy.

In contrast, Labor has no plan for Tasmania. Mr O'Byrne, as we know, has confirmed in his op-ed that he, or they, have no plans to improve health outcomes for Tasmanians. They have refused to provide an alternative economic blueprint for Tasmania. They do not have a single health policy, not one new doctor, not one new nurse, not one new allied health professional. Just yesterday the AMA called them out fair and square. Not one policy on the table. Tasmanians are asking, including the AMA, where are your policies and plans? What is the record of those opposite? When they were in government they underinvested in infrastructure and essential services and 10 000 Tasmanians lost their jobs under a Labor-Greens government.

As was outlined yesterday by Mr Barnett, why is Labor still hiding their review of the disastrous selection panel? Is it because Ms White's leadership is under pressure? Is it because it will demonstrate that they had seven health policies during the election? Is it because it will show up their policy of medi-hotels? In contrast, the Hodgman majority Liberal Government is getting on with the job of investing record amounts into infrastructure and essential services, including long-term health infrastructure. Around 15 000 more Tasmanians have jobs since we came to office and we are restoring the essential services that Labor cut to the bone.

### **Royal Hobart Hospital - Redevelopment Completion Date**

**Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Ms COURTNEY**

[10.28 a.m.]

The Australian Medical Association has been scathing in its assessment of the Tasmanian health system. They are saying it is getting worse under you. Dr John Davis from the AMA said the health system is beyond crisis point, it is in chaos - and I quote:

The Government has got to understand that what they are doing is not working. The band-aids are not working, the silence is not working. We need a redesign and a strategy going forward ...

AMA President, John Burgess, has frankly stated that 'the fish rots from the head'.

Your only answer to these urgent cries for help has been to say that the new Royal Hobart Hospital will be finished soon. You have been shift and evasive in response to questions about when K Block would achieve practical completion. The managing contractor would be communicating daily with you and your Government about the date for practical completion. You know this information, you just do not want to be honest with the people of Tasmania. On what date will construction on the Royal Hobart Hospital be completed?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member and appreciate the question on the new K Block that they failed to lay a single brick on. It has taken the Hodgman majority Government to deliver this



redevelopment and it will make significant changes for our health system, including 44 new beds which will help address the access flow which we see at that hospital at the moment. We are going to see world-class facilities that are going to assist Tasmanians have the care they need.

As we saw last week, the helipad is being tested. We are going to make sure that Tasmanians, no matter where they live around the state, are able to access the critical care that they need. We should be proud of that. The completion is now imminent with the final fit-out nearing completion.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order. For goodness' sake. Manners are completely missing today.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Once this occurs, the building will undergo vigorous inspection testing and defect rectification to ensure that it meets all specified requirements and it is safe and fit for purpose.

**Ms O'Byrne** - Yes, but what date? When will it be finished?

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, Ms O'Byrne.

**Ms COURTNEY** - This will be followed by commissioning of services into K Block which is on track for a February commencement.

It is important that the managing contractor completes construction of the building as efficiently as possible without compromising quality and that there is a well-executed and supported commissioning process. We will continue to work with our expert project and clinical managers to undertake this very complex and important work.

**Ms WHITE** - Point of order, Madam Speaker. It goes to standing order 45. If you could draw the minister's attention to the question, which was: when will the hospital be completed? She has not given a date. Previously the Government has, and I am wondering why she is being so secretive?

**Madam SPEAKER** - Thank you. It is not a standard point of order, but I ask the minister to be relevant.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I will go on, Madam Speaker.

As I was saying, we are going to continue to work with the experts with regard to the final stages of this completion. This is complex and important work. They are the experts, not the politicians. They are best placed to ensure additional capacity is delivered as soon as possible without minimising any impact on services.

### **Bushfires Readiness - Availability of Remote Area Teams**

**Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mr SHELTON**

[10.32 a.m.]

Tasmanians want to be assured that you are putting all resources and effort into keeping them as safe as possible. Can you tell us if a fire were to break out in a remote area tomorrow, how many TFS remote area team staff would be able to be mobilised?

## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. Fire is an important area. It is emotionally charged at the moment so we need to keep some respect in the debate to make sure that this issue is kept in perspective when it comes to Tasmanians. What I have said in the past -

**Dr Woodruff** - Give him a hand. He needs it. Tell him what to say; he needs to know what to say.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Dr Woodruff, could you be more respectful, please.

**Dr Woodruff** - Well, look at what just happened, Madam Speaker. Messages.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Let us be a kind parliament.

**Dr Woodruff** - This is the time for ministerial scrutiny. Ministers should be able to manage their portfolios.

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

**Mr SHELTON** - I will come to the second part of answer in a moment.

The TFS has a remote firefighting capability and that has been reinstated, as I have said. A program of training has commenced to ensure that our remote teams have the appropriate training ready for the summer bushfire season, which I have already said a number of times. The Parks and Wildlife Service continue to train and maintain the largest remote area firefighting capability in the state. The Tasmania Fire Service is geared up for tanker-based firefighting and urban interface. Only 2 per cent of their work is in remote area firefighting, normally supported by the Parks and Wildlife Service. As I indicated, that program is ongoing. It will be in place by the beginning of the bushfire season.

**Dr Woodruff** - When is the bushfire season, minister?

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

**Mr SHELTON** - I have always said at the beginning of the summer bush fire season -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Madam Speaker, this is deeply concerning. Point of order, standing order 45 on relevance. I asked one question: how many TFS remote area team staff can be deployed if required tomorrow?

**Madam SPEAKER** - Thank you. Minister, the question is fairly explicit.

**Mr SHELTON** - Madam Speaker, I have already answered the question -

**Dr Woodruff** - You have not.

**Mr SHELTON** - The start of the summer bushfire season is on 1 December.

To reiterate the previous answer: the incident management teams are routinely made up of multi-agency staff including from the Tasmania Fire Service, Parks and Wildlife Service and Sustainable Timbers Tasmania. As the Premier said it is a matter for the Chief Fire Officer in relation to staffing.

**Dr Woodruff** - No. How many are there?

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr SHELTON** - He has advised me that he is not aware of any issues with the staffing of incident management teams in relation to the fires several weeks ago.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Point of order 45, Madam Speaker. Perhaps if the minister cannot answer this question he should sit down and give us the answer in the House tomorrow. It is important. This Government has been saying that there are 80 TFS remote area team staff and that they are ready. We believe that is not true. We believe none of them is ready. We need to know the answer.

**Madam SPEAKER** - My understanding is that the minister made it quite clear that they would be ready to go from 1 December.

**Dr Woodruff** - No, that is not true.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Is that true, minister? You can stand, please, and address it.

**Mr SHELTON** - I said 1 December.

**Dr Woodruff** - How many?

**Mr SHELTON** - I said they will be in place for 1 December.

**Dr Woodruff** - Tomorrow is zero?

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, Dr Woodruff. You cannot keep doing this. I ask you to hear the answer in silence.

**Mr SHELTON** - Madam Speaker, to quickly finish up, evidently the fires were responded to very well. I send my full support to all volunteers and career fire officers. They did a terrific job in keeping lives and property safe in the last fires.

### **Royal Hobart Hospital - Additional Bed Capacity**

**Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Ms COURTNEY**

[10.36 a.m.]

The Australasian College for Emergency Medicine has released data showing that the Royal Hobart Hospital is one of the worst-performing in the country in terms of access block and emergency department waits of more than 24 hours. The Director of Emergency Medicine has given evidence to the Coroner that in the last year, 1800 patients waited more than 24 hours in the ED compared to just two across Melbourne's four major hospitals.

We know that extended waits in the ED contribute directly to worse health outcomes, including preventable deaths. To date your only answer to chronic bed block is to open 44 of the 250 promised additional beds at the Royal Hobart Hospital when K Block is finally completed and commissioned. However, even that promise is starting to unravel.

Can you confirm that when these beds are opened the contract arrangement with the Hobart Private Hospital for the use of up to 10 beds will cease? Therefore, the additional capacity at the Royal Hobart Hospital will not be 44 beds as promised by you but rather 34 beds.

## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I welcome the opportunity to talk about the benefits that we will get from the co-location with the Hobart Private Hospital. We are finalising the agreement for that to commence shortly. We know the benefits that are going to flow for Tasmanians with regard to the emergency department, to arrangements with surgery and also to capital upgrades that we will see onsite. I welcome the process that was instigated by my predecessor to ensure that we get the benefits from the co-located hospital and that Tasmanians can benefit from it.

The member began her question with the Australian College for Emergency Medicine's report and their comments that came out earlier in the week. As I said yesterday, I acknowledge their concerns and the comments they have made. I am looking forward to meeting the ACEM later in the week to look at how we can address the things they have raised. They are important issues in our hospitals and as has been said by ACEM -

**Ms WHITE** - Point of order, Madam Speaker. It goes to standing order 45, relevance. The question was straightforward: can the minister confirm that it is not 44 additional beds but 34? The community deserves to know. If the minister does not know, she can come back to the House at a later date.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Thank you. Minister, I ask you to try to be relevant, please.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I am looking forward to the opening of the redevelopment of K Block. There will be 44 more beds on the Royal site available for patients. This redevelopment will enable 2500 Tasmanian patients to be seen every year. This is an exciting development for Tasmanians and will help with the challenges that we are seeing in the ED. I acknowledge those concerns. This is why we are working with clinicians to get the outcomes that we need.

## **Education - Years 11 and 12 Extension Policy**

**Mrs RYLAH question to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.40 a.m.]

Can you please inform the House how the Hodgman Liberal Government is delivering our plan for education and increasing senior secondary opportunities through our successful years 11 and 12 extension policy?

## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question and her interest in this matter. The Hodgman Liberal Government is continuing to deliver upon our long-term plan for education,

providing young Tasmanians with every opportunity to complete their senior secondary education. A great education is a passport to a better life and a better standard of living. That is why we are employing more teachers, extending our government high schools to year 12 and making the biggest ever investment in school infrastructure.

Communities around the state have embraced our program to extend high schools to years 11 and 12, with 43 schools making the move so far. This has been a very sensible, measured, purposeful reform. We have brought the school communities with us and as a result they are working well with retention and attainment rates up. This means more students are staying at school longer and achieving more while they are there. Tasmanian Certificate of Education attainment, for example, is more than 10 per cent higher since we came to government in 2014.

Today I am pleased to announce the next round of schools that are preparing to extend in 2021 as part of our commitment to create a job ready generation. Seven schools will be extending to year 12 in 2021. They are Bothwell District High School, Brooks High School, Cosgrove High School, Exeter High School, Montrose Bay High School, Queechy High School and Riverside High School. Schools are working collectively to increase opportunity for shared enrolments to meet the personalised needs of their student cohort. Support, including funding, will be provided to these schools throughout next year to further develop their years 11 and 12 implementation plan and curriculum offerings in 2021.

These schools will join 43 other schools around Tasmania that have already extended to years 11 and 12 as well as a further four schools that have committed to extending from next year, including King Island District High School. This means more young Tasmanians are able to stay on and study years 11 and 12 at their local high school, ensuring we are able to provide the right mix of senior secondary study opportunities to meet the individual and diverse needs of every student.

I notice the great interest the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is having with this particular program. I look forward to their support for our years 11 and 12 extension. It will give confidence to all of those school communities when Labor does have a firm policy on this. Our high schools and communities have a right to know the position of the Labor Party.

Only this side of the House is committed to creating a job-ready generation of young Tasmanians through our extension school program. The infrastructure investment we are making to do this is also significant. In addition to the \$67.5 million provided over the past five years, this Government is committed to a further \$97 million over the next four years to the extension program. This infrastructure investment will not only benefit the students in all those school communities but all of those people employed in the building and construction industry. That means more jobs, supporting school business, supporting medium business and large business, supporting industry and supporting jobs, employing Tasmanians in our creation of a job-ready generation.

### **Family Violence Action Plan - Final Report**

**Mrs PETRUSMA question to MINISTER for PREVENTION of FAMILY VIOLENCE, Mr HODGMAN**

[10.44 a.m.]

Can you please update the House on the outcomes of the Hodgman Liberal Government First Family Violence Action Plan, Safe Homes, Safe Families?

## ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, the former minister who was instrumental in developing our state's response to family violence, which remains a top priority for me and for my Government. It is reflected in our first family violence action plan that in 2015 the esteemed Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty, said was nation-leading, backed by an additional funding of \$26 million to deliver resources, programs and support under 23 actions.

We have since released the next stage of our action plan with a budget of \$26 million over three years. Another great Australian and family violence campaigner, Natasha Stott Despoja, has said, on announcing what was one of the 40 actions under this plan:

... it not only shows renewed and passionate commitment from this Government but it's actually a national first and possibly a world first at this stage and shows true commitment in eliminating violence against women.

**Ms O'Byrne** - You are not funding the core services. New initiatives are great and -

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, could we hear the Premier in silence, please.

**Mr HODGMAN** - As Natasha Stott Despoja, a great leader in this area, says, 'Actually, a national first and possibly a world first at this stage'.

**Ms O'Byrne** - She does not know that you cut everything else.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, Ms O'Byrne.

**Mr HODGMAN** - I think Natasha Stott Despoja is well aware of the things we are doing as a Government. I would not suggest that she is ignorant, as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition does. She says, 'It shows true commitment in eliminating violence against women and children'.

Today, I am releasing the final report and outcomes of our first family violence action plan, Safe Homes, Safe Families. I am pleased to report that over the past financial year there has been a 12.64 per cent decrease in the number of high-risk family violence incidents and at 5.67 per cent increase in the number of family violence orders issued.

There has been a steady increase in the reporting of family violence arguments and incidents, indicating greater community awareness and intolerance of family violence with victims feeling more confident to report offending of what has, for so long, been one of our nation's dark secrets. While overall these are encouraging results, we know there is a consistently high level of family and sexual violence in our community that reminds us of how far we have to go.

The report confirms the delivery of additional services and support for victims and survivors of family violence right around the state, as well as stronger legislative protections. Since 2015 this report shows there have been 841 high-risk family violence incidents mapped by the new Safe Families Coordination unit. There have been over 8000 at-risk children identified and over 5000 notifications made to schools so those students can be supported. There have been 970 clients provided with support counselling and referrals through our new Safe Choices service. An additional 743 children and young people have received counselling services comprising 4719 additional hours. There were 4593 additional hours of counselling services provided to adults.

There have been 50 extra houses made available for families experiencing family violence and 1311 additional clients were provided with legal assistance. There have been 2099 clients assessed and provided information and referral through the men's referral service and 216 women were provided with safety upgrades to support them to remain in their home or a home of choice.

These are not just numbers. These are people: victims, survivors. These are additional services and supports now available under our plan and strongly supported by our agencies and many valued non-government partners. There are more on-ground frontline resources, over 50 new and ongoing positions in the state service, as well as jobs for those in the community sector, including psychologists, social workers, police prosecutors, liaison officers, legal practitioners and family safety workers.

Our new plan also includes a focus on sexual violence. The Sexual Assault Support Service in the south that I visited last week - and thanks to the dedicated staff there for what they do - advised me that around 40 to 45 per cent of women who experience physical abuse from an intimate partner are also abused sexually and approximately 30 per cent of children who presented to be assessed in the last financial year had experienced historical family violence.

This clearly demonstrates the intersection between family violence and sexual violence. This was also demonstrated through our consultations on the new action plan including through the Hearing Lived Experience survey, which engaged 500 victim survivors. We thank them for their bravery and their courage in contributing.

I have also met with the members of the Family Violence Counselling Support Service. We appreciate the service and support they provide to those impacted by family violence. The report being released today under our first Family Violence Action Plan will be available, and that includes on our website. It reports positive progress but also the scale of the challenge ahead of us, which requires strong collaboration across government and our whole community to create a safer Tasmania and one that is free from family violence.

### **Northern Regional Prison - Alternative Sites**

#### **Ms BUTLER question to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS, Ms ARCHER**

[10.50 a.m.]

In recent weeks you have repeatedly refused to release details of alternative sites that were considered for the maximum security northern prison. Your secrecy and lack of consultation has fuelled deep distrust in the Westbury community. Information has had to be dragged out of your Government using right to information laws. These right to information documents are revealing. Can you confirm that 102 Lilydale Road, Rocherlea was identified by your own department as a potential site for the maximum security northern prison? Is Rocherlea on your secret shortlist of prison sites?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. We have nothing to hide as part of the RTI process. Members know that is done at arm's length. I have no role to play in that, and the member is being usually selective. As the RTI letter, which was actually addressed to the Leader of the Opposition, regarding the expressions of interest process indicated:

It was a term of the conditions of the expressions of interest that all documents and information provided by proponents as part of submissions would be recognised as being provided commercial-in-confidence and would accordingly be held in confidence.

They are private landowners. The site to which you have referred has appropriately been revealed because it is a Crown land site. In fact four government sites were nominated as potentially suitable for the prison development. One was subsequently withdrawn by the nominating agency as it was still required for the agency's purposes. Of the three other sites, the gradient of one was deemed unsuitable for a prison development and the other two sites were removed from the shortlist because they were primarily within residential areas. They are in relation to Crown land sites.

I will not be releasing other sites for reasons that the RTI officer confirmed, independently of me as the minister, that it is appropriate the Government maintains commercial-in-confidence be upheld for shortlisted sites while the consultation continues so as not to prejudice any future outcome.

This is a critical project that must not be subject to constant scaremongering and, as I said yesterday, this is just groundhog day. The Opposition keeps running out of questions so they revert back to the prison. They think they have something in an RTI -

**Ms WHITE** - Point of order, Madam Speaker, under standing order 45, relevance. The question that was asked of the minister is whether she could confirm the Rocherlea site was shortlisted? She has mentioned other sites but she has not addressed that one. I hope she can address the answer now.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Thank you. Minister.

**Ms ARCHER** - I confirmed that the Rocherlea site was a Crown land site that was appropriately revealed but was determined to be not appropriate before the shortlist. I will not be releasing the shortlist. The RTI request clearly points to the fact that commercial-in-confidence prevents us from doing so.

As I was saying before the Leader of the Opposition, on behalf of the member for Lyons, took a point of order, this is constant scaremongering and irresponsible behaviour by the Labor Party on such a massive infrastructure project for the state that will be positive in terms of economic outcomes and jobs, hundreds of jobs during the construction stage and hundreds of permanent jobs thereafter as a result of the prison. Quite frankly, Labor's faux attention to the northern part of the state is just that. It is a new-found love of the north of the state and it is temporary in relation to this area. The fly-in-fly-out member for Lyons, whose natural habitat on the day that we were consulting last week was in Sandy Bay, came into this House and said that she had visited Westbury for a month, almost every day, two weeks of which we were sitting in this House.

### **Bothwell - Closure of General Practice Clinic**

**Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Ms COURTNEY**

[10.55 a.m.]

You would be aware that the community of Bothwell will lose its only GP service by the end of this week. The Bothwell GP practice has over 600 active patients that it cares for, from Miena



to Kempton. The community is geographically isolated, with limited public transport and the next closest doctor's surgery, if you can get in, is 50 kilometres away. The Premier and your staff member last met with the mayor of the Central Highlands Council on 29 October, where a proposal was put forward by the council asking the state government to support the council to keep a GP in Bothwell. The mayor was told that the Premier would provide a response by that Friday, 1 November. That did not happen. To date, there has been no support offered to the community and, as a consequence, the doctor's surgery is set to close. Why have you ignored the health needs of the Central Highlands community? Will you now step in and make sure that they do not permanently lose their doctor?

## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. We did indeed meet with representatives. I understand the Premier did but unfortunately I was not able to attend the meeting because I was in the Chamber at the time. I know this has been a challenge for that community and service delivery of primary health around regional areas of Tasmania can be challenging at times.

With regard to what we are doing there, my understanding - and I will correct the record if I need to - is that I have already written to the mayor subsequent to that meeting to outline that the Government will do further work on that proposal. I am afraid I do not have that correspondence with me so I cannot provide any more detail, but as a government I had met with them previously, as has the Premier. As a government and through the department, we are doing everything we can to work with that community to explore options and look at ways we can ensure we have service delivery for that community into the future.

### **Pioneer - Access to Safe Drinking Water**

#### **Ms O'BYRNE question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN**

[10.58 a.m.]

As you would be aware, the TasWater legislation passed this House on 23 August 2018 and received royal assent on 14 September 2018. Only four days before royal assent, you wrote to a resident of Pioneer in response to their very serious concerns about lead contamination in their water to advise that you could provide no assistance, as your Government was separate from TasWater.

In May of this year, the former failed health minister, Mr Ferguson, wrote to the member for McIntyre, Ms Rattray, advising that he could also provide no assistance to ensure safe water and referred to the Premier's previous letter of 18 September to explain why he could do nothing. Clearly by this stage, the Government was indeed a shareholder of TasWater, so can you explain what action was taken, as a shareholder, to ensure the provision of safe drinking water to the residents of Pioneer? Why did you claim you had no responsibility? Why have you abandoned the people of Pioneer and your promise to ensure that every community has access to safe drinking water?

## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question but refute her claims as to what has or has not been done and can assure members of that community and this parliament of what has. The

Government is always very concerned to ensure that drinking water in our communities is safe for consumption and meets the necessary guidelines, including through our public health services. We expect TasWater to ensure that rainwater tanks provided to residents are installed consistent with guidelines and legislative requirements.

After residents' concerns that the service replacement at Pioneer did not appear to address all the elements of the original proposal, I am advised that the Director of Public Health asked TasWater to investigate how each residential supply was managed and ensure they reached the standards for sustainable long-term rainwater collection. Public Health Services will continue to work with TasWater, which has committed to liaising with households to help them manage water supply. TasWater has advised that it remains committed to resolving the issues at Pioneer and implementing the most appropriate solution to ensure residents have ongoing access to safe drinking water.

I am advised that approximately 91 per cent of the Tasmanian population receives a drinking water supply from TasWater and that there are currently no water supplies operating on boiled water alerts. There has only been one temporary water alert this financial year, which is a record low, far below the 25 alerts that were issued in 2012-13. Obviously there is still more to do but 24 alerts were lifted between July 2017 and 2018 as a result of the work of TasWater to improve water supplies to small towns throughout Tasmania. That refutes the claim from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that nothing has happened.

### **Building and Construction Sector - Long-Term Plan**

**Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for BUILDING and CONSTRUCTION, Ms ARCHER**

[11.01 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Hodgman Liberal Government is delivering its long-term plan to support the building and construction sector and create jobs? Is the minister aware of any other approaches?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons, Mr Tucker, for his interest in this area and, indeed, all my colleagues on my side of the House who take an enormous interest in our strong support of Tasmania's building and construction sector.

We are delivering our long-term plan with record levels of infrastructure investment in our 2019-20 state Budget, which will generate further growth in jobs across the industry. Today Tasmania is a much stronger and more confident place to be than when we came to government in 2014. Our long-term plan is delivering results. Since our Government came to office, 1500 more Tasmanians have jobs. We have nation-leading business conditions and strong levels of business confidence.

It is a plan that is working in Tasmania's building and construction sector, which is widely acknowledged by industry insiders and commentators as nation-leading. According to ABS lending statistics released last week, Tasmania remains the best place to buy your first home or build one. In the year to September this year, the number of first home buyers grew 11.9 per cent to more than 2000 compared to the previous year, making Tasmania the fastest-growing state for first home

buyers. This is great news for those entering the market, particularly our young Tasmanians. It is also great news for Tasmania's many local businesses involved in the building sector or supporting the sector.

The ABS data also indicated that Tasmania leads the nation in lending commitments for the construction of owner-occupied new homes in the year to September 2019, with 6.2 per cent growth compared to the previous year. Tasmania is also the fastest-growing jurisdiction in Australia for building work on both a quarterly and annual basis. In fact, Tasmania is the only jurisdiction in Australia to see growth in building work done. Since 2014 the number of construction jobs has grown by more than 18 per cent. That is hundreds; hundreds more jobs for Tasmanians.

The industry is also supported strongly by record levels of investment by our Government in infrastructure. Our 2019-20 Budget included a record \$3.6 billion investment into intergenerational infrastructure supporting future growth, investment attraction and, of course, job creation. That means road and rail upgrades, new hospitals, new schools, irrigation schemes, new prisons, supporting local businesses in our building and construction sector. The future is bright. The recently released Infrastructure Tasmania Project Pipeline forecasts that \$15.2 billion is to be spent on public and private sector infrastructure over the next 10 years.

Tasmania is a much stronger, more confident place to be but it certainly has not always been that way. Our businesses do not suddenly switch from being the least confident in the country to being the most confident and the most optimistic about their future. They need the right conditions to grow and prosper, to invest and to employ more Tasmanians. This includes strong, stable budget management under a majority Liberal government.

Madam Speaker, I was asked about other approaches. Tasmanians already know you cannot trust Labor and the Greens when it comes to keeping our economy strong and sensible budget management.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, please.

**Ms ARCHER** - Tasmanians should be reminded that it was the Labor-Greens government that took Tasmania into recession. They broke the budget, they failed to invest in infrastructure and essential services and 10 000 Tasmanians lost their jobs under the Labor-Greens government. By contrast, the infrastructure investment in our 2019-20 state budget is 250 per cent bigger than the last year of the Labor-Greens government. That is a massive contrast.

**Ms O'Byrne** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, please, Ms O'Byrne.

**Ms ARCHER** - Madam Speaker, our Budget invests record amounts into job creating infrastructure and essential services to maintain the momentum in our economy and support the creation of 10 000 more jobs. We are getting on with the job of delivering our plan which is backing the growth in the building and construction sector. Meanwhile, Labor has no plan, no alternative budget, cannot be trusted, and they have no credibility on the economy and jobs growth in the building and construction sector, or any other sector, for that matter.

**Time expired.**

## **CAT MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2019 (No. 55)**

### **First Reading**

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

## **PROPERTY AGENTS AND LAND TRANSACTIONS AMENDMENT BILL 2019 (No. 53)**

### **First Reading**

Bill presented by **Ms Archer** and read the first time.

## **MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

### **Bushfire Preparedness**

[11.10 a.m.]

**Ms BUTLER** (Lyons - Motion) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: bushfire preparedness.

I am pleased to talk today about bushfire preparedness. Yesterday, it was revealed that recruiting and training volunteers for remote area teams was only considered a long-term priority, despite it being recommended in the 2016 Press inquiry and again in the AFAC inquiry into last summer's devastating bushfires.

We want the minister to get this right. We need him to be doing a good job. We need this to be right. The community needs him to get this right. The implications are dire. We will be facing bushfires as a community this summer and we need to know that the minister and the decision-makers have taken on the advice from the 2016 and the 2019 reviews and implemented proper training and recruitment to all career and volunteer firefighters across the state.

We need to know that they are resourced properly, minister. We need to know empirically that you have this under control. We are receiving worrying reports from the Tasmania Fire Service that Tasmania is at risk this bushfire season and this minister is leading us into an extraordinarily dangerous fire season under-resourced and ill-prepared.

We are advised that in the recent bushfire emergencies at Lachlan and Scamander the TFS did not have enough staff to put together an incident management team and had to draw resources from other agencies. We know that training of staff has been one of the problem areas identified in the 2016 review, and resourcing properly is a major issue. We need to know that the minister has this under control.

Recommendation 2 of the AFAC review of the management of the Tasmanian fires of December 2018-19 stated that:

TFS should pursue the creation of a group of volunteer remote area firefighters. In doing so, the TFS should not consider itself limited to upskilling of current volunteer brigade members but should carry out a cross-benefit analysis of creating one or more remote area firefighting units based in urban areas in order to tap into the potential of those members of the urban-based Tasmanian community who may have advanced knowledge and skills relating to navigation and survival in wilderness.

We know that this has not happened. The review then states that 'Tasmania only has limited numbers of firefighters with this level of training and fitness', and in the 2016 review of the fires that burnt in Tasmania that year it was recommended that Tasmania look at developing a cadre of volunteers with the necessary training and fitness to perform this role. We were told in the course of the current review that while some funding had been provided for scoping this project, it had not yet come to fruition and there is yet no volunteer remote area firefighting capacity in Tasmania.

Resourcing has been an issue raised in all of the reviews and we need to know that the minister has this under control and we do not believe he does. From the information we are gathering - actually we are not gathering it, people are coming to us - people also have serious concerns. This is a really serious issue. These are lives. This is huge. You have the tourism industry, you have business communities, you have communities across Tasmania, you have out-of-date community protection plans, you have a lack of mapping. There are all kinds of things that were missing from that annual report. It is all over the place, minister, and we need to know that you have this under control and we just cannot see much evidence to suggest that you do.

Also in the review it said:

We note that the NSW Rural Fire Service maintains a significant number of volunteers who are trained and have the requisite levels of fitness to work as remote area firefighters and many of these volunteers deployed to Tasmania in 2019. We consider that TFS should revisit this recommendation and establish its own volunteer remote area firefighting force.

This is where you have an issue at the moment. This still has not been resolved. The review continues:

In doing so we consider that it will be important to overlook the number of people who live in urban areas in Tasmania, away from traditional volunteer fire stations, who enjoy recreation in the wilderness area of the State and already have the fitness and bushcraft skills that would enable them to be effective remote area firefighters given the proper training.

Training is an issue, minister. Training is what we keep hearing. There is a lack of training and a lack of preparedness. There is a lack of time for when people put their hand up and contribute their time to be volunteers and when their training is complete. There is a serious lag in that area at the moment. You have a number of people across the state who want to be volunteer firefighters but they are not able to go out and fight fires yet because they have not been trained because of lack

of resourcing. You cannot put that back on to workers, minister. You have to take responsibility for that because this is really serious. It is a major thing you need to get right.

The reports of the serious lag times between when people put their hand up to when they can volunteer is not okay. You cannot just say they have started their training. We are looking for completed training times. We want to know that people's training is complete and they are able to volunteer as firefighters, shoulder to shoulder with other people in their community. I am getting this from brigades all across the state. It is not good enough and it is a resourcing issue.

There is also a problem we keep coming across of an unhealthy culture and compromising of remote forest firefighters, the Sustainable Timber career firefighters, the TSF and also brigade volunteers. The AFAC inquiry also pointed to resourcing issues and said:

We found that Group Officers (volunteers who manage a Group of volunteer brigades) though legislatively recognised as part of the TFS management structure, had been over time diminished in their command role and had their authority deferred to paid District Officers (we did, however, see examples of good practice in the way that Group Officers were used to manage resourcing from the ongoing commitment to these fires).

Resourcing is a major issue and we have no reason to believe you have rectified this. It is time for you to step up and get it right.

**Time expired.**

[11.17 a.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** (Franklin) - Seriously, you are not going to get up. That is unbelievable. Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to say for the record that the minister, in terms of seeking the call on this most important matter, basically sat on his hands. That is unbelievable. We brought this on as a matter of public importance -

**Mr SHELTON** - Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is normal process that the Greens have a say, Labor has had their say. As the minister -

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Minister, it is not a point of order. It is whoever jumps.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - I remember when I was a minister and there was a matter of public importance raised in my portfolio area, we allowed the member to move the motion to speak and then we would respond.

This is a matter of extreme importance. I will start by acknowledging that we have a number of volunteer firefighters and firefighters from the TFS who are currently working in extreme circumstances and conditions in New South Wales on deployment. At the outset of this contribution it is important that we on this side of the House acknowledge their commitment and work and we wish them well and that they come home safely to their families. We know that Tasmania Fire Service is well regarded across Australia and the globe in terms of their contribution to firefighting and emergency management. At the outset it is important that we acknowledge that and send our message.

**Mr Ferguson** - And yet you rubbished them in question time.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - No, we did not.

**Mr Ferguson** - Yes, you did.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - By interjection, the Leader of Government Business has said that we rubbished the TFS.

**Mr Ferguson** - You did, and you did last summer as well.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - We did not. That is an absolute outrage. We have had information given to us. This is information that is legitimate: that people within the TFS, both in the volunteer and the career brigades, are very concerned about their preparedness and capability and the lack of support they are receiving from their Government. It is our responsibility if we are aware of this information that we ask questions of the Government to get them to respond. We absolutely support the TFS. What we are calling out is that you do not support them.

**Mr Ferguson** - Rubbish.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - You are not providing them with the resources they need.

**Mr Ferguson** - What you did damaged morale last summer. In early January you rubbished them. You said they were too slow.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order, the member has the call.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - I take offence to that, because we didn't.

**Mr Ferguson** - You shouldn't have said it.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - The issue we raised was the lack of Government support for our fire services.

**Mr Ferguson** - You said they were too slow.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order, Mr Ferguson.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - They are legitimate issues that we raised. We are raising these issues in terms of supporting our fire services, both volunteer and career, both Parks and Wildlife and Sustainable Timbers Tasmania. We want to support them in their work. When we hear the Government is not doing the work to support them, we will call it out every time.

Let us be clear about the politics played on that side of the House. When the Premier responded to a question yesterday, he accused the Labor-Greens government of not implementing recommendations from the 2013 inquiry -

**Mr Ferguson** - Well, you did not.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order, Mr Ferguson.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - Let us be clear about this.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order. I ask that the member be heard in silence please. If the member wants to make a contribution, he can. I ask that the member continue.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - We received the 2013 bushfire report from the former assistant police commissioner from South Australia in mid-2013. We immediately set about implementing a range of those recommendations. Some were short-term, some were medium-term and some were long-term. We went into caretaker mode in early 2014, only six months after we received that report. The election was called and there was a change of government. Of course there were going to be outstanding recommendations from that report. The Premier got up here and played politics and said that we had not acted on it. We had acted on it - short-, medium- and long-term.

You want to talk about politics. Let us expose some of the behaviour of the Liberal Party when they were in opposition during the Dunalley bushfires. The fires had not even been put out, fires were still raging and there was the Leader of the Opposition, Will Hodgman, and his then emergency services shadow minister, Elise Archer, walking with farmers while the fires were still burning, trying to make politics about fuel reduction burns and the impacts of those fires.

The fires had not been put out and there you were fronting the media, trying to play politics with it. The fires were still raging and at the peak of that the opposition sought a briefing. We initially responded and said we were still focusing on fighting the fires but would brief you when we are able to but they were the most intense fires we had faced in many years.

We then got the chief fire commissioner away from his work fighting the fires to brief the opposition. Guess what, the opposition leader did not even turn up - demanded a briefing and did not even front the meeting. The only people who fronted the meeting were the then member for Lyons, Mr Hidding, and the emergency services shadow minister, Elise Archer. The leader's office demanded a briefing and then did not front up to it. He could front up to the media to play politics and to prey on people who were going through some of the most stressful circumstances that they could confront; our farmers, our people in those areas who were affected by those fires. Do not accuse us of playing politics.

You talk about morale. That is the kind of politics that is played on the other side. If we have issues that are raised with us that bring us concern around community safety, we are obligated to raise those.

**Mr Ferguson** - Saps morale. You sapped morale.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order. Mr Ferguson, I ask you to be quiet, please.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - Guess what hits morale: when they do not get the support from the Government, when they do not get the resources they need. Resources are at a stretch. The change in fire behaviour and the length of the fire season now has completely and fundamentally changed the capability response required by the Tasmanian Fire Service.

Traditionally, we would have a major event once every four or five years. It would be an extreme event over a short period of time. The deployments from volunteers and career staff would



be intense over those moments. In the intervening years, there would be a capacity to respond to the recent incident, change capability, increase capability but also give those volunteer and career fire brigades the break between those major incidents.

**Time expired.**

[11.24 a.m.]

**Mr SHELTON** (Lyons - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Madam Deputy Speaker, it is a shame that we are dealing with this and playing politics with it.

You always give the opportunity to both opposition parties and the Greens did not jump. Therefore, I do not mind getting up and making my presentation before the Greens have a chance to have their say if they want to remain in their seat.

It is a real shame that the Tasmanian Labor Party has not taken a leaf out of the national Labor Party's book. Mr Albanese said it is not time to engage in party politics and I quote:

This isn't a party political point here, this is people trying to do their best.

I am not seeking to politicise this at all.

I commend the Opposition for mentioning this, but we have significant fires raging at the moment on the mainland states. We have a number of Tasmanian volunteers over there. The first thing we have to say in any debate is that we wish anybody participating in the fires over there all the very best and we congratulate them for putting up their hands and volunteering and going to the mainland to participate and assist our northern neighbouring states, to help their communities protect their people and do the best thing by the communities. That is a fantastic effort by our fire fighters.

We have had an early start. The chief fire officer stated earlier that it is not unusual to get some spring fires when the hot weather and the northerly winds start up. We have had a taste of fire this season. The process that the Tasmanian Fire Service put in place has been fantastic. We had a number of fires in the state and they were all dealt with very well by the department.

You are attempting to capitalise on the disastrous conditions in New South Wales. If there were not fires in New South Wales and Queensland you would not be here with this today.

**Dr Woodruff** - Do you think the people in New South Wales do not want us to talk about the bushfires? Do you think people do not want us to talk about fires?

**Mr SHELTON** - Again you have sunk to new lows by questioning the operational staff of Tasmanian Fire Service in the recent Tasmanian fires. These recent fires pose no threat thanks to the excellent work of the fire fighting agencies.

Incident management teams are staffed by employees of Tasmanian Fire Service, Parks and Wildlife Service and Sustainable Timbers Tasmania. Incident management teams are formed when and if required for multiple complex and cross-tenure fires. As the Premier stated earlier today and I also have, it is a matter for the chief fire officer in relation to staffing. He has advised me that he is not aware of any issues with staffing incident management teams in relation to the fires several weeks ago.

**Mr O'Byrne** - If that is true that is pretty scary.

**Mr SHELTON** - That is what he has informed me. I send my full support to the chief officer and all the fire fighters that did a terrific job to keep lives and property safe in these fires.

We have more than 5600 fire fighters in this state. In terms of remote area firefighters, there is a training program that is going on. As training programs are completed people are then brought up to scratch as remote area firefighters. I am informed that there are 50 remote area firefighters from the north and north west who have been trained and are ready for deployment.

**Dr Woodruff** - Parks or TFS?

**Mr SHELTON** - Fifty. TFS.

**Dr Woodruff** - TFS, 50. Thirty are not ready to go.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Dr Woodruff, you will have an opportunity to make a contribution soon.

**Mr SHELTON** - The chief fire officer has informed me that 50 remote area firefighters from the north and north-west have been trained and are ready for deployment. The chief fire officer has further advised me that the southern contingent will be trained by 1 December 2019, which I have been indicating to the House, adding an additional number to the 50 already deployed.

**Dr Woodruff** - How many extra?

**Mr SHELTON** - When the training is completed I will be able to tell you. As you are fully aware our predominant cohort for remote area teams is in the Parks and Wildlife Service and remains ready.

Of the over 5000 volunteer members the Tasmania Fire Service has on its book, almost 3900 are operational firefighters. The remainder are support members, junior members and cadets and provisional member cadets waiting to become qualified. All volunteers play a valuable and critical role regardless of whether they are a part of the TFS response capabilities. For example, support members remain at stations to ensure gear is maintained and ready to go. The TFS juniors and cadets are the future and also play a support role. At the state firefighting championships held on Saturday in Invermay Park, Launceston, 39 teams competed. Twenty of those were junior competitions.

**Time expired.**

[11.31 a.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, that was a very revealing answer from the minister about the number of remote area teams that are not available in the south of the state today. This is most concerning. This Government has had since the bushfires were operational and the bushfires -

**Mr Shelton** - They will be ready by 1 December. That has always been the case.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - You did not tell the House how many. We also do not know how many people from Parks are available from remote areas.

**Mr Shelton** - I have said there is a training program in place.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - This is the same minister who gets up here every time and talks about the threat to lives and property. He is missing a word. That word is 'wilderness'. That is wilderness because this Government does not value wilderness. It does not value the integrity of the wilderness and understand that that is where bushfires generate a vast amount of heat and energy. If we do not have a remote area team response that is adequate for the situation for us, we will not be able to respond appropriately. We will have no hope.

Across New South Wales, communities have been doing fuel reduction burns. The Mayor of Glen Innes said that they have done fuel reduction burns twice in the past 18 months. They have done beyond the quota. The New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service confirmed that they have done more fuel reduction burns than they were expected to do or planning to do. They have gone harder than they wanted to. They have done that. The Liberal Government has done that in New South Wales. They are in charge. They have exceeded their limits and we are seeing catastrophic bushfires burning. Despite this, parks, reserves and bushland across New South Wales are burning.

That this minister does not understand is very concerning. He is either ignorant or wilfully denying the change that climate heating is having on bushfires. How can we have a minister for Fire and Emergency Management who does not get climate heating and the change to the behaviour of bushfires? On behalf of Tasmanians, I am very concerned. This minister repeatedly talks about when the summer fire season starts. How can he do that? His own staff, the 5000 volunteers he talked about from TFS and Parks and the rest across the state, men and women, have already been fighting fires in Lachlan, Elderslie, and Scamander, but they have a minister who talks about when the summer fire season starts. This is not Dad's Army. We cannot have that response. We cannot have a Dad's Army response, as though we get up there with our little garden hoses as we have always done.

**Mrs Rylah** - Do not be patronising.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - This is not patronising. This is the way it is. This is the way this minister and this Government are responding to the climate changes that are happening. That is why we are seeing the intensity of fires -

**Mr Shelton** - That is rubbish. I will take my advice from the experts, not the Greens.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - It is why we are seeing a catastrophic bushfire alert for Sydney. A catastrophic bushfire alert in Sydney has never happened.

**Mr Tucker** - The Greens' fire policy is to lock even more of it up.

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

**Dr WOODRUFF** - It is comical, concerning and disturbing that people who are Liberal and Labor members of parliament talk about this as though the Greens have cooked it up. We are very

powerful; we are very effective at fighting back and stopping dodgy proposals like the EOI process and fighting for Lake Malbena, fighting for the wilderness, but we are not that powerful that we can manufacture catastrophic wildfires. They are the responsibility of every single person on the planet. They are fundamentally the responsibility of Labor and Liberal parties in Australia that continue to take donations from the coal and gas lobby. It is the responsibility of people in those parties who continue to take money from the very companies that are causing the heating that is fuelling the intensity of the fires we are experiencing.

Every member of the Labor and Liberal party in this place, and at the federal level, is personally responsible for being in a party that takes money from coal and gas companies that are causing the damage to the planet, to our own landscapes and to communities who, today, are suffering.

Carmel Duncan posted on Twitter yesterday. She lost her house; her father lost his house; and her father lost two friends to a fire in New South Wales. She wants us to talk about climate change; that was her message. Her message is for us to talk about climate change.

Preparation for bushfires means accept that climate change is happening, accept the heating that is underway, having a minister who is able to understand the changing bio-behaviour, who understands he cannot just have a garden hose and that we cannot have the nice little breaks in between. We may be in bushfire season. The TFS staff from the south themselves said, 'for six months'. Forget six weeks, six months.

You might smile, Mr Tucker, but these things are always going to be unprecedented. The heating will build and we will get more intensity. That means we have to change what we do. We have to mobilise some money from other parts of the Budget and put it into preparing ourselves, ensuring communities are supported, and ensuring people have a realistic bushfire plan and know where to go. This requires more volunteer training: it definitely requires an expansion of volunteers and fire crews, remote and volunteer. This minister has failed to act on the independent recommendations from the Tony Press Report in 2016 and this year's AFAC review.

### **Time expired.**

[11.38 a.m.]

**Mrs RYLAH** (Braddon) - Madam Deputy Speaker, the Hodgman Liberal Government and their capable agencies are prepared, well-resourced and ready to respond to fire. We are delivering and it is working. The Hodgman Liberal Government and the minister has instigated circumstances to prepare for the upcoming fire season, including updates on the changing climate from experts.

Firefighting capability is made up in Tasmania of the Tasmania Fire Service, the Parks and Wildlife Service, Sustainable Timbers Tasmania, and our volunteers. Parks and Wildlife is the dominant agency in providing remote area firefighting and is supported by Tasmania Fire Service. The TFS maintains the urban firefighting response in our cities and towns. The TFS is geared up, the team can face firefighting on the urban interface. Only 2 per cent of TFS work is in remote area firefighting, normally in support of Parks and Wildlife.

Parks and Wildlife continue to train and maintain the largest remote area firefighting capability in the state. Parks' firefighting capability is made up of rangers and field officers based around the state. They are bolstered by what is called 'a fire crew' of 18 permanent firefighters who are based in Ulverstone, Scottsdale and Hobart. Other regional and Hobart office staff are also engaged in fire response activities but are usually engaged in incident management teams.

Incident management teams reserve values, protection planning, communication and act as fire duty officers or state level liaison.

Fire management staff members, as at 14 October 2019, are 155. Numbers will increase as people complete their yearly medical and fitness assessments and will be above the number from last year, which was 196, showing increased capability and greater resource. Parks and Wildlife and STT staff undertake an annual fitness assessment during spring to assess their suitability to safely participate in firefighting activities. The assessment is at three levels.

Medical clearance is the first level which allows staff to participate in incident management activities, including in a formal incident management team that may be set up in an incident control centre away from the usual place of work. The second level is moderate clearance, which allows staff to participate in tanker-based firefighting that is restricted to road access or a short distance from a road. The third area is arduous clearance, which allows staff to participate in remote area firefighting where the operation may be more than 45 minutes' walk from a road and may require other means of insertion or extraction from the fireground and may include fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters or boats.

Each season the Parks and Wildlife Service employs seasonal firefighters to add to the permanent number of firefighters. These are engaged from October to mid-May and are based at Ulverstone, Launceston, Scottsdale and Hobart. In 2019, 16 seasonal firefighters have been employed and there are still more undergoing business assessments. The Parks and Wildlife Service implemented campfire restrictions in selected areas on the east coast on 28 September this year. Fire permits are used by Tasmania Fire Service to control the amount of fire in the landscape and reduce the risk of bushfires and were put in place on 28 September for the municipalities of Break O'Day, Glamorgan Spring Bay and Sorell.

Strategic fuel reduction services to mitigate the risk of fire from across the landscape is something the Labor-Greens government ignored from review after review and it took this Liberal Government to implement. The Tasmanian fuel reduction program is nation-leading and represents a contemporary approach to bushfire mitigation and community fire service, and I only wish that New South Wales had implemented something like ours.

The Tasmanian Government has an ongoing commitment of \$9 million per annum to the program to significantly decrease bushfire risk across the state. This follows the three years initial set-up funding of \$19.5 million from 2014-17. The program is in its sixth year of operation. Over the first five years of the program, 608 fuel reduction burns were completed across the state, encompassing over 86 294 hectares, of which 13 594 hectares was private land.

Annual bushfire risk reanalysis work has shown that statewide risk has reduced by 4 per cent over the last four years, a notable decrease at the whole-of-state level. At the time of this analysis, which was October 2018, statewide relative risk was at 86.2 per cent, the lowest it had been in 15 years and on track to meet the fuel reduction program 2022-23 target of 80 per cent.

A further interim risk reanalysis was conducted post the large summer 2018-19 bushfires and included some fuel reduction burns conducted over the autumn of the 2019 burn season. This showed that statewide relative risk had further reduced to 83.3 per cent. On a local scale, many Tasmanian communities now have reduced bushfire risk as a result of the fuel reduction program, with up to 50 per cent to 75 per cent reductions in some areas.

There are also now a number of real instances where fuel reduction burns have prevented actual bushfires developing from lightning strikes that would have spread close to settlements or reached fire intensities that were too extreme for firefighters to work safely and for the communities of Rossarden, St Marys, Scamander, and Beaumaris. During the 2018-19 summer bushfires, fuel reduction burns previously undertaken were critical in protecting the town of Zeehan by preventing the spread of the Western Hills fire, reducing the spread of the Castle Cary fire north of Avoca and the south-west fires at Dolphin Ridge and Spero River.

**Time expired.**

**Matter noted.**

## **POLICE OFFENCES AMENDMENT (REPEAL OF BEGGING) BILL 2019 (No. 49)**

### **Second Reading**

**Resumed from 12 November 2019 (page 91)**

[11.45 a.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Deputy Speaker, on 17 October last year we brought on for debate the Greens' Police Offences Amendment (Begging) Bill of 2018 and the operative clause of the bill was, 'Section 8 of the Principal Act is amended by omitting subsections (1) and (1AA)'. This is our bill here. The then minister, Mr Ferguson, indicated that the bill would not be supported by the Government on the grounds that:

Plainly, people can see that the current section 8(1) of the act is more than about begging.

Almost 13 months later and three years after we tabled our first amendment bill to remove the crime of begging, clause 4 in the Government's bill is identical to ours. The only difference is clause 5 in this bill, which provides police with powers they already have. The only reason to do this is to come up with some point of difference from our bill to justify voting against it when the Government did. Clause 5 provides for new grounds under section 15B for which people can be dispersed 'by, or in the course of, or in connection with, begging'. These grounds are as follows:

- (i) intimidated, or harassed, a person;

The existing conditions in 15B(1)(a) covers this, allowing for dispersal where a person 'has committed or is likely to commit an offence'. Similarly, paragraph (c) provides for dispersal if a person 'is endangering or likely to endanger the safety of any other person', and (d), where a person 'has committed or is likely to commit a breach of the peace'. This is comprehensively covered in the proposed new subclause (ca)(i).

The other proposed new grounds are where a person 'by, or in the course of, or in connection with, begging'

- (ii) prevented or deterred persons from entering, or the conduct of, a business that is in, or in the vicinity of, the place'; or

- (iii) prevented or deterred persons from using a public facility that is in, or in the vicinity of, the place; or

The current 15B(1)(b) provides for dispersal where a person is 'obstructing or is likely to obstruct the movement of pedestrians or vehicles'. This covers the issue extensively. The current provisions capture this clause that has gone into the Police Offences Amendment (Repeal of Begging) Bill absolutely.

Any reading of the current provisions will tell you that they give police the powers already to move people on who are begging for money. We will not be supporting this clause in the legislation. While we warmly welcome the Government's belated response to the need to make sure we are not punishing people because they are poor, we do not accept that this second part of the bill is in any way necessary. It is not and we are very disappointed that Labor has not properly read through the second amendment in this bill and held it up against the current provisions in the Police Offences Act.

With all due respect to Shelter Tasmania, an organisation I have a huge amount of time for, this is not an area of their specific expertise, so to glibly say as you did yesterday, Ms Butler, that you have some concerns but you would like to see a review of the operation of this provision after a year and Shelter is happy with that, that is not good enough. That is not what we are supposed to do in here as legislators. We go in and we have a look at the amendments, go back to the principal act and it is very clear that it is padding at best on the part of the Government.

The Police Offences Act under 15B already provides significant powers for police to disperse persons. I will run through that again so no-one is in any doubt. 15B - Dispersal of persons - this is the current Police Offences Act 1935 -

- (1) A police officer may direct a person in a public place to leave that place and not return for a specified period of not less than 4 hours if the police officer believes on reasonable grounds that the person -
  - (a) has committed or is like to commit an offence; or
  - (b) is obstructing or is likely to obstruct the movement of pedestrians or vehicles; or
  - (c) is endangering or likely to endanger the safety of any other person; or
  - (d) has committed or is likely to commit a breach of the peace.

Absolutely covers the police powers to move people on should they have their hat out asking for coins. Absolutely 100 per cent.

If Labor is doing its job in this place as the Opposition it should vote against that clause. We should not be allowing duplication in legislation that is being put in there simply for a bit of face-saving, if you like, on the part of Government because they do not want to admit that the bill we brought into this place and debated last year allows for the decriminalisation of begging, which all of the House can agree is important -

**Mr Ferguson** - You have forgotten we were quite complimentary about your intentions and indeed the spirit of your bill.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I have not forgotten that. It does not mean because you have been nice to me over the legislation that I cannot tell you there is over-reach in this bill. I understand that. I have just reread the press release, minister, but the second provision in the bill is completely unnecessary. We will not be supporting it. It is duplication, it is potentially over-reach, but at best it is duplication. It should not enter the statute. We can do better.

During our debate last October when we brought on our police offences bill I delivered a lengthy second reading speech. I want to highlight a number of points that were made at that time about the rationale for removing the crime of begging.

There continue to be people taken before the courts under the provisions in the current act and charged with the crime of begging. In the Magistrates Court late last year there was a Tasmanian person on five counts of begging. It was very clear that the law that we are moving to repeal today captures the destitute and the desperate. The fact that the offence of begging exists and is being enforced is entirely contrary to the statement that was made by the Liberals in Government.

I wonder, given Labor's apparent contentment with the repeat clause in the second amendment, whether they have gone back to the Community Legal Centres and Anglicare Tasmania who advocated for this reform and sought their advice on the second amendment, because I believe if they had taken it to someone with legal expertise even an impartial person in the Tasmania Police service, not in the minister's office, they would have been advised that the second amendment is unnecessary.

I note that in the letter Ms Butler referred to yesterday, which was written to the Premier on 16 October last year, there are some damning statistics. Justice Connect interviewed 30 people over 2016 who beg or have begged and published the following results: 77 per cent were experiencing homelessness; 87 per cent had a mental illness; 80 per cent had been unemployed for 12 months or more; 33 per cent had experienced family violence, and 37 per cent reported childhood trauma or abuse. The letter goes on -

Importantly, the research points to begging being an action of last resort, meaning that people beg rather than resorting to more serious criminal offences, such as stealing, drug dealing or prostitution.

Finally, an argument often raised for the criminalisation of begging is the need for public safety, namely that some persons that beg engage in standover tactics or threatening speech or behaviour. However the research finds that the incidence of aggressive begging is very low. It should also be noted that there are other offences currently provided in the act that could address violent or abusive conduct.

This letter was written by Benedict Bartl, policy officer of Community Legal Centres Tasmania, and Dr Chris Jones, CEO of Anglicare Tasmania, asking members in this House to support our amendment bill. If we had a little bit more grace in this place and an ability to look objectively at each matter that comes before the House with the best interests of the Tasmanian people in mind, we would have decriminalised begging a year ago.



We welcome the move to decriminalise begging in Tasmania. We acknowledge that people who beg are reduced to that circumstance by grinding inequality in this country, the marginalisation of the poor and the dispossessed. The gap between rich and poor in this country grows by the day. Wages are stagnating; Centrelink is sending robo-debt notices to people for debts they do not owe. It has led to suicide. Under a conservative federal Government, we have had already marginalised people shoved to the outer margins of our society. We have a Government that wants to drug test Centrelink recipients; we have a Government that makes it so hard for people who are poor to get ahead; a Government that still regards people who are living on the margins as 'leaners', in the famous words of former cigar-smoking treasurer, Joe Hockey.

We have Government ministers that take pride federally in marginalising and 'othering' people simply because they are poor and they are reliant on what was once a strong social safety net in this country, which has been eroded by conservatives in Canberra. As a society, we all pay the price of that. We are all only ever two pay cheques away from being homeless or having to go cap in hand to Centrelink for support. More compassion please.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this amendment bill is an expression of compassion and common sense and we do commend the Government for finally bringing it in.

We will not be supporting the second amendment.

[11.59 a.m.]

**Mr JAENSCH** (Braddon - Minister for Human Services) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to make a contribution on this bill in support of this bill. I commend my colleagues for bringing this forward and concur with the principal sentiments of the last speaker regarding how we, as a community, view and increasingly understand and empathise with those members of our society who find themselves without options and in desperate straits.

Over recent years we have seen more evidence of people in our streets sleeping rough and seeking help and support from their fellow Tasmanians. I do not like the term 'begging'. That is not what they do; they are simply asking for help. It is something we are seeing in our city and it is causing concern in our community.

It is something that has been more familiar for much longer in other cities that we visit, such as Melbourne and Sydney, notably for me most recently in the CBDs. In the busy parts of the cities there are people, day and night, who are sleeping or living rough with their hat out for coins, and so it is not a Hobart or a Tasmanian thing, it is a thing wherever there are concentrations of people and the fact that we are now looking at amending this part of an act that was written in 1935 suggests that it is not only here but it has been part of life in our cities for a very long time, probably forever and probably will be forever.

What is changing dramatically and what is reflected in the discussions here today is how we view it, how we deal with it and understand it. I am guessing that even the language of begging is something that maybe back in 1935 Tasmanians might have thought of beggars in our community. More lately I think we have seen a transition where we are not referring to the homeless as a type of people or group in our community but rather people who are homeless for a period. So begging and homelessness are not a type of person. They are situations, a circumstance, people find themselves in, often without notice, never planning to be there but with a need for support and help to move through it out the other side and to get their lives back together again. I believe this overdue change is a reflection of our changing appreciation of the circumstances of individuals.

When I talk to people who are sleeping rough and looking for help in our city and when I talk to our frontline workers, particularly around the Greater Hobart area, working day and night to find and extend the offer of support to people who are sleeping rough, who are homeless and who maybe seeking help, the numbers vary but the estimate is that there are maybe 70 to 100 individuals at any one time who find themselves in this situation, but they are not all the same. They did not get there through the same journey and they are very individual, unique circumstances and I think that is something we understand better now than we ever have before. They need individualised support. We need, as a society, a range of tools and options that we can present them and connect them to, to help them through this phase of their life, this unfortunate part of their journey, and back to stability, with more control of where they are going next and a greater quality of life for them and those who might love and depend on them.

With a view to that, this bill is timely and it gives us the opportunity also to reflect and focus on the needs of people in our community and what needs to be done and what is being done to respond to their needs. To that end, I want to mention a few of the things that are underway. I am not for one instant suggesting that this will prevent forever people falling into homelessness or needing support, but what we can point to is the growing range and diversity of options, services and resources that are now available to wrap around them when they are ready for them in their time of need.

In my time as a minister and in this Government, shortly after our last election the Hodgman Government announced \$500 000 for a winter package initially to extend the Housing Connect Front Door service to offer an outreach team which was charged to proactively engage with, go find and offer support to people sleeping rough, in need, in the Greater Hobart area and other centres around the state, as well as increased brokerage funding to secure opportunities for them to get off the street, out of the weather and into the warmth and dry while their options for longer-term shelter, housing and services needs were assessed, considered and the connections were made.

That worked a little bit differently in different parts of the state. Certainly in the Hobart area, many of the options for brokerage were already occupied and full and some of that support needed to be offered in different ways. In the north and north-west we found that our Housing Connect providers in Anglicare in particular and their partners have been able to innovate the way they have used brokerage to secure longer-term head leases for cabins, hotels, motel rooms and other forms of accommodation that they can use flexibly to provide for the needs of people who find themselves homeless and without options.

In the time since the 2018 election and that initial investment of \$500 000, we have made the provision of the Housing Connect outreach service and this uncapped brokerage a permanent feature of our Affordable Housing Action Plan year-on-year so that it is part of what we do all year round, recognising there is a need that needs to be flexible and able to be tailored to the needs of individuals. The network and the networking of our Housing Connect services with other services that are out on the ground with police as well, the Hobart City Council, the various shelter and other service providers, is growing month on month.

One of the more recent expressions of that has been in the process led by Hobart City Mission and the Salvation Army in Hobart to develop the Safe Night Space concept. I confirm that the state Government has been a partner in those discussions right from the beginning but we are very clear that this is an initiative being led by people with very direct, current, day-to-day experience of the needs and circumstances of people who find themselves slipping between the other forms of support that are available in the shelters of various kinds and the brokered accommodation. Some of these

are people who, for various reasons associated with their health, their mental health, behaviour or their history, are no longer able to take advantage of some of those other services and need some other options.

That is where John Stubbley and Don McCrae and others have stepped up. They have come up with the Safe Night Space concept. Our Government has been in that discussion with them from the beginning. We have committed to seed fund that pilot and to work with them through commissioning and evaluating it to see what it means for the longer term beyond the pilot. We have not barrelled in, taken charge and announced our contribution to it as yet because, at their request, the drivers of the project wanted to be in charge of that and the fundraising process. They believe that more than just government need to put their hand in their pocket and have been running a very successful fundraising program which has so far raised \$120 000 and counting. We wish them well.

We will be with them there when they are ready to announce the commencement of their service. We have committed to play our part and to support them financially and practically along the way. We will learn from what they do as practitioners on the ground delivering a new type of service to those who need it, people who have fallen between the other offerings that are out there - things like the shelters that are being extended right now, thanks to the \$5 million that Cabinet approved earlier this year and which we are now seeing delivered in our city.

New accommodation pods will be installed at Bethlehem House and at the Hobart Women's Shelter; 18 in total at Bethlehem House and 10 at Hobart Women's Shelter. We have now secured another seven family-size units, which are being managed by Hobart Women's Shelter. They are being occupied by families who find themselves homeless. That has filled a very important gap that has been there for a long time. We have had shelters for men and for women, but we have had very little for families who do not want to be separated in order to have shelter: women in one place, men elsewhere or someone sleeping in the car while the balance of the family has a dry, warm place to sleep. There are seven of those units now occupied under the management of Hobart Women's Shelter in our city.

On 13 October we held the Housing Expo in Hobart at the City Hall with the assistance of the Hobart City Council. More than 1000 people looked at the range of services and support on offer. We were very glad of the exposure given to that event. There was very earnest engagement with a range of service providers. I thank all of those who were part of the Housing Connect work in virtual space, who came into one room. Under one roof, they showcased what the Tasmanian community, through various organisations, was doing to reach out and offer support to people in various levels of housing stress - not only those sleeping rough, but also people who are in rental stress, who have not been before, who have had a good income, and always been able to pay the rent, who were saving for a home but have now found that their rent has grown, they cannot save and they are caught. There are options, such as the HomeShare program, which was the single most in-demand stall holder at the Housing Expo. It saw a very large number of people who were checking on their eligibility and the terms of how it worked. They were signed up for follow-up meetings and discussions. Because we were in an open space, we did not want people to be asked to share personal and private information. They are now following through their meetings with Tassie Home Loans and their finance partners to check out whether the HomeShare program is for them.

One of the other things that was on display at the expo was one of the backyard units that are now being delivered around Tasmania as part of our AHAP2 with a focus on prevention of youth

homelessness. Podmatrix is one of the local firms, based at Cambridge. It has secured a contract to provide about 40 of these backyard units which are a prefabricated demountable but as good as permanent living space for young people. These are being delivered into the backyards of the state-owned public housing stock around the state, where we have families that have grown too big or too blended to be sustainable in public housing right now and from which young people might need to leave but before they are ready to compete themselves in the housing market or for other available social housing. Rather than have those young people at risk of homelessness, in at least 40 sites around the state so far our plan is to give them the opportunity to move out of home without moving away from the family, keeping those support structures there. In some cases this is where a young person is starting a family. They and their partner and maybe their baby can be close to home and the support networks of a family without having to worry about competing in the market with higher priority applicants for social housing. The backyard units are one of the examples of how we are directly aiming to prevent homelessness in the younger cohort. We are looking at how that concept can be extended to other groups, maybe to older Tasmanians.

Older Tasmanians and homelessness are also being addressed through the Wirksworth Integrated Aged Care facility which is now under construction at Bellerive. It will have the capacity for 50 older Tasmanians who might otherwise be facing homelessness, including a section of independent living units as well as an aged-care bed arrangement and an outreach service so that the Wintringham group who will be operating this can offer support for people in that district while they are still in their own homes. Then, when the time comes, they will be able to seamlessly move them into independent living as part of the Wirksworth complex and after that potentially into the more intensive aged-care component of that facility.

This is a group that has never before been directly targeted in terms of a social housing aged care facility. We are really proud to have given the Wirksworth Integrated Aged Care facility its start. We will evaluate that and watch it very closely and look at the opportunities to extend that or similar concepts to other parts of the state, to more Tasmanians, as we go.

Other cohorts that have been directly addressed as part of our Affordable Housing Strategy in the area of homelessness include the Colville Place youth at risk centre in Moonah. I acknowledge and thank my predecessor in this portfolio, Mrs Petrusma, who was the architect of many of these concepts and got them up and running in the first Affordable Housing Action plan. I am in a happy position to be able to see them to fruition during my time as minister and then add on and build on the work and the learnings from that initial work. I thank and congratulate Jacquie. I know how much her work is appreciated and the difference it has made to a lot of people, such as the young people who take advantage of the Colville Place youth at risk centre in Moonah, which is managed by Colony 47. These are younger kids who find themselves at risk of homelessness and for whom there needed to be a facility which was not for older youth and young adults but rather older kids. It is a transition centre, not a 'forever home'. It is a place for young people to receive the wraparound services they need and to plot their course for stability and more secure accommodation and care.

Everline House in Devonport is a 25-bed facility for a slightly older group, the 16 to 24 year olds. That is one of our transitional types of support and accommodation facilities for youth that is on its way to being something a little different again: a youth foyer with a focus on education and vocational opportunities as well as the life skills that young people need to become ready for independent living. That has been a hugely successful new development in partnership with the local charity group, Action Against Homelessness and the Loaves and Fishes organisation, which operates a social enterprise on the site giving young people, not only shelter, safety and support, but the opportunity to learn a skill and receive a qualification they can take into the world.

Particularly relevant, it is a trade built around helping other people. A strong theme among the young people I have spoken to who are residents in these facilities is their wish to be involved in helping other people after they themselves have been helped.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I know you have been a visitor out there and met these young people. The people who operate Eveline House are truly inspirational. They are very happy with the way that has worked. Part of our second Affordable Housing Action Plan is to deliver further examples, extend Thyne House along similar lines, to build a new youth foyer in Burnie and one in Hobart, both of them with a strong educational focus aligned to particular areas of demand and opportunity in their local economies.

There is also a commitment to build another Youth at Risk centre, like Colville Place, but this one in Launceston, to service the needs of those younger people at risk of homelessness in the north of the state.

For the same cohort, there is also a piece of work, which is about to report back, a taskforce chaired by Danny Sutton from Colony 47, to look into the circumstances of younger, unaccompanied children. I think we call it the under 16 taskforce. It is referenced in the Affordable Housing Action Plan, to identify the priority issues and actions that the Government might consider further investment in for this group. It is one that has been troubling a lot of service providers: young kids who are, I think the term used in the centre is 'self-selecting', which is like running away from something, from their family, their support networks, and turning up at shelters that are not set up for them, such as men's and women's shelters, as unaccompanied young children. They cover a range of different status in terms of whether they are known to our child safety system or if they are new. They have removed themselves from a family or a household or a living arrangement that has been too much for them, for a range of reasons. We need to be able to receive them, support them, get them stabilised, make them feel safe and return them to some form of longer term, secure and appropriate accommodation and care. This under 16 taskforce is something that has been called for. This examination of this cohort by Anglicare and others for a long time is now about to come back to me with its initial report. From that we will be able to develop an action plan to work with that group in the future and give them the support they need.

This is not an exhaustive list but it is a lot of work that is going on. While the numbers may be small in any particular group, we need this full spectrum of responses, this toolkit that we can use to respond to the needs of Tasmanians because their circumstances are individually unique and often very complex.

Reflecting back to 1935, when the act we are amending was created, it might not have been quite this way. We have seen a history of institutional responses to people in desperate need which have not always turned out to be very helpful to those people. Some of them are shameful for us as a society; the treatment that people in desperate and complex need have received at some times in the past at the hands of the state and well-meaning charities and other organisations, through their policies and the actions of individuals.

We will hear and learn and mourn more the circumstances of some of the people who were victims of ill-treatment in those facilities. We have come a long way. We can be proud of the raft of initiatives and resources and the army of people with great skill, more information and resources than ever before that is directed to assisting people who find themselves homeless and in need of help.

The job is not done and probably never will be. We need to keep learning. One of the very significant things we can do is change our language and change laws, like the one we are looking at today. It takes something which is a human tragedy and looks to work out, not how we make it illegal but how we reach out and help people and we are doing that.

I commend the minister and his team for their work on this. I look forward to the contributions of others as we progress this amendment and change our laws to eliminate the offence of begging.

[12.27 p.m.]

**Mrs PETRUSMA** (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, it is with pleasure that I speak on bill. I commend the minister and the department for all the work they have undertaken in regard to this bill, especially in ensuring that the bill gets the balance right with regard to how the law in Tasmania deals with begging.

Back in June 2019, the Government announced it would remove the offence of begging from the Police Offences Act 1935 while acknowledging that police would still need the power to move people on if they were intimidating, creating a nuisance or otherwise harassing other people. This bill is therefore about reducing the stigmatisation of Tasmanians who resort to begging by repealing the offence contained at clauses 8(1) and (1AA) of the Police Offences Act.

Importantly, the Police Offences Act contains at clause 15B the power to disperse. This means that police can direct a person to leave a public place for a specific period. There will be an expansion of this power to enable a police officer to direct a person to leave a public place for a specified period of not less than four hours if the police officer believes on reasonable grounds that the person is begging in that public place and has intimidated or harassed a person, prevented or deterred persons from patronising a business or the conduct of the business or prevented or deterred persons from using a public facility.

With regard to public facilities, I note that the bill also provides a non-exhaustive list of public facilities to make clear the nature of the facilities that this bill refers to. For example, it is limited to facilities such as public toilets, parenting rooms, playground equipment and bus shelters. It is not businesses, shopping districts, pedestrian malls or parks and gardens.

As the minister has stated in his second reading speech, begging often stems from homelessness, chronic poverty and disadvantage and is usually a last resort to meet immediate needs and therefore the criminal law is not the most appropriate response. Importantly, it is only the failure to comply with the direction of the police officer to move on that is an offence, not the act of begging itself.

The bill constrains the move-on powers so it does not apply more broadly to other classes of persons, for example homeless, skate-boarders or youth generally.

I note that other members have referred to the Community Legal Centres Tasmania submission on the bill and in a letter they sent dated 4 October 2019. Community Legal Centres Tasmania is the peak body representing the interests of nine community legal centres located throughout Tasmania and I note that they strongly support the proposed amendment of the Police Offences Act 1935 Tasmania to repeal the offence of begging because they strongly believe that homelessness and poverty cannot be addressed through the criminal justice system and that the repeal of the offence of begging should result in a more humane approach by ensuring that beggars are not criminalised or denied the right to publicly communicate their need for assistance.

I note that other members have also quoted the section and referred to research that has been carried out in a number of Australian organisations that indicates, for example, that people beg because of homelessness, mental illness, unemployment, family violence, childhood trauma or abuse. They also say in their submission that the repeal of begging, which this bill is doing, will bring Tasmania in line with other jurisdictions, including Western Australia, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, which have all decriminalised begging in their relevant criminal codes.

This Government does not want any Tasmanians to be in a position where they feel they need to beg. That is why I want to put on the record some of the initiatives the Hodgman majority Liberal Government is undertaking to build the future of Tasmanians, especially those in need. I note the comments of Mr Jaensch. In his Department of Communities Tasmania in the 2019-20 Budget, there is \$634 million to continue to fund a wide range of community services organisations and to deliver more housing for those in need, disability services, children's services and other supports to Tasmanians in need.

If we look at homelessness, for example, this Government is fully committed to reducing housing pressures for lower-income Tasmanians through Tasmania's very first Affordable Housing Strategy and Affordable Housing Action Plan. It is in recognition of continuing high demand for social and affordable housing that the Hodgman majority Liberal Government has allocated almost \$68 million in 2019-20 alone to boost the supply of new social and affordable homes, because this Government recognises the increased demand for housing and we are working through our 10-year Affordable Housing Strategy to address housing stress and reduce homelessness in Tasmania.

To accelerate the building of more houses to address supply challenges, we have also heavily front-ended our \$125 million housing commitment in stage 2 of the Government's Affordable Housing Action Plan, with \$10 million of this funding brought forward, bringing the total allocated in this financial year alone to \$40.5 million more. On top of that, there is a further \$27.4 million allocated for Housing Tasmania's capital program, including the purchase and construction of new social housing which will also support the initiatives in our second action plan.

Outside of the work of Communities Tasmania in regard to housing, we are also doing our part to increase supply across the spectrum, including extending the First Homeowner Grant of \$20 000 to 30 June 2020. Our approach is multifaceted across different agencies. The Government's commitment of \$125 million to stage 2 of our Affordable Housing Action Plan 2019-23 takes our total investment into affordable housing to almost \$200 million over eight years, which is the largest ever state investment into affordable housing in Tasmania's history. This is a huge investment and I want to commend the Government for being willing to invest \$200 million, the largest ever investment over eight years into housing in Tasmania, because we want to build more homes for Tasmanians in need faster.

I also note that our investment adds to the \$30 million committed by the Morrison federal government through the Hobart City Deal, which is facilitating more than 100 new social housing dwellings across Greater Hobart. As well, our Affordable Housing Action Plan stage 2 builds on Affordable Housing Action Plan 1 which went from 2015 to 2019, so we are delivering on our commitment to increase the supply of affordable and social housing with our Affordable Housing Action Plan 2 also on track to meet all of its targets, just like AHAP 1 did.

Affordable Housing Action Plan 2 takes a multifaceted approach, like AHAP 1, to tackling housing stress and homelessness around the state. I note that the first quarter report of AHAP 2

reports that 142 households were assisted, which means a total of 1747 households have now been assisted so far through action plans 1 and 2, including the new supply of 1050 affordable land lots and homes since we launched the Affordable Housing Strategy back in 2015. These figures show that we have hit the ground running for our AHAP 2 and we have a strong pipeline of work with over 100 houses currently under construction.

Assistance during the last quarter included 16 households into affordable home ownership, 45 new social housing dwellings constructed, 18 households assisted in escaping family violence, and nine backyard units to support young people to remain at home. I know that Mr Jaensch referred to some of the cases in regard to the backyard units, but I had the privilege when I was minister to see some of these backyard units. I went to Scottsdale and visited a home where the family had been in tragic circumstances where dad was unable to work, he had been severely injured, mum likewise had suffered a severe injury, there were five kids in the house and they just needed a circuit-breaker because they had a teenager who they loved dearly but things were just a bit tough and intense. I think all of us who have had teenagers can understand what it can be like but when you add into the mix other elements that were creating pressure, by this Government just putting a unit in the backyard of this family home the young person was able to have their own space, they still had a loving mum and dad close by if they needed extra assistance, but it enabled them to keep continuing with years 11 and 12. I know that that young person has gone on to get a job, because she keeps in contact. It is the little things we can do to prevent homelessness, especially for our young people, which is one of the ways that our action plan is so multifaceted.

We have also assisted 44 households into affordable private rentals and we have had 14 new units of homeless accommodation provided. As we saw at the Housing Ends Homelessness Expo, where over 1000 people attended, affordable home ownership is a key part of addressing the challenges in our housing market and there was significant interest from Tasmanians looking for more information about our products, including HomeShare which I find is an outstanding program. Everyone I know who I believe would fit the criteria I send them the links and email the criteria because I think this is one of the best initiatives that any government can do to help facilitate people on low incomes to get into the market to get their own home.

I also note that key projects also underway in action plan 2 include the Huntingfield land release and the Wirksworth integrated aged care facility, along with increasing the supply of homes in our regions. Mr Jaensch has also announced the start of construction for the new 25-unit complex in Goulburn Street which is designed to cater for older tenants and those with a disability. I congratulate Fairbrother Construction because this is a \$9 million project which is expected to be completed in around 16 months. This complex will comprise 19 two-bedroom units and six one-bedroom units at this strategic inner-city site. It is helping to address the needs of those who are listed on the housing register or are homeless. This project will create around 60 full time equivalent construction industry jobs, therefore providing a significant employment and economic boost to address unemployment in Tasmania.

I note that together with the Morrison Coalition Government's waiving of the historic Commonwealth housing debt that together we will be investing a record \$258 million over eight years. That is going to make a big difference to those in need of affordable and social housing.

On top of this, this Government also provides each year around \$300 million in concessions to support Tasmanians from all walks of life, from students to older Tasmanians or those who may need a little bit of extra support. There are over 90 different types of concessions and discounts provided by the Tasmanian Government, including essential services such as housing, electricity,



water and sewerage, health services and public transport. The concessions to assist Tasmanians to access services include education, parks and heritage sites around Tasmania and reduce the cost of living, including applying for a driver licence or registering a car.

Tasmanians also continue to benefit from some of the lowest regulated power prices in the nation, thanks to the Hodgman Liberal Government's electricity price cap.

I note that the economic regulator in their final price determination implemented a price cap of 2 per cent for households or small businesses which reflects the Government's commitment, especially Mr Barnett's - a very strong advocate - to ensure that to protect Tasmanians from increasing electricity costs so we do get Tasmanian prices. This 2 per cent increase is lower than CPI. It is resulting in a real term reduction in electricity costs. I congratulate the minister and the department and everyone involved. We are acting to keep downward pressure on the cost of living. By capping the increase of regulated power prices over this time, this Government has protected the average electricity consumer from increases of nearly 20 per cent, which is a phenomenal effort.

A strong economic management means we are also able to continue supporting Tasmanians in need by providing up to \$45 million in electricity concessions supporting more than 90 000 Tasmanians in need.

I also note that the 2019-20 Budget also commits a further \$1 million over four years to a wonderful program, the NILS scheme. I acknowledge the great work of everyone in NILS. I congratulate John Hooper for taking over the role. The work NILS does in our Neighbourhood Houses and other locations throughout the state is fantastic. I acknowledge the fact that they are providing subsidies to low income individuals and families seeking to invest in energy-saving initiatives for their home.

The Hodgman Liberal Government is helping to reduce the cost of living pressures for Tasmanians in need and is focused on delivering the lowest regulated electricity prices in the nation by 2022, thanks to our Tasmania-First Energy Policy.

In regards to mental ill health, we all want to see a Tasmania where people are happier, healthier and more resilient. This is why the Hodgman Liberal Government is committed to delivering our \$104 million mental health plan which supports evidence-based care and an increased focus on early intervention and prevention and service integration. For example this Government's mental health Hospital in the Home Service is reducing hospital admissions at the Royal Hobart Hospital and has had a positive impact on patient flow. In the first three months from March to June this year, the new service had 36 admissions and 29 discharges with the average length of the admission being 21.5 days.

This is allowing people in an acute phase of mental illness who otherwise may have had to be admitted to hospital to now receive intensive evidence-based short-term support in a more comfortable home environment. Importantly, this service is improving patient care. We are advised that feedback from patients, carers and family during the first few months has been very positive, with patients particularly expressing appreciation to this different approach to their care.

This service operates extended hours, seven days a week. The intensity of treatment varies depending on individual need. This service is also currently operating eight beds in patients' homes and will be scaling up to 12 beds soon.

We are committed to providing Tasmanians with the very best mental health care possible, which includes the right mix of prevention, early intervention, community-based care and acute hospital-based care through our \$104 million mental health plan.

In regard to unemployment, the Hodgman Liberal Government's top priority is to grow the economy and to create jobs. Newly released data shows that the state's vibrant economy remains the strongest in Australia for job vacancy growth. The Commonwealth Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business has released data that shows that the number of internet job vacancies in September 2019 is 5.9 per cent higher than a year ago in trend terms. This result puts Tasmania at the top of the states and has been achieved while job vacancies have declined across the nation. Job vacancies are an indication that businesses are confident and looking to hire more people, providing opportunities for all Tasmanians, including those in need, to take part in our strong economy.

While there is always more to do, it is clear that our plan is working. Under the Hodgman Liberal Government 15 000 jobs have been created since we came to government. Our economy is the fastest growing in the nation. We have to remember that under the previous government, under Labor and the Greens, 10 000 jobs were lost.

On top of all this we are also committed to upskilling Tasmanians in need for daily life in a digital world. We want to include digital inclusion and ensure all Tasmanians are equally able to participate in the digital economy. Since coming to government, the Australian Digital Inclusion Report indicates Tasmania has made pleasing progress in digital inclusivity, with our score lifting by 10 per cent in just three years. But we know there is more work still to be done.

Therefore, our new Digital Ready for Daily Life program aims to increase the online confidence and skills of Tasmanians experiencing high levels of digital exclusion, specifically our low-income households, older Tasmanians, and people not in paid employment. This program will offer targeted digital assistance sessions around the state, including pop-ups at community events and shopping centres, one-on-one drop-in sessions and scheduled workshops with partner community organisations, as well as raise awareness of the range of computing and technology courses offered by Libraries Tasmania at locations around the state. The program also promotes the use of free wi-fi access at Libraries Tasmania venues throughout the state, as well as our free wi-fi network available at more than 70 locations across Tasmania.

In regard to children and child abuse, this Government is strongly committed to protecting our children in Tasmania so as to address and prevent childhood abuse and trauma. Nation-leading laws that help protect Tasmania's children and hold offenders to account have recently been passed in this parliament under the Criminal Code and the related legislation, the Child Abuse Amendment Bill. This bill introduced a number of important reforms to Tasmania's laws and delivers on the Hodgman Liberal Government's commitment to make people in religious ministry mandatory reporters of child sexual abuse, even when they have obtained that knowledge in the confessional. The bill also makes it a crime for any person to fail to report child abuse. A person will be guilty of this new crime if they reasonably believe that child abuse has occurred and fails, without reasonable excuse, to inform a police officer as soon as practicable.

Our legislation makes it clear that all members of the community, including members of parliament, must do everything in their power to protect children and prevent child abuse from occurring. There is no excuse for failure to report the horrific abuse of children, least of all for institutions that have been named by the royal commission as failing to prevent child abuse in the

past. The Hodgman Liberal Government remains committed to better protecting our children. Last year we were proud to allocate \$70 million towards the National Redress Scheme.

In regard to family violence, the Hodgman Liberal Government is strongly committed to preventing and responding to family and sexual violence in Tasmania. Today the Premier outlined the success of our first Family Violence Action Plan. An amount of \$26 million was invested into the Family Violence Action Plan Stage 1. I note that \$26 million over three years is being invested to deliver the next stage of our comprehensive plan for significant new supports and services across the state.

The new action plan includes initiatives to address sexual violence for the first time in Tasmania, which often intersects with family violence but also requires separate responses.

Safe Homes, Families, Communities includes 40 actions to prevent and respond to family and sexual violence in Tasmania, including increased investment in primary prevention such as establishing the new Our Watch primary prevention officer in Tasmania, which is a national first partnership model; delivering a new problem sexual behaviours and sexually abusive behaviours program for children and young people; developing a new family and sexual violence website, a single information portal about the range of services and support now available in Tasmania.

We are also delivering another first, providing additional counselling services for children and young people through non-government organisations. We are rolling out mobile phone data extraction devices for use by Tasmania Police in response to technology-facilitated abuse. The devices mean that victim survivors are not required to give up their mobile phones for extended periods so their data can be extracted for evidentiary purposes. We are also extending the forensic mental examination service for adult family violence victim survivors to the north-west, creating a statewide service. We are also strengthening the defendant health liaison service to provide early intervention to offenders to assist them to change their behaviour and to reduce recidivism.

We are also introducing the ability to require mandated behaviour change program participation as part of a family violence order. We are implementing further legislative reform to strengthen our legal responses to family and sexual violence.

We will also be undertaking a feasibility study for a disclosure scheme in Tasmania which would enable people who may be at risk of family violence to find out if their current partner has a history of family violence.

The action plan is the result of a comprehensive service system review, which included consultation with hundreds of people with lived experience and frontline workers from government and non-government services who prevent and respond to family and sexual violence. I was part of that work, and I want to sincerely thank and acknowledge all the people who participated during the surveys and also during the forums for their input into this critical action plan.

There is still a lot more work to do, and the Hodgman Liberal Government is therefore very grateful and thankful for the support provided by the community sector, as well as members of the wider community, in helping us to assist our most vulnerable Tasmanians.

I put on the record my grateful thanks for having the privilege of working with them very closely for five and a half years. The Government has a strong agenda to improve the services provided to the Tasmanian community and to drive economic growth throughout the state. We

welcome the partnership and contributions from the community on how we can best achieve these important objectives. This Government looks forward to continuing our work with the community, to plan and implement effective strategies, services and supports, to ensure that all Tasmanians remain connected to their community, to fund a range of important new initiatives that are designed to build and support strong, resilient communities.

I commend Mr Shelton and the members of Tasmania Police for the great work they do in protecting the Tasmanian way of life and our community. We need to focus resources in areas causing the most harm in our community. Since the election of the Hodgman Liberal Government there has been a lot of work done in Tasmania Police to ensure they have the tools to keep Tasmanians safe. This includes disrupting the importation and trafficking of drugs in Tasmania. Last year we passed legislation on outlaw motorcycle gang colours and consorting so as to position Tasmania to be able to fight the illegal drug trade. Outlaw motorcycle gangs are well organised, well-resourced and increasingly sophisticated in how they structure and execute their criminal activities. They are resilient and opportunistic and are involved in a wide range of serious crime, including drug trafficking, money laundering, extortion, firearms and drug offences and high-level violence. Nationally, addiction to crystalline methamphetamine or ice has fuelled the spread bikie gangs and international crime syndicates, which places pressure on our emergency service providers.

Sadly, Tasmania has not escaped the shocking damage that the scourge of ice has on individuals, families and communities, which is why our tough-on-crime approach will help cut and disrupt the supply and make Tasmania a safer place. Police intelligence indicates that outlaw motorcycle gangs are major participants in the importation and trafficking of ice in Tasmania. Since 2000, senior gang members in Tasmania have been responsible for and charged with some of the most significant methamphetamine importations in the state's history. Tasmania Police employs an intelligence-based approach to enable effective monitoring, interception, enforcement in relation to drug crimes, with a range of strategies being used to reduce the demand for ice with a focus on supply reduction, demand reduction and harm reduction.

That is why this Government is focusing on taking insidious drugs, such as ice, out of the community. It is why we recently cracked down on the display and sale of ice pipes. That is why we are also delivering six specialist ice investigators as a part of our war on ice and our roll-out of 125 more police officers. We are doing this because we have an ambitious target to have the lowest rate of crystalline methamphetamine use of any state by 2022.

The most recent analysis of ice deposits in waste water, as part of the national waste water drug monitoring program report published in December 2018, suggested that the volume of ice consumed in Tasmanian catchments is approximately two-thirds that of the national average.

Serious illicit drug use is a scourge in our community and needs to be eradicated, not normalised. I commend the minister for his work.

---

### **Recognition of Visitors**

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Honourable members, I acknowledge students from St Leonards Primary School who are in the gallery today.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

---

[12.57 p.m.]

**Mr SHELTON** (Lyons - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank all the members of the House who have contributed to this bill and for their general support.

The purpose of the bill is to amend the Police Offences Act 1935 to repeal the offence of begging, while still providing police with the powers to move beggars on in the rare instance that their behaviour extends to include activities that rightly cause community concern. It is appropriate that we decriminalise begging as an act given that begging often stems from circumstances such as homelessness, chronic poverty and disadvantage. Equally, however, it is important to confirm the importance of being able to address problematic behaviour such as intimidation and harassment, which should never be tolerated in our society.

The bill poses expansion of the dispersal of a person power to enable the police officers to direct a person to leave a public place for a specific period of not less than four hours if the police officer believes, on reasonable grounds, the person is begging in that public place and has intimidated or harassed persons, prevented or deterred persons from patronising a business or the conduct of that business or prevented and deterred persons from using a public facility.

Members of the community should not be put in a position where they are frightened or discouraged from entering public facilities such as a toilet or their local bus stop or accessing a business premises as a result of anti-social behaviour of others.

I will move on to some of the responses. Ms Butler was the first contributor to the debate and I thank her for her considered contribution. In regard to her query regarding the number of charges from 2017-18, I advise that in 2017-18 there were 42 calls to police, complaining about instances of begging.

**Debate adjourned.**

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

## **MOTION**

### **Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Review - Implementation of Recommendations**

[2.30 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House -

- (1) Acknowledges the bushfire season has started early and ferociously in eastern Australia, with homes having already been threatened in Tasmania, and massive fires causing widespread devastation in New South Wales and Queensland.

- (2) Understands the likelihood of ongoing bushfire emergencies in mainland Australia, meaning Tasmania may not be able to depend on the assistance of resources from interstate if we face a large event of our own.
- (3) Recognises the Government was provided with nine important recommendations by an independent review conducted by the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) after the 2018 bushfires.
- (4) Calls on the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, Hon Mark Shelton MP, to lay before the House, by 14 November 2019 -
  - (a) all information related to the completed implementation of Recommendations 4 and 6 of the AFAC review; and
  - (b) all information related to the progress of implementing Recommendations 1, 5 and 8 of the AFAC review, along with a time line for completion of these recommendations.
- (5) Calls on the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, Hon Mark Shelton MP, to lay before the House detailed strategies outlining the plan and resourcing for implementing Recommendations 2, 3, 7, and 9 of the AFAC review, no later than the first sitting week of the 2020 Parliamentary session.

We call this private members' debate on today about bushfire preparation. All Tasmanians would be aware that the bushfire season has started. It has started in Tasmania and it started early and ferociously across eastern Australian states. Tasmanians are part of the groups of men and women who are fighting those fires on the mainland states, in New South Wales and Queensland. We are all thinking of them and their families in Tasmania and the role that they play protecting other people's communities and protecting other people's wild places, protecting other people's properties, their stock, their pets and everything that they hold dear in their lives. If it was not for the efforts of volunteer and paid firefighters those communities would be an even darker place than they are.

That is why we are here, because the next order of business for Tasmanians is to think about our own fire season, to think about the risks for us, for other communities and to reflect on how well we individually and as a state are prepared for what is likely over the coming months. Fire in some form of another, intense or not so intense, will come. That is the point being made again and again by seasoned firefighters such as Greg Mullins, the former commissioner of the New South Wales Fire Service, who has brought together a cadre of seasoned firefighters from around the country. Twenty two of them spoke to the Prime Minister and to the media earlier this year after last summer's bushfires calling on governments, but particularly the federal government, to pay attention to the reality of the climate heating that is happening, the way it is changing fire behaviour and the way we need to respond to those changes.

Monday was the first day in recorded history that mainland Australia did not have a single drop of rain. It is incredible to think from the wetlands in the Northern Territory, Western Australia, South Australia; yes, they are dry. South Australia is a dry place but the Northern Territory, Queensland, far north Queensland, the whole of New South Wales, the whole of Victoria and the whole of the ACT, each one of those states and territories did not have a single drop of rain. It was

the first time in Sydney, only a few days ago, that a catastrophic fire risk was reported to people. There are four other major shires in New South Wales still suffering catastrophic fire conditions.

We have an unprecedented number of fires burning across New South Wales and Queensland, burning in areas that have not burned in living memory, such as rainforests and swamps, places where people have never known fire. They are utterly unprepared for responding to fires. The fact there are fires even though we are not in a so-called fire season yet in Australia is because of climate heating. Across mainland Australia we are enduring the worst drought in human memory. Meteorologists and drought experts say it is worse than the millennium drought that started at the end of the last century.

We have higher temperatures and the evaporation that is being driven by those higher temperatures is making bush and grasslands even dryer than before. Fires now start more easily, they spread more quickly and they are reported as spotting twice as far ahead as before. A fire expert from California speaking at UTAS talked about the unpredictability of fire, travelling in directions it has never done, spotting and throwing enormous balls of fire in ways that have never been seen before.

Greg Mullins wrote a piece in the *Sydney Morning Herald* two days ago in which he talks about unprecedented fire behaviour and reflects on what unprecedented means in the context of fire and climate heating. He said we have -

Unprecedented dryness; reductions in long-term rainfall; low humidity; high temperatures; wind velocities; fire danger indices; fire spread and ferocity; instances of pyro-convective fires (fire storms - making their own weather); early starts and late finishes to bushfire seasons ...

driven by the long-term warming of the climate.

More appropriately, we talk about the heating of the climate. Warming is too soft and benign a term for what is happening on the planet.

This is happening with just 1.1 degrees Celsius of additional average global temperature. We are trying desperately to keep the planet to below 1.5 degrees Celsius above the long-term average and here we are at 1.1 degrees Celsius. Every single year Australia has been increasing its carbon emissions. Every single year federal politicians from the Labor and Liberal parties keep accepting donations from the coal and gas industry, keep voting against the sorts of climate mitigation and climate emission reduction strategies that we must take, not only to make our contribution to reducing emissions for the whole planet but to protect our lives, to protect our properties, to protect our wilderness from the heating climate. We are contributing to that. We, as a country, have a disproportionately massive contribution of coal and gas that we are exporting to be burnt. We are on just one planet. Whether it is on somebody else's patch of land on the other side of the sea makes no difference to us when we are standing in Hobart fighting a fire. When we have climate-driven and climate-heated fires they are coming from a huge increase in greenhouse gas emissions.

The planet is struggling to keep to the 2015 Paris Agreement. On the current rate of planetary and especially Australian emissions, we are looking to a 3 degree Celsius minimum increase in temperatures unless we make an active change. This is exactly why we have to talk about the link between bushfires and climate heating. We have to do it all the time, not just during a fire or before a fire. That is the reality of the world we live in. We are having this debate today because unless

we change the way that we think and the way that we respond we cannot hope to be equipped for the sorts of conditions that we will confront.

Glen Innes mayor, Carol Sparks, and MidCoast mayor, Claire Pontin, have both lambasted federal politicians for saying that they should not talk about climate change. They have both linked the disasters in their communities that they have experienced over the last week to climate change while their regions are dealing with devastating bushfires. Ms Sparks said that it is not a political thing, it is a scientific fact that we are going through climate change. Carol Duncan tweeted -

This is my father's home being destroyed by NSW fires a few weeks ago - just one of 64 in this fire alone. Two of his friends were killed. My brother and his wife have today had to evacuate their home. I think now is a very good time to talk about climate change.

Hear, hear, Carol Sparks. Good on you for being brave and for reflecting on that when so many other people, Liberal members of parliament this morning, are shamefully pointing to people who live in cities and to Greens voters as somehow being responsible for the situation. That is utter nonsense. The mayors from New South Wales and the experiences we have had in Tasmania and across the world now show that fuel reduction burns are not and cannot ever be enough to confront the sorts of fires that we are experiencing now - and we will experience far more of them in the future.

The warmer and drier conditions and the start of the dangerous fire season is narrowing the fire hazard reduction burning period. It has been doing this for years. I had a briefing with Tasmania Fire Service in 2016 about this. They were talking about the difficulty of undertaking fuel reduction burning because of the narrowing window of appropriate time. There is only so long when it is not too hot, too dry, too windy, or too wet to burn. There is only a short amount of time. As much as the Liberal members of parliament might like to deny the reality of this, that is the truth. They can keep talking about things that might have happened in the past, but the fact is, you cannot burn everything. As Mayor Sparks said, they burned twice in the last 18 months around their area, actively reducing fuel. Nonetheless, those areas still burned because of the nature of fire, the spotting of fire, and the intensity that builds up in bushland areas.

Thanks to the very active, caring and compassionate work of staff at the Hobart City Council for their strong leadership in this area. It is important to have that council and staff at the council being leaders in this space. This is what we expect to be hearing from the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management. He should be acknowledging that the fire season has never really left Hobart. He should be acknowledging that fuel reduction is not and cannot be enough. As John Fisher, the council's bushland manager, said -

Moisture levels in the forests surrounding Hobart have not reset to normal levels, which has resulted in conditions in Hobart similar to those faced before Tasmania's devastating 1967 bushfire.

He said -

It was dry throughout winter. We have had a bit of rain in August and September that is allowing us to carry out hazard reduction burns but conditions have been barely suitable for the sort of low intensity fuel reduction burns we carry out in Hobart's forests woodlands and grasslands.



Despite intention, it is simply not possible to do that work, not to the level that we need. It is convenient to blame the Greens for the Government's inability to keep up with fuel reduction burning but the fact is that it is going to continue to get harder and it is not helped by cuts to Parks. This Government is totally culpable for cutting the guts out of the Parks service, for failing to fund them so they can do the fuel reduction burns and be able to have trained staff to go into wilderness areas.

**Ms O'Connor** - True. Same in New South Wales. Cut by one-third.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - This is true. New South Wales Parks and Wildlife Service has been cut by one-third. Great - all those massive bushland areas are burning in New South Wales. You cannot do fuel reduction burns in a rainforest, yet we have the areas around Nimbin, Falls, rainforests that have never burned before. You do not do fuel reduction burns in rainforests. We have to understand that the climate is heating and we need a whole different way of approaching bushfire preparation and management.

It is distressing and disgusting to see Liberal and Labor members in federal parliament pointing the finger elsewhere and denying the reality of climate change. Last summer's fires in Tasmania were the second largest only to 1967. They burned 6 per cent of the World Heritage Area and 14 per cent of our Tasmanian tall forests were burned. It was fortunate that communities in the Huon Valley, Central Highlands and in the north-west were not more affected. It was the amazing work of the TFS and Parks, paid and volunteer firefighters and incredible organisation that managed to prevent worse damage.

The findings of the AFAC Report undertaken after that and delivered in June made it very clear that the crews were not properly resourced and that they were without aircraft available to identify hotspots. That was one of the reasons that the fire got as big and went as far as it did. That is the truth. That was the finding. This Government's failure to comprehend the relation between bushlands, between the requirement for remote area firefighting, between the ability to have rapid attack in remote areas and the will to care about wilderness, not only for its intrinsic value but for the potential threat from fires that start in wilderness areas are not adequately responded to.

This minister and the Government have a dinosaur-like and deeply concerning response to the threat that it has beyond those areas that. We continually hear the Premier and the minister talking about their priorities being lives and property.

**Ms O'Connor** - Never mention wilderness.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - They do not mention wilderness. That is an appalling statement about their lack of understanding of the extraordinary values for wilderness areas that have been here since Gondwanaland, which nowhere else on this planet has. Their incompetence and inability to recognise the threat and not appropriately responding to the threat those areas could have, do have, have had on communities outside those areas is a scandal.

The minister's response was that he would only accept the nine recommendations from the AFAC Review in principle. Since then we have been asking for what response he is actually going to make to those recommendations and what money he has put into it. No money was put into the Budget for this financial year to respond to the AFAC Review recommendations, despite the fact they knew they were coming. They knew that resourcing would have to change yet this Liberal Government put nothing into the Budget.

We have also had no response at all, about which of their recommendations have been implemented and what the time frames were. We wrote to the minister on 31 October, two weeks ago now. We have not had a response to our letter. We asked for a detailed response to each of the recommendations, what particular reports had been initiated and how the Government was responding in resources, timing and priority, preparing us for this coming summer. Nothing - radio silence.

Since then we have been able to glean - the minister is obviously feeling the pressure - that two of the nine recommendations have been completed - apparently. We can only take their word for it; we have no evidence, only their say-so, and given the minister's track record, I do not trust anything he says until I see something on paper because it is clear he is not being honest with Tasmanians about what money is being spent. Otherwise he would let us know.

Two of the nine recommendations have been done and seven have not. Of the seven, two more apparently are going to be done soon - that is good because we are in the fire season - and another four of them have been pushed off into the never-never - 'We will do that later'. Let us come to some of those later ones. They relate to, guess what, remote air firefighting and rapid attack, because why would they prioritise something that has anything to do with bushland and wilderness? Why would they have anything to do with a recommendation that has resourcing attached to it?

The AFAC independent review's second recommendation was that:

TFS should pursue the creation of a cadre of volunteer remote area firefighters. In doing so, the TFS should not consider itself limited to upskilling of current volunteer brigade members, but should carry out a cost benefit analysis of creating one or more remote area firefighting units based in urban areas, in order to tap into the potential of those members of the urban-based Tasmanian community who may have advanced knowledge and skills relating to navigation and survival in wilderness areas.

That sounds very familiar if you read the Tony Press review of the massive 2016 bushfires, which made essentially the same recommendation, and although the minister and the Government might like to pretend they have not had time since June to attend to an AFAC recommendation, the same thing was recommended in 2016. They have had three and a half years where this Treasurer has come into this House and crowed about the fact he has the budget back into the black and he has not attended to resourcing for bushfire preparation in remote areas. He has not done it.

The AFAC recommendation number 12 was that:

That a full review be undertaken of the benefits and costs of training a cadre of Tasmanian volunteer firefighters in remote area firefighting, with reference to the experience of jurisdictions interstate that already do so.

I remind you that was three and a half years ago. That was the AFAC recommendation from 2016 and there was also the Tony Press recommendation from 2016 that was essentially the same in that it also looked at the use of volunteers in supporting fire management activities, including the potential to use trained remote area volunteer fire crews.

The Greens were contacted by many good Tasmanians last summer while the bushfires were burning. So many people said, 'We want to help, we want to volunteer. We are skilled, we are

experienced bushwalkers, we are fit, we are active', and there is no way under this Liberal Government that they will resource the creation of volunteer remote area firefighters. They have had that recommendation from two reviews from 2016 and again from this year, and they still have not investigated volunteer remote area firefighting.

The recommendation from this year was harder than the review. It said that the Government should create a cadre of volunteer remote area firefighters because they say people in urban-based Tasmanian communities may have advanced knowledge and skills relating to navigation and survival in wilderness areas. What a missed resource. Other states are doing this. Other states have those people with skills on the ground. We will never have enough skills and enough resources but how can we not use what is sitting there? It is a disgrace. People want to get involved and this Government repeatedly fails to put the resourcing aside. That is what is underneath it. What is underneath it is a failure to put the money in, and the only conclusion I can come to is because they do not actually believe that climate change is happening. I believe there is a deep level of climate heating denialism in Government that is holding back any change in the way we do business. It is business as usual for this minister, and business as usual in a bumbling, incompetent, totally opaque manner. It is not good enough.

He has time to turn this around. He can do something about it now. He can fully open up what is happening. He can be really honest instead of reading prepared scripts in question time about how many people are available in the south as remote area crew. He did not reveal that bit of information this morning. He said something about 1 December - well, how many? For three and a half years this Government was meant to be expanding remote area firefighters. Not only have they not done that but now we find out that there are even less than there were last year because they have not prioritised training them. They have not prioritised making sure that they have the skills and ability they need. Let us not forget that remote area firefighting is not easy.

**Mr Shelton** - Let us not forget who shut down the forest industry and had dozens of firefighters having to shift out of the state.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, Mr Shelton, through the Chair.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - These are not people who work with water from fire tankers. Remote area firefighters have to clear the earth, they have to make breaks and walk the kilometres from drop-off points. They have to work in steep terrain. They have to be transported by helicopter and they have to be fit. This is a lot of work and that is exactly why the Government should have been getting on with it. Other states are mobilising the Army.

**Mr Tucker** - Forestry workers were all well trained and you just flogged them off. You closed it down.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Excuse me, Mr Tucker.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - We cannot even get this minister to mobilise his own staff to be fit and ready for business. They are ready in their minds, they are ready in their will, but they are not being given the training and equipment that they need by this Government. This Government is not prioritising it.

We will not be cowed from speaking the truth about the extreme situation we are facing. We are in company with many seasoned firefighters such as Greg Mullins, with 47 years firefighting

experience, and Mike Brown, previous Tasmanian fire commissioner. Like every other person I have spoken to who stands behind a hose, we are in their company. We walk with them and stand with them against a bunch of climate sceptics who are refusing to prioritise the sort of change we need to have in Tasmania, with the rest of Australia, to confront totally different fire regimes.

There are no easy answers here, but there are plenty of people in Tasmania, some of the best experts in the world, such as Professor David Bowman from the Fire Ecology Unit at UTAS. We have extraordinary expertise, we have great will, we have amazing local councils with mayors who totally get the risk and understand that their communities want leadership and very clear directions on how to prepare themselves. We have the Tasmania Fire Service volunteers who are going out into communities every weekend, every day, in contact with people in the communities. They are doing an amazing job. I had the pleasure of meeting some of them down at the Tasman Peninsula a few weeks ago. They have extraordinary expertise. I felt more confident about responding to fire in a personal situation, more prepared, after speaking to those people. They live it, but they do not live in a state where their government is working with them to help them do everything possible to prepare for the upcoming fire season and the ones in the future, which in all likelihood will be more extreme than the one we are in now.

To conclude, because I know other members will be wanting to say some useful things in contribution, we asked the same thing two weeks ago. The minister has not responded to my letter, which is impolite. I can understand you might not open these things up to the community -

**Mr Shelton** - You sent it last week.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - No, I sent it two weeks ago. To not even say that you are preparing a response is inappropriate given that we are in a bushfire season. We are calling on the minister to provide detailed plans for the resourcing and implementation of the recommendations from the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council review, the Tony Press review from 2016 and the AFAC review 2016.

**Ms O'Connor** - And 2019.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - There was one from 2016 as well, but essentially from 2019 AFAC and the 2016 Tony Press review. Both have substantial outstanding recommendations. Tasmanians need to know the time frame, not just for the long-term, as the Premier has said, but the time frame for acting on those recommendations. They were clear. We do not want to waste peoples' time doing independent reviews of these bushfire events without taking them seriously. That is the job of the minister. I hope he lays before the House today the response to our questions, because Tasmanians are waiting to hear them.

[3.02 p.m.]

**Mr SHELTON** (Lyons - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to this motion. I would like to move an amendment to the motion as distributed.

The Government's amendment is to leave out paragraphs 2, 3, 4 and 5 and replace them with the following paragraphs -

- (2) Confirms the strong support of the Tasmanian people for those affected by the fires and praises the efforts of Tasmanian firefighters in New South

Wales and Queensland who are helping their mainland colleagues to defend life and property.

- (3) Again recognises the Government has accepted in principle the recommendations by an independent review conducted by AFAC after last season's bushfires.
- (4) Notes that no Greens Member of Parliament attended a briefing on the season outlook and preparation as provided by the Chief Fire Officer for Members of Parliament.
- (5) Acknowledge the advice provided to the House that AFAC short-term recommendations 4 and 6 are completed and that the remaining short-term recommendations, being 1, 5 and 8 will be completed by the end of November. Further that medium and long-term recommendations being 2, 3, 7 and 9 are being progressed by the dedicated project manager in the Tasmanian Fire Service.

Regarding the issues raised by the member who just resumed her seat around the Tasmanian Fire Service and particularly the volunteers, I place on record that there is no one in this place more connected to volunteer firefighting service than me. My father was the inaugural fire chief of the Bracknell Fire Brigade. My wife and I have been members of the Bracknell Rural Fire Brigade; my two sons are now involved in the Bracknell Rural Fire Brigade, and are second officer and third officer. I understand fully the issues around Tasmania Fire Service and the volunteer brigade.

Now, to the motion and the amendments. As the Prime Minister has said, there needs to be an end to the shouting. The Tasmania Fire Service has said on numerous occasions, and I have also said on numerous occasions, it is normal for there to be bushfires at this time of the year. Spring bushfires are normal in Tasmania.

We note the strong backlash nationally against the Greens for making it so hard to reduce fuel reduction loads and then preaching about politics while the fires are still burning. That is terrible behaviour made all the more galling by its hypocrisy. The Greens have been called out by fires on the ground and by farmers and by people in the country areas. No-one is denying climate change as an issue but now is not the time for the Greens' armchair critics to be playing politics. It is disgraceful. That is because the Greens are the definition of hypocrisy on fires and preparation. They are the definition of hypocrisy on energy and climate change. Even the leader of the Labor Party federally, Anthony Albanese, has said that now is not the appropriate time for politicking.

**Ms O'Connor** - Because both parties take millions from fossil fuel companies. You are complicit.

**Mr SHELTON** - We will always back our magnificent firefighters over those opposite. Rather than seeking to politicise fires and scaremongering, Labor and the Greens should be joining with the Government to support our fire agency experts and the work they do -

**Ms O'Connor** - Like the 22 former fire chiefs who could not get a meeting with the Prime Minister.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, Ms O'Connor.

**Mr SHELTON** - This is another dirty political stunt while fires are burning interstate where lives have been lost and I am calling them out.

Our focus will always be on protecting lives, communities and properties. It is just a little frustrating that in the context of climate change, rather than adapting the Greens and their Labor partners spent decades locking up our natural wildfire forests, arguing against fuel reduction in our state, which is one of the most fire-prone in the world, arguing against sustainability -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Point of order, Madam Speaker, I asked the minister to withdraw that last statement. He has just misled the House. The Greens have never had a policy not to support strategic fuel-reduction burning. Never in our history. He is lying and I ask you to ask him to withdraw it.

**Madam SPEAKER** - We do not like the word 'lying' in this House but I ask the minister to be sure of his facts.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - On the point of order, Madam Speaker, as a minister of the Crown, allegedly trustee and beloved by the governor, he is bound to tell the truth in this place and he has just laid a complete falsehood on the public record. I ask him to withdraw it immediately.

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

**Ms O'Connor** - He has accused us of something that is untrue.

**Mr SHELTON** - If you will allow me to explain, I will keep going. It is a little frustrating that in the context of climate change, rather than adapting, the Greens and their Labor partners spent decades locking up our natural wildfire forests, arguing against fuel reduction in our state which is one of the most fire-prone in the world, arguing against sustainable harvesting of timber and regrowth forest while gutting the forest management capacity. Now they turn around when there are fires and say, 'We told you so'.

Well, we told you not to lock up every tree and bit of land in Tasmania. We told you not to shut down sustainable forestry and we told you not to shed jobs and trash years of forest management knowledge and skills.

**Ms O'Connor** - This is about you and this year's bushfire season.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, Ms O'Connor, please.

**Mr SHELTON** - We told you that the fuel loads needed to be reduced and not added to. You were told by several scathing reviews that fuel loads needed to be reduced. What did Labor and the Greens do? Worse than nothing. They kept locking up land. Now you hypocritically accuse the Hodgman Liberal Government of not acting and preparing. We did act and we are continuing to act and prepare. It took this Government to take climate change and fuel reduction seriously. We called for it in opposition and we have implemented it in Government. I know it makes you feel uncomfortable that we were capable, in opposition, of having a policy position, while you seemed to really struggle with how to decide a position to stick to.

It took this Government to fund and implement our nation-leading fuel reduction program and encourage private landowners to burn more. It took this Government to commit at the last election,

at which, I might add, we were resoundingly re-elected with 50.5 per cent of the statewide primary vote, to developing the remote area firefighting after Labor and the Greens together did nothing.

It is at least reassuring that you have both adopted our policy. As we know, Labor could not even bother to prepare a budget, so we will not be lectured by you who have done more to add to the risk of the impact of climate change than any other party.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr SHELTON** - The Greens do not get to scoff. Your godfather of coal, Dr Bob Brown, has a track record on promoting coal at the expense of renewables and even he cannot deny that.

**Ms O'Connor** - You should be embarrassed.

**Mr SHELTON** - Do you deny that?

**Ms O'Connor** - That was 1976.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, through the Chair.

**Mr SHELTON** - The Greens were in the Labor-Greens government when the Cabinet deferred a decision on considerably expanding the burning program over five years, coordinated over multi-agencies -

**Ms O'Connor** - At the time, we did not have \$30 million in our back pocket.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, Ms O'Connor. One more squawk and you are out the door.

**Mr SHELTON** - Thank you, Madam Speaker. In 2011 Cabinet deferred a decision on the minute that is on public record. It left Tasmania with no strategic fuel management plan -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Madam Speaker, that is untrue. As a minister of the Crown he needs to tell the truth.

**Madam SPEAKER** - I ask the minister to sit down, please.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - The minister has just said that Tasmania had no strategic fuel reduction regime in 2011. That is untrue. There was strategic fuel reduction happening all over the state, undertaken by a number of agencies across tenures.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Thank you.

**Ms COURTNEY** - On the point of order, Madam Speaker, that is a debating point. The member can deal with that when she makes her contribution.

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

**Mr SHELTON** - I will read it again. It left Tasmania with no strategic fuel management plan. By not acting back then, Labor and the Greens allowed fuel loads across Tasmania to increase. The trees and the understorey did not stop growing. Labor and the Greens allowed that to happen. Labor and the Greens allowed the fuel load risk to increase.

The briefing prepared by SFMC, the State Fire and Management Council, provided advice to Cabinet in March 2011 outlining a program by which a burning target of 5 per cent of treatable fuel on public land could be achieved through a considerably expanded program over five years, coordinated over multi-agencies. Such an expanded program also required legislative amendments to enable the restructuring of the fire management area committees. Cabinet deferred a decision on the minute. Tasmania had no strategic fuel management to address recommendation 56 or other complex issues surrounding fuel management on private land tenure.

We acted decisively upon coming to government and implemented what is now recognised as a nation-leading fuel reduction program. This is the Government that listened to the experts, unlike those opposite, and that is why we commissioned the AFAC review into last summer's bushfires.

**Dr Woodruff** - And you're doing nothing about the recommendations. You've only implemented two of them.

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

**Mr SHELTON** - All the recommendations of the AFAC review were accepted by the Government in principle. Short-term recommendations 4 and 6 are completed. It is that simple. The remaining short-term recommendations 1, 5 and 8 will be completed by the end of November 2019. The medium and long-term recommendations 2, 3, 7 and 9 are just that and the TFS has a dedicated project manager working on their delivery.

I began calling for an increase in fuel reduction burnings in 2010 when I first came to this place. The fact is those opposite never did enough when they were in government and allowed the fuel loads to get dangerously out of control. We had the premier of the day, Lara Giddings, rejecting the recommendation of the royal commission into the devastating 2009 Victorian bushfires which was to undertake major fuel reduction burns. Then what happened? An horrendous 2013 fire season that saw a massive loss of property at Dunalley. The Greens, of course, were only interested in telling us that they were not to blame in posts on social media during the height of the bushfire in January 2013. Then on 9 April 2013 the Greens called for the end of fuel reduction burns, not three months after the devastating bushfire season, and I quote the Greens:

The Tasmanian Greens today condemned the start of the annual forestry high-intensive burning-off regime.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Point of order, Madam Speaker. The minister is being misleading again. He is conflating forestry burns that happen after a place has been clear-felled and logged, an alleged regeneration burn, with a program of backburning or strategic fuel reduction burning. He is repeatedly misleading the House. I ask you to pull him into line. It is a lie.

**Ms COURTNEY** - On that point of order, Madam Speaker, I think you know what I am going to say. That is simply a debating point and if the member wants to move a substantive motion she can in other business.



**Madam SPEAKER** - That is not upheld and I ask the minister to continue.

**Mr SHELTON** - Thank you, Madam Speaker. Obviously the Greens do not like it. The Greens have been in this space ever since I have been in this place. I understand why the Greens do not like it and they use points of order to constantly interrupt people.

**Ms O'Connor** - To try to get you to tell the truth.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Excuse me, Ms O'Connor, do not bite.

**Mr SHELTON** - I repeat, the Greens condemned the start of the annual forestry high-intensive burn regime only three months after the devastating Dunalley fires. The Greens then said:

Once again, Tasmania's beautiful autumn days are blighted by the dense smoke plumes blocking out the sun and choking our air.

The Liberals, as I have said, promised and have delivered more fuel reduction burns. What those opposite actually did was massively reduce the number of burns undertaken by Parks and Wildlife. DPIPWE's annual report for 2011-12 showed a 94 per cent reduction in fuel reduction burns undertaken. We have implemented the recommendations of the Hyde review when Labor and the Greens could not be bothered. They had six months to implement the Hyde review recommendations and today we had the former failed minister, Mr O'Byrne, coming into this place to weasel his way out of his responsibility to act. The Greens and Labor had multiple fire reviews telling them what needed to be done and what happened? Nothing. No fuel reduction program, no additional funding.

It has taken the majority Hodgman Liberal Government to develop policies to keep Tasmanians safe from the risk of catastrophic bushfires. We asked the Tasmanian people in 2014 if they preferred a policy committed to fuel reduction or a Labor-Greens approach of locking up land and letting fuel loads spiral out of control. The Tasmanian people spoke loud and clear and they spoke loud and clear again in 2018. They did not and do not want to be abandoned to the Labor and the Greens government opposed to fuel reduction. Farmers want to be able to manage their land without being strangled by red and green tape. Areas around cities and towns need more fuel reduction and clearing, not less.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, Ms Butler, Mr Tucker.

**Mr SHELTON** - It is tenure blind. It is based on science. There is no greater danger to Tasmanians in relationship to fire than a Labor-Greens government. I want to talk about the hypocrisy of Labor and the Greens.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, please have some respect.

---

## Recognition of Visitors

**Madam SPEAKER** - Honourable members, I would like to introduce you to grade 5 and 6 students from the Romaine Park Primary School whom I hope behave better than we do. Welcome to parliament. I remind the honourable members to be honourable.

---

**Mr SHELTON** - We are the nation's renewable energy state. Under our Government we are generating around 25 per cent of the nation's renewable power. We are on track to be 100 per cent self-sufficient in renewable energy by 2022. We were the first state in the country to have zero net emissions. We did that in 2016. Tasmania has the lowest per capital emissions of all states and territories and is one of the lowest emitters of carbon dioxide on the planet.

The Greens have opposed new wind farms and new dams since their inception. We know there is always more to be done. That is why we are aiming to be 100 per cent renewable in terms of electricity generation by 2022. No other state will get close to this. We are well ahead of the 2050 target of zero net emissions. We are also investing significant funds to support the rest of the country to move to a renewable energy future, including \$30 million for the first stage of the Battery of the Nation and, with the federal government, \$56 million to move the Marinus link forward. So there it is. Whether they like it or not, that is the record and they are the facts.

[3.23 p.m.]

**Ms BUTLER** (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, I start by paying homage to the Tasmanian firefighters currently in New South Wales and Queensland who are making a difference. On Sunday morning the Bridgewater fire brigade sent four volunteer firefighters to fight the fires in New South Wales. They joined 30 other TFS volunteers and personnel on a rapid seven-day deployment to assist firefighting efforts in New South Wales.

I thank the member for Franklin, Dr Woodruff, for bringing on this Notice of Motion today. It is only mid-November and already across Australia we are facing catastrophic bushfires. We have already had significant bushfires here, right at the start of November. This is a very dangerous season which is coming. We know that the 2018-19 summer bushfires were the second-largest bushfire event in Tasmania's history only behind the catastrophic events of 1967.

I note that I have only been given six minutes to speak and I had to listen to that minister waffle on with a heap of political nonsense instead of actually dealing with the facts and figures. These are very serious issues. These are people's lives. You would know from being involved in firefighting. I have been in a fire myself. It is one of the most frightening experiences in my life. I cannot believe that we are doing 'Labor this', 'Greens this' when this is such an important issue. You should know better, minister.

**Mr Shelton** - It is not our motion. The Greens are the ones playing politics.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order. Minister, you are above this.

**Ms BUTLER** - The bushfire occurred during this state's second-warmest summer on record resulting in drier fuel loads. The three main fires were started by lightning strikes. The fires burned

through 210 000 hectares and put communities such as those south of Huonville and the Central Highlands at risk for weeks between December 2018 and March this year.

The AFAC Review of the management of bushfires during the 2018-19 fire season commended Tasmanian fire agencies for protecting human life and property but highlighted the significant damage done to the Wilderness World Heritage Area. Approximately 14 per cent of Tasmania's very tall forests were burned. The report raised the lack of smartphone apps in Tasmania, like the Victorian Emergency app in Victoria or Fires in New South Wales, which allowed community members to easily access information on their mobile devices. Can the minister confirm whether this app is complete yet? Is it ready to be rolled out across Tasmania now?

The report recommended the Tasmania Fire Service pursue the creation of a team of local volunteer remote area firefighters and that the TFS, Parks and Wildlife Services and Sustainable Timber Tasmania initiate a discussion with their Australasian peers about good practice in managing new fire starts in remote terrain. It was recommended that TFS begin a policy review to identify which agency was responsible for planning, carrying out and enforcing fuel management on private property at a township level and that Tasmania's fire agencies work to pursue a statewide fuel management and burning program.

The report reveals 12 workers compensation claims were made by the Tasmanian Fire Service following the fires and a further 10 by Parks and Wildlife Services. It has been suggested that the state's fire agencies review their practices in fatigue management of personnel. Has that been conducted, minister? This needed to be done yesterday, if it hasn't.

It states fire legislation policy in Tasmania is overdue for an overhaul, labelling it outdated. It added that the state would be well served by a purpose-built state control centre for the management of natural hazards because the Cambridge facility was awkwardly laid out, cramped and not supportive of contemporary incident management practice. Minister, has that been looked into? Can you come back to the House with that information? That also should have been done yesterday.

The report was also critical of the \$40 million spent on water bombing and surveillance aircraft, stating contracts should be negotiated in quiet times, not when aircraft are urgently required as we then have to pay tenfold for that. Minister, we would appreciate you talking to the House about those negotiations and whether you were able to get some good deals on behalf of Tasmanian taxpayers beforehand instead of at the last minute.

Recommendation 12 of the report stated -

That a full review be undertaken of the benefits and costs of training a cadre of Tasmanian volunteer firefighters in remote-area firefighting with reference to the experience of jurisdictions interstate that already do so.

We have no evidence to support this recommendation being implemented. We have seen the depletion of rural and remote firefighters due to disputes and unsafe work conditions. The technical release of these Remote Access Team Services to be deployed ready with the blessings of WorkSafe and workers themselves is the subject of much boisterous semantics, instead of an honest response about where work needs to be done or where negotiations are so that the matter can be resolved. We need to have these matters resolved. I am sick of hearing all the politics of it. Just get on and do the job. It is so important.

It seems every question asked of this Government, regardless of relevance and importance, is met with accusations of dishonesty and scaremongering. That is frightening. As I said, I have been in a fire before. I have had a ceiling of a room collapse on me. I know what that feels like. You cannot muck around with this. Stop the politics. Get on and do your job.

I have also consulted the AFAC Independent Operational Review, a review of the management of the Tasmanian fires of January 2016 and read not just the reviews, not just the executive reports but read all the submissions as well because that is where you get the truth of it. I found some very compelling information: inappropriate resourcing by the Government; lack of adequate communication between various stakeholders; an ineffective top-down approach; and training inefficiencies. That is a constant theme in 2016 and 2018-19. Plus: lack of consistency in operational approaches; inconsistent delivery of equipment; and not listening to experienced volunteer firefighters, especially landowners and farmers on how to fight fires on land that families have managed for generations without problem.

### **Recommendation 3 -**

The Tasmanian fire agencies develop a multi-agency position to ensure that training for incident controllers includes training in how the transition from local incident control to divisional control is managed.

The TFGA states in its submission to the review of the management of the bushfires in the 2018-19 fire season, the government-funded forest fire training for both the Tasmania Fire Service -

**Time expired.**

**Question - That the amendment be agreed to - put.**

**The House divided.**

#### **AYES 12**

Ms Archer  
Mr Barnett  
Ms Courtney  
Mr Ferguson  
Mr Gutwein  
Mr Hodgman  
Mr Jaensch  
Ms Ogilvie  
Mrs Petrusma  
Mrs Rylah (Teller)  
Mr Shelton  
Mr Tucker

#### **NOES 10**

Dr Broad  
Ms Butler  
Ms Dow (Teller)  
Ms Haddad  
Mr O'Byrne  
Ms O'Byrne  
Ms O'Connor  
Ms Standen  
Ms White  
Dr Woodruff

#### **PAIR**

Mr Rockliff

Ms Houston

**Amendment agreed to.**

**Question - That the motion, as amended, be agreed to - put.**

**The House divided -**

AYES 12

Ms Archer  
Mr Barnett  
Ms Courtney  
Mr Ferguson  
Mr Gutwein  
Mr Hodgman  
Mr Jaensch  
Ms Ogilvie  
Mrs Petrusma  
Mrs Rylah (Teller)  
Mr Shelton  
Mr Tucker

NOES 10

Dr Broad  
Ms Butler  
Ms Dow (Teller)  
Ms Haddad  
Mr O'Byrne  
Ms O'Byrne  
Ms O'Connor  
Ms Standen  
Ms White  
Dr Woodruff

PAIR

Mr Rockliff

Ms Houston

**Motion, as amended, agreed to.**

## **MOTION**

### **Launceston General Hospital Emergency Department**

[3.39 p.m.]

**Ms O'BYRNE** (Bass - Motion) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House:-

- (1) Notes with concern reports that over the third weekend in October 2019, 12 admitted patients at the Launceston General Hospital (LGH) were waiting in the Emergency Department for longer than 24 hours, with four of those patients waiting longer than two days, and one patient forced to wait 16 hours in an ambulance.
- (2) Further notes that the Tasmanian Health Service Annual Report shows that only 56.6% of patients at the LGH experienced an Emergency Department stay of less than four hours, drastically short of the Service Plan target of not less than 90% of patients.
- (3) Further notes with concern the Auditor-General's finding that the rate of adverse events in the Emergency Department at the LGH increased significantly between 2015 and 2018.

- (4) Further notes that the Auditor-General's Report into the performance of Tasmania's four major hospitals in the delivery of Emergency Department services found that LGH spent 70% of the time between 29 June 2018 and 24 January 2019 at the highest possible level of escalation and in a state of almost constant gridlock.
- (5) Heeds the calls of nurses and doctors, through the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF), the Health and Community Services Union (HACSU), and the LGH Staff Association for the introduction of a fourth level in the LGH escalation policy, a response that was implemented at the Royal Hobart Hospital.
- (6) Calls on the Minister for Health, Hon Sarah Courtney MP, to commit to a review of the LGH escalation policy, including the manner in which a fourth escalation level will be introduced, in consultation with the ANMF, HACSU and the LGH Staff Association.

The motion before us today that we are being asked to contribute to goes to a direct plea from the staff at the Launceston General Hospital who are desperate for support right now. This is not a politically motivated motion, as I am sure the Government would like to assert, but it is a direct response to the request from staff at the hospital for the mechanisms they need in order to deal with the circumstances that they now face.

The first four points in the motion are statements of fact that have been recognised in the Government's own annual report, the Auditor-General's report and were well canvassed in the media in terms of that awful night at the LGH, which I will speak about a little more later. The fifth point of the motion asks us to do exactly what the staff require us to do, a request that has come from the people on the front line in our hospital.

There is nothing political in this motion. That does not mean I might not make some political points as we go through the debate, but there is nothing political in this motion. This motion is made up of statements of fact and a request from the staff on the front line. There is no reason that this House should not be able to support it because it gives effect to something that the staff say will deal with the matters of fact that are raised earlier in the motion.

I do not know what the Government plans to do. I am hoping that they will support the motion. They may oppose it. If they seek to amend it, that will send a very damaging message to the staff that their request, their solution to a significant challenge, is not being considered by this Government and not being given the weight it deserves. We have made this motion as non-political as possible to give the Government the opportunity to support those staff, because no matter how we might feel about each other in this room, none of us think that those staff should be left in any more stress than they already are. It is a terrible circumstance they are in.

What happened on the night that precipitated this? There were 35 admitted patients waiting for inpatient beds at the hospital and more than 50 patients waiting in the ED. One patient spent 16 hours in a ramped ambulance in what has been described as one of the worst nights in the hospital's history. Calls from staff to initiate a Code Yellow were shut down despite unprecedented demand. A Code Yellow is called when a hospital either has an infrastructure or other internal emergency affecting its service delivery.

The THS executive director said disaster codes were designed for specific events largely outside a facility's control which require a system-wide response and delineated management protocols. That manager said:

Managing patient flow is not one of those events and I am not aware of any conditions which would have required that to be activated.

No-one who was on the wards or in the ED on that night agrees with that statement. No-one thinks that was not the case. It is not something that they asked for lightly. They are very concerned that they were no longer capable of dealing with the matters before it.

I will go through what escalation protocols are and what exists now both at the LGH and the Royal Hobart Hospital, but what I know from talking to staff who were on duty that night is that what they lacked was a coherent, clear plan of what to do in this crisis circumstance. By the time they were able to negotiate and work their way to get the additional support, which took time away from the critical care they were all supposed to be providing, it was hours into the crisis. A clear escalation policy gives a very simple answer on how you deal with this, so that the staff on the front line are not busily negotiating how to get other things happening. They have a very clear process to follow and they can get on with the work knowing that that support is coming down the line. That is why it is so important.

I spoke to staff who worked that night in many areas of the hospital, both in the ED but in other areas that have to deal with the work flow as a natural result of a very busy ED. They were terribly distressed about their ability to manage that night and terribly distressed that their call for help went unanswered. Even if you contend - and I do not agree necessarily with this - that it would have made no difference, at least it would have said to those staff that we are hearing what you say, we recognise you are in a significantly difficult position and we have your back. At its most limited response, it would have given confidence that people knew what was happening and cared about what was happening that day. However, we know that there is also a very practical outcome from the elevated motions.

I will come a little later to what an escalation does but I will deal with the other matters that I raised in the motion that go to some of the concerns we have. I will go to the Auditor-General's report into major Tasmanian hospitals, which is extremely concerning. I do not think anyone in this House would not be concerned about the Auditor-General's commentary. Auditor-General Rod Whitehead found significant issues across the health system. Ambulance ramping across the four hospitals between 2012-13 and 2018-19 had increased by 149 per cent, despite only a 20 per cent growth in ambulance presentations to EDs over the same period. The duration of ambulance ramping increased with the off-load delay exceeding the 15-minute target, growing by 197 per cent and exceeding 30 minutes by 239 per cent.

The Royal was bed-blocked for 93 per cent of the time between June 2018 and January 2019 with patient safety severely and routinely compromised once every four days on average. At the LGH, they spent more than 70 per cent of the time over the same period at the highest possible level escalation and in a state of almost constant gridlock. What staff are saying is they need an additional escalation point to help them break the gridlock and help them get through that next stage.

It talked about the increase in adverse events by 60 per cent between 2015 and 2018. An adverse event does not mean that someone died but it does mean that the health care they should have been provided was not provided and that, in fact, their treatment was compromised. That is

what an adverse incident is. It does not mean that they died, although there have been deaths. What it means is that they did not get the care they should have and therefore their health was compromised as a result. That is not something that any of us, who all rely on our public health system, want to see. We all rely on the public health system. If any of us or our families get sick, that is where we go. We want it to work and we want the staff there to know they have support.

We have some extremely concerning outcomes in the Auditor-General's report between 2015-16 and that point of gridlock has caused significant concern. We also have every level of staff concerned about this. We have the bodies that represent our nurses, most of our frontline workers and our medical staff, all saying that this is a crisis point and they are frightened.

We also have the Government's own annual report, which shows that only 56.6 per cent of patients at the LGH experienced an emergency department stay of less than four hours. The target is 90 per cent. The reason the target is 90 per cent because it actually matters how quickly you get care. Not everyone is admitted, some people are allowed to go home, but it does matter how quickly you are able to respond to those people.

I have spoken to people who were on the front line that night and who are on the front line every day. What is happening in the ED at the LGH now is that they are treating patients who are ward patients. Some people might say that is okay because they are well-trained professionals and they can provide that level of care. The reality is that the ED is not equipped to take care of ward patients. They do not have the equipment, the staffing and they do not even have simple things like toilets. There are not enough toilets to cope with people who are there for long periods of time.

When somebody stays in the hospital for the sort of hours we have been talking about, days, they are not getting the kind of care they need and that can lead to an adverse outcome. It also means that staff are really stressed because at the same time as they are dealing with an emergency or a crisis coming through the door, they are also trying to provide the ongoing ward-based care people are requiring because they are still in the ED. It also means that there is not enough room to treat people.

Talking to people at the ED, there are very personal treatments and very personal conversations now taking place in the chairs in the waiting room.

With triage, the hospital has done a good thing and now has two queues. There is the queue for people who might want to visit people in ED, but even with that the queue for triage goes around a bit of a corner and you cannot see if somebody collapses at the back of the queue. You are requiring somebody to draw your attention to it, because the queue is too long.

They talk about rooms that have historically been storage rooms. They will take people into those storage rooms to have consults, because they need to have a level of privacy. It is chaos every day. They are exhausted. One of the strategies they want to employ is the ability, as the Royal Hobart Hospital has, to have that additional escalation level that allows them two things: one, to know that everybody else knows what is going on and are backing them; and two, they know clearly what they have to do.

That was the one thing that they kept saying when I talked to them about this. This is not a Labor driven initiative, it is a staff driven initiative. When they get to a point of crisis they want to be able to implement the protocol and then get back onto the job they need to get done.



What happened on that night and what they fear will happen on subsequent nights when it occurs again is that they will be scrambling around desperately trying to find a way to get an escalation level or to get some level of additional support. There was additional support provided on that shift, but it took so long and was so hard to navigate that it was towards the end of the crisis. That meant everybody was operating at a level that they feel compromised their ability to provide patient care. That is why this motion matters.

What does an escalation strategy mean within a hospital context? The department says -

An escalation management plan describes the actions that are taken when a surge in activity is detected. As an efficient and contemporary inpatient health facility maximisation of all available beds must occur with optimal use of both physical and human resources. Bed flow is achievable with use of predictive data and maximising bed use and flow.

At the Royal Hobart Hospital, the plan has four levels of status. Level 1, which is Green, which reflects an effective patient flow.

**Mr Tucker** - You sacked a nurse a day.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - I am sorry, what did he say?

**Mr O'Byrne** - He said a nurse a day. It is just rubbish.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - You can play politics if you want, Mr Tucker. I do not know if you are capable of very much more than that, but this is a request from the staff. If you want to talk about sacking a nurse a day, let us talk about the fact that you have reduced shifts from eight hours to six hours; let us talk about the fact that you pretend to staff beds that you have not; let us talk about the fact that there are two Tasmanian Industrial Commission reports that say you are understaffing both 5D and 4D at the LGH.

**Mr Tucker** - Let us talk about why you did not lay one brick -

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, Mr Tucker, I might have to throw you out.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - If you want to talk about who is stuffing up the health system at the LGH, it has got worse under you. If every single thing you come in here and say is, 'We have spent so much more money', if you have spent more money and it is getting worse it is because you do not know how to manage it. Do not dare come in here and play crap politics -

**Mrs Rylah** - Rubbish, it is about demand and you know that.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - when we are trying to have a decent and genuine conversation about what staff on the frontline want.

**Mrs Rylah** - You know it is about increased demand.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - If you are incapable of doing that just get out now, because this is a serious conversation about what the staff need. If you are incapable then resign your seat and just bugger off now.

**Mrs Rylah** - I beg your pardon.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - I am sorry. I am quite sorry.

**Madam SPEAKER** - That is not very parliamentary, Ms O'Byrne.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - The word 'bugger' or 'just get out'?

**Madam SPEAKER** - No, you know what you said.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - I withdraw 'bugger off now'. Resign your seat if you are incapable of doing anything in politics.

The plan has four levels, Mr Tucker might be interested to know:

Level 1, Green, reflecting effective patient flow through to level 4, Black, reflecting critical patient flow disruption. The majority of effort and focus is to be proactive in maintaining patient care areas at level 1. All of our hospitals do that. Staff focus on that. Effective patient flow is managed through the responsibilities and actions of all key staff and departments. Supplementing this are additional actions that are required to achieve effective patient flow and response to changes in demand. This plan provides a series of additional actions when surge in demand is detected with evaluation of the actions undertaken.

The aim is to ensure that the campus has the ability to maintain flow at the first level of management or return to that level of management as soon as possible following escalation. It involves forecasting and early identification issues with a timely response.

What happens at the Royal Hobart Hospital under level 1, the normal operating activity, the capacity is such that the campus is able to maintain patient flow and able to meet anticipated demand within available resources.

Level 2 is what happens when you have an increased level of pressure. The campus and systems are showing signs of pressure. Focused actions are required to mitigate further escalation. Enhanced coordination will alert the campus to take action to return to Green status as quickly as possible. You then get to the point of level 3. That happens when all the actions that are taken in level 2 have failed to return the system to normal operating activity and pressure is increasing. The campus and local health care systems are experiencing major pressure, compromising patient flow. There are further urgent actions required across the whole system by all areas.

The Royal Hobart Hospital then has the ability to go to Level 4, which is the system severely compromised in relation to delivery of safe patient care. No-one who was on duty at the LGH that night thinks that this was not the circumstance they were dealing with. What the Royal Hobart Hospital can do, when they recognise that all actions initiated have failed to contain service pressures within agreed time frames, local health care systems are unable to deliver comprehensive emergency care -

**Mr Tucker** - Not a single brick.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - I am sorry, did you want to contribute again, Mr Tucker? No? Good.

There is a high potential for patient care to be compromised, so therefore decisive action and decision making must be instituted to cover capacity using a health system-wide approach. A declaration of level 3 -

**Mr Tucker** - A nurse a day.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - I am sorry, Mr Tucker, please.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Mr Tucker, one more squawk and you are out.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - A declaration of level 3 has to be approved by an Assistant Director of Nursing (ADON) or ADON on call. They initiate an executive conference call with the director and everyone is on board. It is a significant decision to make.

A declaration of level 4 is approved by a group director, clinical operations and chief operating officer. It requires an establishment of an incident management team.

That is what happens. It elevates it to a point where there are significant additional resources supplied to manage everything in the hospital, not just to manage what is happening in the emergency department, but to manage everything.

Why are you shaking your head? This is actually how an escalation policy works. I am happy to send you a copy, if you would like.

---

**Member Suspended**  
**Member for Lyons - Mr Tucker**

**Mr Tucker** - I am pleased, I would like one.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, Mr Tucker. I am sorry, I think you are trivialising a really important debate and I am going to ask you to leave the Chamber.

**Mr Tucker** - She is baiting me.

**Madam SPEAKER** - You are bigger than that. I am going to ask you to leave the Chamber and reflect on your behaviour until the end of this debate. Thank you.

**Mr Tucker withdrew.**

---

**Ms O'BYRNE** - That is what happens at the Royal Hobart Hospital, which allows that really important escalation to occur.

At the Launceston General Hospital there are some good initiatives; there are some good things in the escalation policy as it currently stands. Level 1 again is Green; it is a normal operating activity. Capacity is such that the campus is able to maintain patient flow and able to meet the demands within the available resources. Things are ticking over fine, and that is actually what we want all of the time.

Level 2 is Amber, increased pressure on flow activity. The campus and systems are starting to show signs of pressure. They then implement focused actions to mitigate further escalation. They enhance the coordination, they alert the campus to take action so they can get back to being in the Green status as quickly as possible.

When those actions taken in Amber have failed to return the system to Green, they go to level 3, which is Red, which is severe effect on flow activity and the campus and the local health care systems are experiencing major pressures compromising patient flow and resulting in access block. Urgent actions are taken across the system by all areas.

The staff said that was where they were and they were still incapable of responding to what was happening right then in the emergency department: not just in the emergency department, down to pathology, through to the wards, to every single operation of the hospital. Certainly to the ambulances and the people who were still arriving at the hospital. One of the things about the high points of the escalation is that everyone then knows that the hospital is in a difficult position and people can very carefully think about how best to respond to their needs at that time.

It does make it very public about what is going on. While that might be politically untenable or politically inconvenient, it allows the community to know what is happening at the hospital to make sure we also act with the best possible responses to ensure we are not further impacting and compromising on the care that is happening there.

There is the need for the escalation process. The staff at the LGH are not saying, 'Please just give us level 4', as the Royal Hobart Hospital has. They recognise that some of these responses need to be site-specific but they are saying that the blanket denial of committing to being able to do they find, I do not want to use the word offensive, but they find it confronting that they on the front line are saying they are now getting to a point where they need to have that extra level of escalation and extra level of support, but that extra level of escalation and support is not being provided.

Madam Speaker, I have been really careful with how I wrote the motion. I appreciate that sometimes the motions that I bring before this House might be a little confrontational and might have a very political bent to them. I have done that in the past, but I have been very careful with this one not to make that the case. Every element in the first four points are statements of fact that this parliament and every member here is aware of. The fifth is the call that has come from the people on the front line and the sixth is the action we would like the minister to take.

I know there is a review going on at the Royal Hobart Hospital about the escalation process. I understand that it regularly gets reviewed. That is identified in the original escalation document that was produced where they talked about reviews. They are good things. I imagine that we would review these processes regularly all the time. That is not a reason not to commence the work for the LGH because as the staff have said, they anticipate that any response would be site-specific. Whilst there were conversations and verbal commitments given at the time within the hospital structures about rolling out that top level of escalation statewide, no-one at the hospital is going to die in a ditch about that. If they can have a site-specific one that is directly related to their concerns, they are great with that. They quite honestly do not have time for this fight anymore, they just need it to be done.

One of the concerns that we have when matters go on for a long time is that people start to experience fatigue. We see it in the conversations we have about violence against women that people just get so tired of grieving and being angry that they do not know how to grieve or be angry

anymore. I worry that our conversations around health are becoming a little bit like that, that we are telling the story so often that people are getting fatigued.

The community may very well experience that, but the most fatigued and stressed people are those staff on the front line, and they will ask for different things at different times and many of those things will be responded to within their own hospital system. This is something that they asked for. They asked for this on that night and it was denied. Since then they have asked for this commitment and it has been denied and, quite frankly, as legislators, as representative members and as local members - which is certainly the case for the minister and I; it is our local hospital - we do not have the right to ignore the request they have made.

We do not get to determine how it will play out and what the escalation process will look like. That is a clinical decision and a decision for those on the front line, but we have an obligation to those people who we ask to work sometimes shift after shift without breaks. We ask them to work in very stressed circumstances. We ask them to work when they are tired. We have an increase in levels of sick leave. When I talk to the staff there they say, 'We have more staff but do you have any idea how many are away at the moment because they are getting unwell?'.

We do not have the right not to respond to this particular request that they have made and it is something that is within the purview of this parliament or this minister to say, 'Yes, I'm going to instruct them to have a look at what an escalation protocol needs to look like for the LGH to be able to respond to this'. I am not telling you how to have it. It does not have to look the same as the Royal Hobart, it can be different, it can be site-specific. We do not have the right to say to those staff on the front line who are requesting it, 'No, you cannot have it'.

I have much more to say but we started a bit late and I want to give an opportunity for, I am assuming, a number of members to speak. I know the Greens are speaking and perhaps Ms Ogilvie needs some time. Certainly the minister needs to have time to speak as well.

It is very hard when you talk to the staff and sit down and have a chat with them about what it is like to be in the ED. Those of us who have presented at the ED with sick kids or sick family members know how busy the staff are and how hard they work. We know the demands that they are under, or so we think, until you start listening to them tell the stories. It is really concerning that they feel they are not giving the care they should. It is really concerning that private conversations about people's health conditions are being discussed in chairs in the waiting room. It is really concerning that the queues are so long you cannot see the end of them to see if something goes wrong. It is concerning that there is such significant ramping - and we talk a lot about ramping in the north. We do not have many ambulances in Launceston. We have four that are placed in Launceston so when there are nine ambulances it means that not only are our four there but also all of our regional ones are there as well.

It is not okay to hear the stories of significant distress of staff who say, 'I left that patient because I was dealing with an emergency patient and that person, who is a ward-based patient, could not get out of their bed because we could not get to them and they soiled themselves and were humiliated and distressed'. For those who have been to the LGH, there are not that many toilets in the emergency area so when you are and you are not an emergency patient it is quite difficult to access them. If you are not the most urgent case in the ED, as you would not be because you are now a ward patient, you will not be seen as quickly as the others. They are ward patients because they are not emergency patients. They need to be able to be transported to the ward as soon as possible.

The staff tell me the most common question they ever get in the ED is, 'When will I be transferred to a ward?'. They find that really hard because they do not know the answer to it.

This does not fix everything that is happening at the ED and it is not supposed to. There are complex bits of work that need to happen and I am sure the minister will talk a little bit about what she is doing in that space, but it is a strategy that allows a clear process around what to do when things are out of control, and they are out of control and were out of control on that night. All of the staff on the front line say so, but this motion also says to staff that we recognise the pressure they are under, we recognise the support they need and we are going to positively respond to a request they have made for a way to resolve their challenge.

I have written this in a way that is so non-political that it should be very easy to support. I do hope that the House supports it. I know that the staff who requested it want that from us. I do not want to be the one who goes back and tells them that we did not give them what they needed and I hope that no-one else in this House wants to do that either.

[4.07 p.m.]

**Ms COURTNEY** (Bass - Minister for Health) - Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her contribution and bringing forward this motion. There are many things in her contribution that I would concur with in terms of the challenges we are seeing within our health system. However, I find it difficult to take it absolutely that this motion was moved in good faith, considering that in this House yesterday I stood here and outlined the fact that at the moment there are initiatives being implemented at the Launceston General Hospital right now, including auditing the processes involving escalation levels. I also said in this place yesterday:

I am here to try to get outcomes based on the advice from the clinicians. I look forward to receiving that advice but I will ensure that as we work through these challenges and as we look at the escalation processes, we look at what is appropriate in individual hospitals and I will take advice on the work that is being done right now.

Perhaps it was because the motion was written prior to question time yesterday, and I will take it as that because I would not want to infer anything about the people that Ms O'Byrne has obviously been speaking with, but I want to make it clear that as Minister for Health, I too have been engaging with those at the hospital and am aware that there is a process underway at the moment and I look forward to receiving the advice on that.

We all know that escalation protocols have an important role and I would like to point out at this time that it was this Government, under my predecessor, Mr Ferguson, who implemented escalation protocols. I congratulate Mr Ferguson for doing that because we know they can have meaningful differences in the flow of the hospital and in terms of the practices that occur. Some of those were outlined by Ms O'Byrne, but I also want to put on the record that this was a process that was recommended by experts to the former government

In 2012 the Monaghan Report was commissioned under the former government. It came to the former government in 2012 with the recommendation that -

The development of a mechanism to alert the hospital to ED overcrowding and a Ramping response and a practical hospital escalation policy that initiates

processes that respond in a real sense to the overcrowding situation and engages inpatient staff.

Unfortunately, when this report was received by the then government, they sat on it and did not implement it.

I want to make sure there is a very clear record that it has been this side of the Chamber that has implemented escalation policies in our system. I have stood here this week and clearly said that I will listen to clinicians. I look to the experts in how we look at patient flow. They are the ones who are dealing with it in real time. They understand what works and what does not. I look forward to hearing what improvements can be made. In this portfolio I would like to be able, as this Government has tried, to make sure that we are decentralising decision-making.

I will make some broader comments on this important portfolio. I have been minister for four months. In that time I have worked very hard to see the different parts of the hospital, to meet as many people I can around the entire state, see different aspects of the THS, different times of the day and night, seeing people, sometimes planned and sometimes unplanned visits. I have had the opportunity to talk to staff one-to-one and understand what their concerns are and also what gets them out of bed every day.

It is an inspiring portfolio. While there are challenges, and I admit there are - there are some really challenging circumstances - this is a system that produces some amazing outcomes every single day. There are some amazing success stories. On what was probably one of my first days as minister, someone came up to me in the street to tell me about the amazing care they had received at the LGH when her late husband had gone through cancer treatment and had subsequently passed away. She wanted to tell me her story and about the care she received and how grateful she was to the nurses, doctors and staff and for the care they provided.

I have heard those stories almost every day that I have held this portfolio. While there are significant challenges and there are things that as a government I look forward to being able support both the department and the THS being able to implement, it is also important that we pause and remember the high-quality care that we get and the hard-working and dedicated individuals we have in our system. It has been a real privilege to have spent so much time within the different facilities at different times of the day and night to try to gain as much understanding as I can of what they are facing and what I can do as a minister to help support them better.

In terms of the escalations at the LGH, we, as a Government, have very proudly made a decision to empower and strengthen local hospital management to make decisions about patient flow. They are in the best position to make decisions about the needs of staff and patients. They are used by hospitals to manage and deploy resources relevant to patient demand. They are implemented based on a number of factors, which are made by hospital management in consultation with the staff on the ground.

As I alluded to earlier, I have been speaking with key leadership at the LGH and working through a range of options to improve patient flow at that hospital. A number of initiatives have already been enacted, including the new patient transit lounge and the integrated onsite operations centre that is helping assist with bed-flow.

As I mentioned yesterday in parliament, we are workshopping ideas, auditing escalation levels and processes, and looking at whether there are opportunities to improve. I look forward to these.

I welcome the work being done because there will always be things that we can improve and processes that need to be refreshed, looked at and addressed in different circumstances. We are focused on making sure that our hospitals are working together, increasing collaboration, both within hospitals and between departments, and empowering staff to implement the changes to ensure that there are the outcomes they want in the areas they work.

Regarding the resourcing within hospitals, the annual report was tabled just recently. It reflects our investment in frontline services. There are now 1150 more staff in the health system than in March 2014. That is an enormous number of people. They are clinicians, doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and other support staff who directly help patient care. We know that we have very busy EDs at the moment, and we have 40 per cent more staff at the Royal Hobart Hospital's emergency department and 28 per cent more staff at the LGH's emergency department. We have been putting in more resources, but I acknowledge that there is still more work to do.

In the financial year alone there has been an increase of 350 FTE staff in the THS. That is enormous: 160 nurses, 55 FTE doctors and 42 FTE allied health staff. We are getting on with implementing a range of initiatives so that we can drive better patient flow. We know that the challenges that we are seeing manifest in the ED are because of presentations at the front door, but our challenge is with patient flow. The new Community Rapid Response Service is having an impact. I will touch on that a bit later. We are delivering increased outreach health services through the TAZREACH program; we have the implementation for secondary triage for ambulance calls, training more intensive care paramedics, increased collaboration with private health services and expanding telehealth services to reduce the need for patients to travel, as well improve access to community-based care.

These are on top of the other patient-flow initiatives, which are being implemented, such as the new transit lounges to improve our discharge processes, resourced integrated operation centres to facilitate and help manage beds and providing more opportunities for community-based care for programs like Rapid Response and also Mental Health Hospital in the Home.

We are committed to doing more. We are doing that by consulting, by listening to staff and by understanding how we can make the changes to make the most difference in our EDs. A big part of that has been at the Access Solutions meeting and also the recommendations from the College of Emergency Management that came out over the weekend.

Regarding the Access Solutions, we saw a genuine commitment across the hospital system to work as a whole and find solutions. As minister, I am absolutely committed to implementing these to ensure that they make the positive changes that was genuinely at the heart of these recommendations, not just lip service. While we have seen that we have not had the performance measures increase as we had hoped and we know we have increasing demand, but that does not mean that I do not remain committed to the implementation of this.

As we implement this process, it will continue to be a collaborative process with stakeholders. There is a broad range of initiatives and none of them happen in isolation in a certain part of the hospital. They all involve a collaboration throughout different departments and different parts of the THS and with parties that are not even part of the THS, and other external parties as well.

I have been heartened by how much positive feedback I have had about those who are involved. While I acknowledge that perhaps we have not seen the changes that we would have hoped as quickly as we would have liked, that does not detract from the enormous amount of effort that has



gone in and the goodwill that is being shown by many people to make sure that the Access Solutions actions when implemented will get the outcomes that we want.

I acknowledge ACEM's comments over the weekend and also their advocacy on hospital culture and processes. I want to make a few remarks because a key part of the work that is underway is the development of a cultural improvement plan for the THS which is designed to break down longstanding barriers and provide practical training opportunities to drive real and lasting changes. Specific programs identified to support cultural improvement at the Royal include the Pathways to Excellence program and the Cognitive Institute's Speaking Up for Safety cultural improvement program. I commend the work that is rolling out at the hospital and I look forward to seeing that being embraced.

With regard to the Access Solutions meeting, I will touch on a few of the initiatives because I am conscious that other members will also want to make a contribution. There is a wide breadth of substantive work that is being rolled out. The private hospitals working group has been working really well. The feedback I have had directly from people engaged with that has been very positive. The Royal Hobart length of stay committee, which is made up of key staff from all clinical streams, has commenced.

We are delivering a series of access and flow staff engagement forums to allow staff to discuss problems and barriers to patient flow and share practical ideas and solutions. We are working to develop a new model for integrated mental health services to avoid hospital and to ensure patients can get the right care in the right place.

We are facilitating the roll out of Medtasker and enabling better access to data for staff by establishing an emergency department dashboard. Other actions include the development of a preferred model to trial admission medication charting by pharmacists, an innovative partnership with doctors which will result in better care.

I would like to focus for a moment on the LGH because that has been the substance of the motion before us. It is an amazing hospital and the people who work there do so with pride. I have spoken to many of the staff in all different areas. There is demand there. We are committed to helping deliver solutions. I thank the staff because I know how committed they are.

The Government has recruited more than 400 additional FTE health staff for the LGH. That is more people now working at the LGH to deliver care. There are 240 more FTE nurses, 45 more FTE doctors. This has allowed us to re-open beds on Ward 4D. This is positive. I see Ms O'Byrne shaking her head over there. This Government opened the beds that were shut at that hospital under the Labor-Greens government. We are committed to the LGH. The former minister showed it during his time as minister with the things that were delivered. As minister now, I remain committed to this hospital.

We have put on new paramedics in the Launceston area for the first time in years. We established the community rapid response service, which is delivering thousands of episodes of care. There were more than 3000 episodes of care given through community rapid response between July and October this year. That is an amazing result. Not only does that help divert people and ensure that they need not be sent to the acute hospital, it also provides care in their own homes or aged care facilities. The patient is at the very core of it. The staff I have spoken to who have been involved in community rapid response value the service and the care they provide.

With this program there have been really good outcomes. A survey of GPs found that 96 per cent agreed that patients referred would otherwise have needed to go to the LGH ED for intervention or hospitalisation. That is an enormous number of Tasmanians who receive the quality of care in their homes.

I will not be able to finish talking about the LGH without talking about the new 32-bed ward that will be delivered as part of the redevelopment. To alleviate pressure in emergency departments a range of solutions have to be provided. Some of that is about beds, some of it is also about other patient flow initiatives. It is good to see the Government is delivering those beds.

I will finish shortly because I want to allow other members to have an opportunity to contribute, but I will touch on the other patient flow initiatives that we are working on with staff at the LGH.

With the Access Solutions meeting many of these initiatives are being rolled out first at the Royal. We are looking at how these can be implemented and adapted appropriately for the northern hospitals. We have been speaking with clinicians at the LGH. We are looking at the most appropriate measures for their hospital noting that a range of initiatives have already been implemented. We are also looking at other specific ones that are appropriate for their site.

It is crucial that solutions or initiatives that are adapted for the LGH recognise the LGH's unique challenges as well as its unique opportunities. That is a body of work that is continuing on the back of some initiatives already rolled out and ensuring that we can look at other initiatives to support staff at this important hospital.

This Government initiated escalation policies at our hospital. This was something that was knocked back by the then Labor-Greens government despite receiving that recommendation in the 2012 Monaghan report. I want to reflect on my Hansard from yesterday the fact that I have said in this place that there is an audit process underway and I am looking forward to that continuing. I am looking forward to the advice and initiatives that come out of that. With that I move an amendment to the motion.

**Dr Woodruff** - How very gracious of you to give me no time to speak. Thank you, minister. You are obviously not sincere at all.

**Ms COURTNEY** - No, you have half an hour.

**Dr Woodruff** - I beg your pardon. I thought I had one minute. You were serious when you said that.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I am stopping. I was serious.

**Dr Woodruff** - I beg your pardon.

**Ms COURTNEY** - I need to read it out, okay.

Madam Speaker, I move -

That the motion be amended by leaving out paragraphs (5) and (6) and replace with -

- (5) Acknowledges that the Minister has already confirmed that an audit of escalation levels is presently underway, and recognises that it is the medical, nursing, allied health and other staff across our hospitals who are best placed to make decisions around internal patient flow processes.

[4.29 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, we support the Labor Party's motion. We have long been on record for wanting more clarity on the Government's responses to the Access Solutions crisis meeting undertaken on 19 June this year in response to five years of failed administration of the public health system by the Liberal Government. As we know, this has left our public hospitals in a deplorable situation in resourcing and capacity constraints, the bed block and the impact on patients and staff as a result of that.

That crisis meeting was of all people who were responsible or have a significant role regarding the access flow issues, particularly in the Royal Hobart Hospital. The Launceston General Hospital was referred to, but it was principally about the systems affecting bed flow at the Royal Hobart Hospital and the possible solutions that could be garnered from the people in the room. I participated in that meeting in good faith on behalf of the Greens, and spent the day with many experts, as you did, Madam Speaker, and a member of the Labor Party, trying to find solutions and come up with what could be done, noting that the big elephant in the room, resourcing, was not discussed.

Fundamentally, you cannot take \$210 million out of the health budget, which is what the Liberal Party did when it came into government and expect that it would not set back the health system enormously. You cannot come into government and take money out of the community health and the preventive health sectors and expect chronic diseases not to increase across the state. You cannot take money out of allied health services and reduce the opportunities for people to prevent things getting worse and progressing to more serious infections, more serious conditions that need to be operated on or need an emergency department to manage. All of those things happened. It is the response to that that we are interested in. I notice that the minister henpecked through a couple of the things that were on the table of actions from the Access Solutions meeting. I did not have time to hear them in detail. It would be more honourable and transparent of her to lay before the House a detailed response to the Access Solutions meeting. We called on her yesterday to do that in parliament today. She has not done that.

The Australasian College of Emergency Medicine's recent report about the devastating bed block and impacts on patients who have to wait more than 24 hours, made it clear that they are not satisfied with the responses that have been taken since the Access Solutions meeting. They were present. Dr Simon Judkins, Head of the Australasian College of Emergency Medicine, presented to the meeting. He provided his perspective as somebody from a large Melbourne hospital. He has expertise around Australia in what can be done and what is being done elsewhere. He made some considered and expert points about what we could be doing in Tasmania.

ACEM's view that the number of patients who are exceeding the 24-hour period in Royal Hobart Hospital and the Launceston General Hospital is extreme. It is also extreme in relation to other states. We know that at the four largest hospitals in Melbourne there were only two cases last year of people having to wait more than 24 hours in an emergency department, whereas in Tasmania 1800 people had to wait more than 24 hours. That is an abomination. Every one of those people were in an extremely stressful situation, stressful for them and stressful for the staff who have to

have this massive load of people in the emergency department waiting room. The impact on the whole hospital system is enormous.

ACEM know what they are talking about. It is a fact that no other state has a hospital system which leaves patients waiting for as long as the Launceston General Hospital and the Royal Hobart Hospital. It is also a fact that following that crisis meeting, five months later, we have not anything like transparency from the government in how they have responded to the solutions and the action plan that came out of that meeting.

I appreciate the minister henpecked her way through a number of the things that she says have been done but, as is the case with Police, Fire and Emergency Management, we need more than the say-so of ministers who have been anything but transparent on the management of their portfolio. We need some documentation and some information about where things are up to.

The Labor Party and the Greens were invited to participate and we did, in good faith, participate in those meetings. We should be given the respect of an update on where the Solutions Action Plan is up to; as should every other person who was in the room. The medical professionals, health professional bodies and agencies involved should be shown the respect of being given a response to the action plan.

Again, I ask the minister to lay before the House the action plan outcomes and implementation from the Access Solutions meeting from 19 June. Immediate actions that were to have been taken, happened within two weeks, short-term actions that were to have happened by the end of July, medium-term actions before the end of October and long-term actions before the end of May next year. Where are these up to? What is not being done? What are the reasons for their not being done?

As for the amendment that the Government has provided, I am interested to hear Ms O'Byrne's comments on this. She has intimated to me that there would be the possibility of doubt from staff that the audit that is presently being undertaken is sufficient in its scope and independence. I am interested to hear more about that.

If an audit of escalation levels is being undertaken, then it clearly has to be an independent one. This Government has a very bad track record of managing these things in-house.

From their perspective, ACEM thought that 'heads should roll' - that is their term - in the department. They feel that things are happening in the senior management that are a blockage. The Greens do not have a position on this, other than that it is the responsibility of the minister to work out where the blockages are in the system.

We do not go picking at individual members of the public service, bureaucrats, senior levels of management. It is not our role to point the finger at them. It is the job of the minister to identify where the blockages are and to fix them. Given that clearly it is not being done, our preference is that audits are undertaken by independent bodies. We will wait to hear Ms O'Byrne's response to this proposed amendment before we will make our minds up.

Whilst things have been appalling at the Royal Hobart Hospital, it is quite clear that what has been happening at the Launceston General Hospital are not much worse. The sheer numbers of people moving through the Royal Hobart Hospital has blown out the situation in the emergency department to an even more extreme level than is happening in Launceston.

There is no doubt that the nurses and doctors, people from the ANMF and HACSU, the LGH staff association, have all been speaking with one voice about the need to have an escalation policy at the LGH. They are concerned that this has been happening at the Royal Hobart Hospital and should be happening at the Launceston General Hospital as well.

We are concerned that although the Government keeps peddling the mistruth that they are spending more than ever on the Health budget, the fact is that they are spending less than they have in previous years consistently, and this failure to prioritise spending to at least keep pace with the increasing costs of health care year in and year out is having a terrible, corrosive effect on the system. You can keep cutting for so long, and then you get to a point where it is just not possible to provide services.

We have had this Government cut the Threatened Species Unit. In 2012 there were around 25 people in the Threatened Species Unit in the department of Parks and the minister has confirmed in the not-too-distant past that that number has been cut to one. Under this term of government the work of the Threatened Species Unit has been more than decimated from 25 down to one and the ability of that unit to be able to perform its function is impossible. It is absolutely impossible for the Threatened Species Unit to undertake all the things they are required to do under law, required under good process and required under their charter, to look after the conservation of threatened species. When you have something like that happen in the Threatened Species Unit, and then you imagine the same attitude happening in the Health department, we are talking about real patients and real staff working in areas, some of which have been slowly decreased over time, and their ability to perform for quality health care is diminished.

The evidence is the emergency department at the Royal Hobart Hospital where - and the Auditor-General made this point very clearly - that the performance of the emergency department service has been compromised and efficiencies have declined. What is much more important is that there have been real concerns about the rate of adverse events that have been occurring at the emergency department. These have increased significantly at the Royal Hobart Hospital between 2015 and 2018, and they have increased significantly at the Launceston General Hospital during the same period.

Adverse events across the four hospitals in Tasmania have gone up by 60 per cent in three years under the Liberals, and most of those events occurred at the Royal Hobart Hospital and the Launceston General Hospital. There has been a sharp increase in adverse health outcomes for people who have been admitted to the emergency department. That is why the Auditor-General recommended an urgent review into the root causes for this increase in adverse events and recommended targeted initiatives to mitigate the impacts and reduce further future incidents.

It is pretty clear that an escalation policy at the LGH is an absolute minimum requirement for the work that the Auditor-General has recommended. That is one of the many initiatives that would be required to make sure patients are attended to in a timely fashion and are correctly identified and triaged, and that there is an ability to escalate the operations of the Launceston General Hospital emergency department if required because of the burden of cases staff are facing.

We strongly support the motion and believe this is not just an operational management issue. It is fundamentally a resourcing issue and with a Government that has a Treasurer who has just agreed to cut \$50 million out of the Royal Hobart Hospital - I do not have the figures for the cuts to the Launceston General Hospital; perhaps Ms O'Byrne is more aware of that - but these are real numbers and they have a real effect on the number of staff that can be employed and especially on

the number of patients that can be operated on and cared for in emergency departments. This will require not just an escalation policy for the LGH but a fundamental refocusing of the Liberals onto supporting public health services and recognising the value of the people who are employed by the public purse, by taxpayers in Tasmania who want their money to go towards quality health services so that when they need them they can be sure they can get them.

[4.46 p.m.]

**Ms O'BYRNE** (Bass) - Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the amended motion and also to sum up. I am not sure there are any other speakers at this point. I was being polite about giving people time.

I have had a very good look at the amended motion moved by the minister. I appreciate what the minister is trying to say, that there is work being undertaken and that should be taken into consideration and therefore the motion as we have moved it is not necessary. The reality is that despite the minister's comments on an audit, I have engaged with the staff who have requested a commitment to the higher level of escalation. They do not believe that that gives them the level of security they have requested. An audit, for instance, could just come back saying here is how it works or here is how we might change the existing work. It does not commit to that higher level of escalation.

I have gone back to the people who have asked us to bring this to the House and raise this issue, recognising the comments that the minister made yesterday. We were aware of those, but we did not think that it changed the request from staff. I have gone back to them on the amendment the minister has tabled, which is simply that we acknowledge that the minister has already confirmed an audit of escalation levels is presently underway. The second part says it recognises that the medical, nursing, allied health and other staff across our hospitals are best placed to make decisions around internal patient flow processes. That is exactly their point. They are best placed to make that decision, and their decision is that they need that higher level of escalation. It is not something we have suggested they do. Being presented with the minister's comments yesterday and presenting the minister's amendment that she has moved today, they do not believe that that gives them the security they need. They do not believe that gives them a guarantee that they will have the capacity to have that extra level. They do not believe it will give them the clarity they need on the ward, on the day in crisis, to make the calls they need to make in that very high-demand position.

Part of the problem, with the greatest respect to some of the things that have been said around the work that is being done, is that they have had these commitments before. During the Bring Your Own Bed campaign there were informal commitments given - not written commitments, I accept that; I have no evidence of them but I am told from staff that these commitments were given - that the Royal Hobart Hospital escalation policy would be rolled out statewide. They did not get that and on that horror day, and I will talk about it again if people want, there were 35 admitted patients waiting for inpatient beds at the hospital. Thirty-five people were ward patients sitting in the ED space. I do not know if you have been there when they are at a point of crisis, but some of those people go back out to the waiting room because there is nowhere else to put them. As one staff member told me on the weekend, some of those people are being seen in rooms that would normally be used for storage. I am not saying they are putting them in a cupboard but they are spaces to give people some level of privacy. Thirty-five people were ward patients sitting in the ED. There were 50 people waiting in the emergency department; there were people in the ambulances. One of them was there for 16 hours. Now just imagine you arrive in an ambulance at 2 p.m., for instance. I do not want to identify this person so I am randomly picking times. At 6 p.m. the next day, after enduring that afternoon and an entire night and a whole day, you are still in the

ambulance at the ED. That was the crisis that they were dealing with. When they wanted to call that extra level, they were denied the opportunity. When the minister in her amended motion says that it is the medical, nursing, allied health and other staff across our hospital who are best placed to make decisions around internal patient flow, they tried to make that decision, but they did not have a level for escalation in place. They had no way of implementing any kind of motion with any kind of structure so it actually took people off the job. People who were responding to the 35 ward patients, the 50 out in the waiting room, the people in the ambulances were dragged away from that while trying to find a strategy to get additional support. That further compounded the problem.

Additional support eventually arrived but it arrived so far down so far into the shift that it really did not give the benefit needed. Had they been able to clearly and distinctly say this is a crisis, we need to have the escalation level, and it was immediately implemented, they would have had that support. They would have the senior level of management taking over and doing that work. Plus they would have been able to do their job better because they were not trying to negotiate.

That is why it matters. When I go to the issue of trust, had that been responded to properly there might be more trust in the audit. Had people not been given a commitment previously that allowed that level of escalation to be provided to the Royal Hobart Hospital and not to have that happen, there might be more trust. I ask the minister to agree with a substantive motion that commits to an additional level of escalation being necessary, not how the level of additional escalation would work. We are not asking you to do that. That level of escalation is necessary. That is all they are asking. That would go a long way to repairing the lack of trust that the staff now have; that they are being heard and that their needs will be met.

That is what we are dealing with now. The minister says, 'It's okay, there's an audit'. We all know that an audit can come back with significant findings. It might come back with an additional escalation but it may very well come back saying that we do not need one.

As a result of the minister's amendment, I have gone back to the representative of the staff and asked how they felt about it. 'Does it meet what you need?' They asked us to strengthen our motion to ensure that it was very clear that an escalation process was needed. It says to commit to a review of the LGH escalation policy including, not if, there should be a fourth escalation level but the manner in which a fourth escalation level will be introduced. Anything less than a commitment to a fourth escalation level simply will not be doing what the minister has said time and time again that she does. She says that she listens to clinical advice. She says that she wants to hear from people on the frontline. She says she wants to respond to the needs of people who are the experts. In her own amended motion, where she does not commit to what they have asked for she says -

It is the medical, nursing, allied health and other staff across our hospitals who are best placed to make decisions around internal patient flow processes.

They have and the minister has not responded appropriately. That is why the motion is before the House today.

If the minister at any time since that horror day in October had said, 'Clearly, you need another level of escalation. Let's work towards looking at what that looks like. What we need to do to the other three, how we stage it throughout our site-specific response to the LGH', then that would have been fine and we would not be having this discussion today.

We tried very hard not to make it a nasty political conversation. I will respond to some of the many things the minister said. Because she has put them on the record, I need to respond to them.

It is not that hard to say that this is what you want, we will deliver it and we will work with you in the manner in which it is delivered. That is what the staff are saying. An audit simply does not cut it. We cannot support the amendment that has been moved by the minister because it devalues the request of the staff. They do not want an audit. They want a commitment that there will be a further escalation policy that allows them to go to that high level if they need it. We do not want them to need it. We would like them to be operating on green all the time. If the hospital could operate at that level we would all be much happier. As legislators, as representatives of our communities, as users of the service that is what we would want but that is not the case. The amendment as moved by the minister is untenable.

The minister made a couple of points that I need to talk about. She talked about the cultural improvement plan. It has been said by a number of people that the heavy reliance on this Government on changing culture to resolve the hospital crisis is not an appropriate response. The world will not get fixed in our health system by the supposed cultural change. There is always work to be done, but cultural change alone will not resolve our challenges. There are an awful lot of committees. I would be interested in more information about how the Access Solutions' work would apply in the north, whether we would have a specific Access Solutions' response to our northern hospitals or whether we are simply going to roll out the ones that have been assigned to address the needs down south.

I am worried that the minister takes the comments of the ACEM recently as some kind of endorsement as opposed to something quite concerning. It worries me that we are having those conversations again. It worries most of us. The minister talked about the additional staff at the hospital and additional money that is going into the hospital. One of the things about health budgets, not just here but in every jurisdiction, is that health is able to ramp up and down often based on the budgetary conditions that they are in.

The situation we have now is more to do with structural implications. The minister and the former minister have said that they should get a lot of praise for introducing local decision-making - this from a government that removed local decision-making. They forgot that they got rid of the CEOs in each of our regional hospitals. They forgot that they got rid of those senior health professionals, directors of surgery, directors of medicine, directors of nursing. They all disappeared under Mr Ferguson's model of health care. To come in here and say, 'You should reward us because we got told off about it so we put in some local decision-making'. The damage that was done at that time without local decision-making was profound. Hospitals have a number of challenges. Budget is one of them, but the framework and the governance is a significant other one. When this Government removed local decision making the damage was huge.

The Government likes to talk about the funding that was provided by the former Labor government yet they seemingly forget that the first thing they did when they came in as a government was to further cut the health budget. If it was cut so badly that it was unsustainable and unfixable, why would you want to cut more? How is that the fault of previous governments? How is that not something that this Government must take responsibility for?

The Government talks about 4D a lot. Politically, it is always better not to close a ward but this Government has not funded beds all across the hospital. That makes it harder to deliver patient care.



I am pretty sure that today is the day that there is supposed to be a response to the staff about whether this Government is ever going to appropriately staff 4D. There is a Tasmanian Industrial Commission Report that talks about what the appropriate staffing is and it has not been applied. Today is the day they are going to find out whether those beds that the Government keeps saying are open will be staffed in a sustainable way. Why would we be nervous about that? That would sound like a good thing? Because 5D is also not staffed.

There was a Tasmanian Industrial Commission Report in January that talked about the appropriate staffing level based on the demand from the previous period, not the increase we have had. The Government is still not staffing 5D at the appropriate level. It is all well and good to come out and have one-line political platitudes but you need to be responsible for the decisions that you make. You do not staff the wards properly. You open beds and you do not staff them. You removed local management. Your first act in government was to rip out over \$200 million from the health system. Take some responsibility for the fundamental damage you did to the system. Here is a step today. Listen to the staff. They have said that the audit you talk of is not enough for them to be confident that they will get the level of support that they need. Do not move this amendment. Join with us in voting the amendment down. Vote for the substantive motion to deliver for those staff on the front line who so desperately want your help.

**Time expired.**

**Question - That the amendment be agreed to - put.**

**The House divided -**

AYES 12

Ms Archer  
Mr Barnett  
Ms Courtney  
Mr Ferguson  
Mr Gutwein  
Mr Hodgman  
Ms Ogilvie  
Mrs Petrusma  
Mr Rockliff  
Mrs Rylah (Teller)  
Mr Shelton  
Mr Tucker

NOES 10

Dr Broad  
Ms Butler  
Ms Dow (Teller)  
Ms Haddad  
Mr O'Byrne  
Ms O'Byrne  
Ms O'Connor  
Ms Standen  
Ms White  
Dr Woodruff

PAIR

Mr Jaensch

Ms Houston

**Amendment agreed to.**

**Question - That the motion, as amended, be agreed to - put.**

**The House divided -**

AYES 12

NOES 10

Ms Archer  
Mr Barnett  
Ms Courtney  
Mr Ferguson  
Mr Gutwein  
Mr Hodgman  
Ms Ogilvie  
Mrs Petrusma  
Mr Rockliff  
Mrs Rylah (Teller)  
Mr Shelton  
Mr Tucker

Dr Broad  
Ms Butler  
Ms Dow  
Ms Haddad  
Mr O'Byrne  
Ms O'Byrne  
Ms O'Connor  
Ms Standen  
Ms White  
Dr Woodruff (Teller)

PAIR

Mr Jaensch

Ms Houston

**Motion, as amended, agreed to.**

## MOTION

### Infrastructure Investment Plan

[5.08 p.m.]

**Mr TUCKER** (Lyons - Motion) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House -

- (1) Acknowledges that the Hodgman majority Liberal Government has a long-term plan to keep our economy strong and this includes investing in infrastructure at record levels in the 2019-20 State Budget.
- (2) Notes that, Government infrastructure spending as a proportion of total expenditure has almost doubled from around 7 per cent in 2014 to almost 12 per cent in the 2018-19 financial year.
- (3) Recognises that actual infrastructure spending by the Hodgman Liberal Government was a massive 230 per cent higher in 2018-19, than it was just six years earlier in the last full year of the previous government.
- (4) Further acknowledges that the Government is getting on with the job of delivering this strong infrastructure investment plan.

I welcome the opportunity to debate the delivery of the Hodgman Government's infrastructure investments, which are making a very strong contribution to Tasmania's growing economy and establishing the foundations for future generations. The Hodgman majority Liberal Government is investing in infrastructure at record levels and the statistics prove it.

Our Infrastructure budget commits \$3.6 billion in spending over this year and the forward Estimates, including \$1.6 billion in transport infrastructure. Treasury analysis has also shown that Infrastructure spending as a proportion of total expenditure has almost doubled from around 7 per cent to almost 12 per cent in five years.

Treasury also advises that actual Infrastructure spending by the Hodgman Liberal Government was 230 per cent higher in 2018-19 than it was just six years earlier. That comparison year was the last full year of the former Labor-Greens coalition government, when the current shadow treasurer and former failed finance minister, Mr O'Byrne, was minister for infrastructure. In that year alone, Mr O'Byrne presided over a 34 per cent underspend against forecast expenditure. This is a fact; that is his record.

In contrast, we are investing both for today and for future generations. This investment is contributing to the surge in business confidence. The latest National Australia Bank business survey has confirmed Tasmanian businesses are the second most confident in the nation and our result is four times better than the national result in trend terms.

Tasmania's economy continues to be the envy of the nation, with this report backing the findings of the August Sensis business index which stated -

Tasmanian businesses were the most confident in the country with the most popular government policies in the nation.

Our economy is rated second of all Australian states and territories according to CommSec -

**Ms O'Connor** - Most fly fishers hate your government.

**Mr TUCKER** - None of this economic growth has come about by accident, Ms O'Connor. These are the results that confidence brings. It is the confidence to invest in the future and to create jobs as opposed to the former Labor-Greens coalition government, under which 10 000 jobs were lost, deficits of over \$1.1 billion were accumulated, and businesses left the state in droves. Conversely, 15 000 more Tasmanians have found work since the Hodgman Liberal Government was elected, and private investment is growing at the fastest rate in the country. The Government is committed to ensure that not only will we deliver our promises, but we will support growth across the state.

Our infrastructure budget was forecast to create 10 000 jobs over the next four years. The record infrastructure investment figures I mentioned earlier do not account for investment by state-owned companies TasPorts, Tasmanian Irrigation, TasWater, our electricity entities, and TasRail. State ownership of the infrastructure assets through our government business sector is much more prevalent here than in other states and territories. This is the case in our electricity sector, imports, rail, water and sewerage provisions, irrigation, public transport, and more.

As the minister for Infrastructure highlighted earlier this week, the first tranche of TasRail's freight rail investment was completed on time and on budget for \$120 million, supporting 170 jobs across Tasmania. Tranche 2, which is underway, will support another 150 jobs.

Those members who are regular travellers on the Midland Highway will see the progress with our \$500 million 10-year Midland Highway action plan. This plan is tracking ahead of schedule with 63 per cent either completed or under construction.

I have laid out how the Government is spending much more on infrastructure than the former Labor-Greens government. This is also the Government with infrastructure policies that are being delivered. This is another important contrast to the efforts of members opposite who still have no policies. We can only assume they cannot be bothered offering up a plan of their own.

The member for Braddon and shadow minister for infrastructure has actually confessed to this in his response to the Legislative Council Select Committee on Greater Hobart Traffic Congestion. In contrast to the Hodgman Government's voluminous submission, Dr Broad has admitted that Labor has no solution to traffic congestion in Greater Hobart and we will not see a Labor policy on this important issue in the next two and a half years. This admission is in black and white in the member for Braddon's submission. What is more disappointing for the voting public than to have an Opposition which criticises the Government for its actions but has no policy of its own?

It is especially disappointing when the Opposition announces that it does not intend to explain its alternative to voters, let alone cost it for 30 months. That 30 months can be added to the 66 months that have transpired since the Labor-Greens government was voted out. In the lead up to the election, the Labor Opposition had no transport infrastructure policy, no ideas as an alternative government, to combat traffic congestion in Greater Hobart, no alternative to our \$500 million plan for the Midland Highway, no plan for road infrastructure improvements between Sorell and Hobart and no ideas for the Great Eastern Drive or the Bass Highway. Yet we are supposed to take seriously the Opposition's criticism of the Government's plans. What more can you expect of an Opposition who cannot be bothered putting together an alternative budget?

Given her comments on infrastructure investment by the Leader of the Opposition at the RACT forum last week, the Opposition's confusion is more understandable. After initially criticising the Government for not spending enough on infrastructure, the Leader of the Opposition changed tack and said we are spending too much. Funny that, probably heard that before. The *Mercury* quoted the Opposition Leader at the RACT forum she attended last week as saying, 'The Hodgman Government should spend less on infrastructure and more on incentivising public transport'.

The Opposition Leader should have a look at the Tasmanian-built buses rolling off the assembly line on the north-west coast, supporting local jobs. She also overlooked our plan to deliver a fifth lane on the Southern Outlet for the use of buses and high occupancy vehicles and the establishment of park and ride facilities in Kingston.

The Opposition had no election policy for any of these initiatives and still has none. The Hodgman Government will not be distracted. We will continue to invest in job-creating infrastructure around Tasmania for the benefit of this generation and those to come.

There are many similarities between the electoral fortunes of federal and state Labor. The only difference is that the federal party is at least willing to publicly debate the reasons for its loss. In Tasmania, the Leader of the Opposition continues to cover up the reasons for their failure and hope the voters do not notice.

It is now 615 days since Tasmanian Labor's election defeat and the Leader of the Opposition still refuses to release the report into that loss. To what extent is the Leader's refusal to release this secret report a symptom of the internal turmoil she faces over the leadership?

I will turn to the matter of congestion in our growing capital city. The Government knows the very real frustrations of commuters caught in traffic congestion and we have a comprehensive plan

to bust it. We took this plan to the last election and won the support of the people. The fact that we have a plan clearly differentiated us from the Labor Opposition, which could not be bothered with an election policy.

In last year's budget, the Government allocated \$30.8 million over four years for congestion mitigation projects, including transferring ownership of Macquarie and Davey streets and implementation of traffic flow improvements, which has been completed. Investment in improved traffic incident response capability, including our fleet of top-end tow trucks and bus priority measures on key routes is making catching the bus all the more attractive.

We started the public consultation planning, design and initial works for a fifth lane on the Southern Outlet with an announcement to be made shortly in relation to this initiative. We are planning for a new underground bus transit centre. Expert consultants have been appointed to undertake the initial feasibility work and there has been further work on the northern suburbs transport corridor project.

Through the City Deal an additional \$20 million has been allocated to address traffic issues affecting Kingborough, including redevelopment of the Kingston bus interchange and park and ride facilities to provide for a higher volume of passengers in the future.

Earlier this year, we changed the operation of the traffic lights at the top of Davey Street to allow traffic to operate more efficiently during the afternoon peak and changed the operation of four other intersections to improve efficiency.

In early August we announced a major step forward in Hobart congestion management, including an extension of tow truck hours to run all day on the Tasman Bridge and tow-away signs installed on Macquarie Street. Clearways on Macquarie Street have been extended by an hour each morning to start from 6.30 a.m. Then the first of a new fleet of the latest quick response tow truck arrive in to service the Hobart CBD and key feeder routes.

In late August, we announced further measures to reduce congestion in Hobart, particularly for those from the Kingborough and Huon municipality areas. Tenders were called for a consultancy to develop detailed designed options for a fifth Southern Outlet transit lane to link with bus priority measures on Macquarie and Davey streets. The consultancy will also include concept designs for a park-and-ride facility in Kingborough. Preliminary planning work has already begun on these projects. The next round of stakeholder consultation will begin in the coming months, providing an opportunity for the community to provide feedback on initial concepts.

Since 14 October, new incident response tow trucks have been used to remove vehicles from clearways on Macquarie Street in the morning peak period to improve traffic flow. I am delighted with our latest investment to reduce congestion events. The rapid response tow trucks which have been established at the top of the Southern Outlet since early September have already made a big difference. Contrary to the erroneous claims made by the new shadow minister for infrastructure, our new tow truck station at Mt Nelson is already proving its worth, as are our extended tow truck hours for the Tasman Bridge vehicles.

Here are some figures to prove it. In the period 5 August to 31 October, the Tasman Bridge tow truck has attended to 57 incidents, including 34 in the previous unserviced period between the morning and afternoon peaks. Ten vehicles have been towed after crashes on the bridge in that

period and nine towed after breaking down. In other cases, tow-truck drivers were able to offer other support, including minor mechanical assistance or clearing of debris from the roadway.

In the period 2 September to 31 October, the peak period standby tow trucks stationed at the Southern Outlet attended to 22 incidents, with six vehicles towed to a safe location away from the incident site. In the period 14 October to 31 October, the peak period tow trucks stationed on the Brooker Highway attended to eight incidents with one vehicle towed after a crash.

In the period 14 October to 6 November more than a dozen vehicles were towed from the Macquarie Street clearways. Our investment is also boosted by the fact that these new generation tow trucks are able to move two vehicles at once.

The real question is where is Labor's vision to bust congestion? Where is their plan? They do not have one. After more than five years in Opposition and two election losses they still do not have one. Dr Broad has no vision whatsoever. Having criticised the Government's plan to reduce traffic congestion in Greater Hobart, despite having no plan of his own, Dr Broad sought to do the same with Infrastructure Tasmania's 30-year strategy. In doing so, he grubbily disparaged the work of independent public servants. We congratulate CEO, Alan Garcia, and his independent forward-thinking team for the work in putting this document together. This strategy will establish a framework to inform long-term future infrastructure investment decisions. It will help to prioritise our spending to optimise long-term value for money. This is particularly important given the large cost and long-term nature of infrastructure projects.

Other states and territories have produced similar documents. This is lost on the member for Braddon who cannot look past the next cheap headline or twitter post or the bad jokes section.

Feedback on the strategy has been positive, which goes to show how out of touch the Opposition is. It takes courage to look forward as Infrastructure Tasmania has in this consultation draft. It is cowardly for Dr Broad to take pot shots at the independent hard-working public servants while offering no vision of his own. He is out of touch.

The *Mercury's* editorial on 18 October 2019 said that the State Government's 30 year strategy 'lays out the challenges and opportunities that are likely to face those planning our infrastructure over the next three decades'.

The Vice President of the Civil Contractors Federation, Ashley Cooper, said that this strategy was important to ensure confidence in the industry. He said -

What this document does is give businesses the confidence to go forward and start considering what they need to do to capitalise on the opportunities that are on the horizon.

Dr Broad clearly has begun criticising the strategy before reading it because he says it did not contain projects or development guidelines. What the strategy is and what it is not is stated clearly up-front but I will quote the *Mercury* editorial for the member of Braddon because it might be instructive for him.

The purpose of this document is different ...

As an academic, Dr Broad should have understood that specific projects were included in the 10-year infrastructure pipeline, some \$15 billion worth. How has a learned academic like Dr Broad failed to notice long-term infrastructure strategies produced in other jurisdictions, which also contain no specific projects. Clearly projects that might be developed in the year 2045 are likely not to have been conceived.

Dr Broad appears to have skim read the strategy to find bogey words in order to get media attention. He discovered two words - 'toll' and 'roads' - and asked us to rule them out, which we did, and as soon as we ruled out toll roads he claimed the strategy has no substance. While the peanut gallery sniped from the cheap seats, the Hodgman majority Liberal Government will continue to back the work of our independent experts in Infrastructure Tasmania to help us plan for a better future.

In relation to infrastructure spending, getting the money out the door is a debate we will have with the Opposition any day of the week. Labor has claimed that the Government is failing to invest in infrastructure. This is an extraordinary claim when you consider Labor's record in government. As I said, the Hodgman Government has invested a record \$3.6 billion across the Budget and forward Estimates in our infrastructure budget this year.

Of this figure \$1.6 billion will be invested in transport infrastructure. Furthermore the Government's infrastructure spending as a proportion of total spending has almost doubled from around 7 per cent in 2014 to almost 12 per cent in the 2018-19 financial year. Despite the unrelenting negativity and mistruths spun by those opposite our infrastructure budget was warmly welcomed by the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Civil Contractors Federation, Australian Logistics Council, RACT, Traffic Management Association of Australia, Tasmanian Transport Association and Roads Australia. Roads Australia President, David Stuart-Watt said that it is not just about having safe reliable transport infrastructure. It is also about creating and maintaining jobs for Tasmanians.

One of the reasons it was so warmly welcomed is because the public knows we will deliver. They trust us. The quiet Tasmanians trust us to deliver. When we promise to build roads and bridges our state needs, the public knows they are fully funded and will be built. The failed former finance minister, David O'Byrne, describes the Government record of getting infrastructure projects out the door as woeful. How then does he explain his own record as Minister for Infrastructure in the last full year of the former Labor-Greens coalition government?

The Department of Treasury and Finance figures show that in 2012-13, \$288.9 million was spent on infrastructure. That year the infrastructure budget was 34 per cent underspent. That was a demonstration of major proportion incompetence. The member for Franklin returned to this place four years later and now he is shadow treasurer such is the depth of talent on the Opposition benches.

Just six years after his incompetent effort in the 2018-19 financial year, the Hodgman Government spent \$676 million on infrastructure. That is a 230 per cent increase in actual expenditure on infrastructure in just six years. Yet the opposition criticises our record. Tasmania must never go back to a Labor-Greens minority government. Businesses want certainty. Labor's deal with the elitist Greens destroyed business confidence and destroyed that certainty.

Here are some of the Tasmanian newspaper headlines from those disastrous years summarising what businesses thought of the Labor-Greens government. This is when you were the failed economic development minister, Mr O'Byrne: 'Government undermining business confidence';

'Jobless rates hurt business optimism'; 'Business confidence at lowest level'; 'Tasmania's economy is the nation's weakest link'; 'Business suffers in anaemic economy'; 'Tasmania in recession'; 'Business confidence in tatters'. You never read any of those words in Mr O'Byrne's glowing self-congratulatory op-eds. Under you, Mr O'Byrne, business confidence was in tatters.

It is important to remind Tasmanians that this is the truth of what it was like for business in Tasmania under Labor and the Greens. Back in the dying days of the Labor-Greens government the Sensis Business Index stated that business support for the state government had collapsed and was the worst in the country. According to Sensis at the time Tasmanian businesses said that the government was being manipulated by the Greens, and the state government did not support small businesses.

The failed former economic development minister, Mr O'Byrne, launched his infamous economic development plan. Not long after, Tasmania slumped into a recession. You did a deal with the Greens in government and Tasmanian businesses suffered terribly for it. It might not have worked for you but it certainly did not work for Tasmanian businesses. The Labor-Greens governments smashed them. You were the worst government every for business.

Unlike Labor, who still have no long-term plan and need to be told that the economy is important, we understand the crucial importance of the business sector when it comes to generating growth and creating jobs for more Tasmanians. That is why we put strong economic management and strong infrastructure investment and business growth front and centre in our plan. Our plan is working for business. The latest Sensis Business Index confirms the Tasmanian businesses are still the most confident in the nation and were the most supportive of this majority Liberal Government's policies for the eighth quarter in a row.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics recently confirmed that 15 000 more Tasmanians are now in work than when we first came to government in March 2014. The shadow treasurer can keep trying to rewrite history, one op-ed at a time, and we will keep calling him out, because we all know there is one big 'T' in David.

The Opposition likes to talk about the Bridgewater bridge. In mid-October the Hodgman and Morrison governments announced the tender for geotechnical works which will shape the detailed design work. The project remains on track to be opened to traffic in 2024. Labor had 16 years in government, the last four with the elitist Greens, and failed to deliver a plan to replace the bridge. To make matters worse, Labor squandered federal funds that had been provided for it. The shadow treasurer hoped that we had forgotten his lack of action on the Bridgewater bridge during his four-year exile from parliament. We haven't. The public lost so much faith in the ability of the Labor-Greens government to build this bridge that at the end of David O'Byrne's four years as failed infrastructure minister, Brighton Mayor Tony Foster said he could not see the new bridge being built for at least 20 years. We also remember that under the watch of the Labor-Greens government the bridge was stuck closed to the river traffic for four years and still repeatedly left people stranded on the river, even after having spent \$14 million on it. In contrast, this Government has a plan. We have the funding locked in and the project is underway.

As I previously mentioned, the Opposition has criticised the Hodgman Liberal Government's infrastructure without having developed a policy of their own. That is the definition of all care and no responsibility. Dr Broad took this to the next level with his criticism of the funding profile of the South East Traffic Solution, a \$162.5 million commitment from the Hodgman and Morrison governments. I remind Dr Broad that his party went to the 2018 election with no policy to improve



the road infrastructure between Sorell and the southern beaches and Hobart in the Leader of the Opposition's heartland - and yours as well, Ms Butler - and Labor lost. No surprises here, is there? The Hodgman Government took a very well-developed and funded policy to the Tasmanian people and won.

The South East Traffic Solution consists of six road upgrade projects along the Sorell to Hobart corridor and then a feasibility study. These projects are the Hobart Airport interchange project; the highway duplication, four lanes near the Tasmanian Golf Club; removal of the roundabout at Midway Point and duplication of the highway, four lanes, through Midway Point; a comprehensive feasibility examining duplication of the Sorell causeways; the Sorell southern bypass; and an overtaking lane on the Arthur Highway near Iron Creek.

The tender for the Hobart Airport interchange project was won by proud Tasmanian civil contracting firm, Hazell Brothers. The project will provide a long-term solution of a grade separated interchange. Both the Morrison and Hodgman governments are fully committed to the Hobart Airport interchange, which will benefit commuters from Sorell, Midway Point and the southern beaches as well as those travelling to and from the Hobart International Airport. As a member for Lyons I am delighted that this project is soon to commence after a complex approvals period. Construction at Arthur Highway overtaking lane has started and will be completed well ahead of our election commitment, by the end of this term of government.

I remind Dr Broad that the Hodgman Government's infrastructure spending as a proportion of total expenditure has almost doubled from around 7 per cent in 2014 to almost 12 per cent in the 2018-19 financial year. Infrastructure spending by the Hodgman Liberal Government was 230 per cent higher in 2018-19 than it was just six years earlier in the last full year of the disastrous Labor-Greens coalition government.

Let us not forget their backflip on the Royal Hobart Hospital. Labor proposed a greenfield site in 2006, spent three years progressing it, wasted \$10 million in the process, backflipped and went with the redevelopment on the current site in 2010. They ran the project off the rails and failed to lay a single brick. Let us also not forget the sacking of a nurse a day. Then Bryan Green and Rebecca White backflipped again and backed the greenfield Cenotaph proposal.

Let the record show the Hodgman Government is spending 230 per cent more on infrastructure for roads, bridges, schools and hospitals and other vital public works than was spent under Labor just six years ago. That is a record we will always be happy to defend.

[5.39 p.m.]

**Dr BROAD** (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, these speeches are getting quite tedious, to be honest. As I have said before in this House, private members' time is the opportunity for backbenchers like Mr Tucker to try to highlight a policy platform of their own. This is his time to shine, to represent his community and put forward ideas that are not otherwise being considered by government. We do not get that, of course, do we? What we get instead is quite a continuation of insults cut and pasted by an intern from the former member for Braddon, Adam Brooks' speeches.

I have heard most of those things before. The things that were not cut and pasted, the insults especially, were probably only rehashing Dorothy Dix questions we have already heard in this place. The member does not understand that he is simply being used as a tool to direct insults at the Opposition and waste the parliament's time.

From the member's contribution, it is quite obvious that he believes all the rubbish he is reading out. It is interesting to note the increasing personal insults directed at me. They have cut out a previous member's name and inserted mine. Maybe that is because they are getting a little bit touchy about some of the issues I have been raising. Again, it is such a disappointment that this is what Mr Tucker's career is starting to look like. We have seen it before -

**Mr Jaensch** - You have given this speech before so you chew up a bit of time talking about the waste of time.

**Dr BROAD** - What am I supposed to do here, Mr Jaensch? This is such rubbish. I heard the member talk about plans and action plans. Action plan sounds better but it is no more action than the previous plan. The member talked about strategies and then about concepts. He even went down to the detail of a framework in place.

From this Government we tend to see lots of plans, action plans, strategies, lots of glossy pictures and lots of consultancies. We have talked about consultancies. Despite the Government promising to cut down on the use of consultancies, we see consultancies pop up all the time. If I heard right, the member talked about another consultancy that has not yet been otherwise announced, not to mention media events and media releases.

What about actual actions? Pretty pictures and glossy brochures are not actions. The member completely disregards anything that the Labor Party has done in the past. We heard from the member's first speech that it is only the Liberal Government that has done anything in this state. The Labor government has done zero. That is a theme he continues to spout in this place. He has no regard for some of the major achievements of the previous Labor government, which delivered massive projects like the Brighton by-pass and the Brighton transport hub.

The Brighton transport hub was a key, visionary piece of infrastructure that set up Tasmania's transport system for 30 years to come. It eliminated all that freight traffic having to go all the way into the Hobart port, through all those traffic lights to unload. The Brighton hub got rid of all of that. It also meant that the trains could get north and south much more efficiently because the trains did not have to go through all those level crossings, did not have to go over the Bridgewater Bridge or into Hobart. All that unloading was done on the outskirts of Hobart at Brighton. That is what a visionary piece of infrastructure looks like.

Yet the member for Lyons completely disregards infrastructure projects like that, simply carping and reading out those silly lines, those silly cut and pasted insults. He believes it and that is such a shame.

He does not reflect on the Kingston by-pass or the East Tamar Highway, the upgrades at Dilston. The Labor Government has a proud history of infrastructure stretching back to when the Labor Party first took part in politics in Tasmania.

The two *Spirits*, for example. That is a Labor legacy. What we see now is a delay in purchase of new *Spirits* that has not been dealt with at all by this Government. There is a range of issues with purchasing new *Spirits* and the Government is in denial, hiding it all, and refusing to answer simple questions like the delivery date. I can tell you it is not 2021.

The Liberals have had five years of inaction on infrastructure. The member proudly talks about the Bridgewater bridge. In my almost three years in this place I have seen and heard so many times

that the Bridgewater bridge is about to happen. There have been so many press conferences out at Bridgewater with Liberal members crowing about the expected delivery of the Bridgewater bridge and yet what we have confirmed today, even in the member's speech, is that they are back to square one. There is another consultancy that has been let to do geotechnical work. Up to this point they did not even know if they could build the bridge. Infrastructure Australia said that the bridge was completely unaffordable the way they designed it. They trashed the business case. It took five years to develop this Bridgewater bridge business case and Infrastructure Australia smashed it to pieces. The Government has had to go back to square one.

They do not have a design, they do not have the geotechnical information, they do not have anything locked in, yet the member, with some confidence, talks about the bridge being delivered in 2024. We have heard it all before. I remember questioning the former minister for infrastructure, Rene Hidding, about the pre-election budget where the Bridgewater bridge was proudly highlighted in the infrastructure budget. You know what was next to it over the next four years? There were four dashed lines. There were zero dollars allocated to the Bridgewater bridge. Zero dollars across the forward Estimates. Yet in that pre-election budget there is the Bridgewater bridge with zero dollars allocated over four years.

I got the Library to do a bit of work and that had never ever happened in a budget before: that there was a budget item in there, an infrastructure project, with zero dollars allocated. At least the former minister, Mr Hidding, was being honest because what we have seen is zero dollars delivered. The only thing that has happened is more consultancies, yet the member stands up and criticises Labor for not delivering infrastructure projects. Not one brick. Well there is not one bucket of concrete gone into the Bridgewater bridge. There is not a single pylon. There is not a single hole. There is not a single bolt. There is not a single length of steel. There is not a single piece of asphalt.

All there is is media events, spin and promises of delivery in 2024, well and truly past the next election. How many elections are you going to need? How many times are you going to promise this? We know that you do not deliver and you cannot deliver the Bridgewater bridge.

The member talked about the 30-year strategy. I have seen in my time a number of consultant's reports. One of my bug bears is when there are no measurables in there. Nothing you can hold them to account on. You have a piece of propaganda that lays out a whole bunch of buzz words. Can the member explain to me what 'restoration of transport efficiency through enabling greater mobility is an important part of Tasmania's future' actually means? This is page 30 of this strategy.

The member who moves this motion, Mr Tucker, the member for Lyons, is quite proud that the strategy contains no specific projects or actions. In fact, he is correct in stating that on page 5 it says, 'The strategy does not list specific projects or actions'. What is a strategy if it does not list any projects, nothing specific? There is nothing you can grab hold of. If people look at that, there are going to be electric cars in the future. What does that mean? What is the Government going to do about electric cars? For example, are we going to have electric cars down the track? What do you think about electric cars? We know that the state gets a lot of money from fuel excise from the federal government that assists us to build roads, et cetera. What happens if we have electric cars? What does that mean for fuel excise? That should be in the 30-year strategy. What is going to happen there?

This is the sort of things strategists think about. They do not just say 'electric cars'. They say these are the sorts of facilities we need for electric cars, this is how we think that transport systems are going to change and this is how we think the electricity grid may need to be upgraded. That is

the sort of thing a strategy does, and you can measure that. You can say, 'Okay, we need so many charging stations by this much. We think that the government vehicle fleet should have this many electric cars in it by this point of time, and that way those electric cars will then flow on into the second-hand market'. These are some of the things that we actually talk about but, apparently, we have no plans and no strategies. That is simply because the member reads out exactly what is in front of him and does not understand the history and does not really care either.

We have the situation with this 30-year strategy, but the minister even forgot spending \$93 000 of taxpayers' money. When asked specifically in parliament whether consultants were paid to put this report together he said, 'No, there were none', but there were. That is \$93 000 worth of consultancies and the minister was unaware and had to come in and apologise. There are so many consultancies going out the door it is probably no wonder they forget about a few of them. We have heard about another one today.

Regarding the Bridgewater Bridge, there were two more consultancies in the paper only a few days ago, first for the geotechnical information and then for an actual design. The member is talking about there being a bridge and it is all about to happen, but it is not. You do not even have a design or the geotechnical information, and this was a bridge that was being promised -

**Mr Tucker** - It will be built by 2024.

**Dr BROAD** - The previous minister, Mr Rockliff, was talking about driving over it and it is not going to happen until 2024. I cannot remember the exact date, but I think the previous minister, Mr Rockliff, was saying, 'I will be driving over the bridge in 2022' - that is my recollection, although I might not have that exactly right. We see this continual offsetting, this continual delay, of these sorts of projects.

The member says that they have delivered, they are delivering, and all we see is spin, yet we are not allowed to hold the Government to account. When the Government sets the time line off into the never-never, we are supposed to accept that on behalf of the Tasmanian people who are stuck in traffic, for example. We are supposed to say the Government is delivering. Our job is to hold the Government to account. When the Government does not keep their promises, our job is to hold them to account.

The speech was just ridiculous. The Government talks about their infrastructure budget which is why we are going into \$1.1 billion in debt, yet what we continually see is this strategy for delaying projects and it is quite obvious that this is a deliberate strategy to prop up the budget bottom line. The whole idea that it is an infrastructure budget, and that is why there is at least \$1.1 billion of debt building up, infrastructure is the excuse but it is a simple fallacy, it is just spin. It is budget mismanagement and the only way you are coping is by not spending. That is what is propping up your budget bottom line, and we expect more of it.

At least you could say that Mr Tucker was quite brave in some of the issues he raised that were obviously written for him. He did speak the words 'underground bus mall'. I think I heard that, Madam Deputy Speaker. Those words emerged from Mr Tucker's lips. Right up until this point, until today, none of the Government members had actually mentioned the words 'underground bus mall', because that was one of these fantasy projects - again, pretty little pictures - that came up during the election campaign, and the previous minister, Mr Rockliff, the member for Braddon, started having this conversation on whether it would be underground or at grade. Now Mr Tucker is confirming that there might be an excavation here because it may be that the fantasy underground

bus mall may actually be going underground, but Mr Tucker did not mention some of the other fantasy projects.

I did not hear anything about the Tamar bridge that also popped up in the election campaign, this famous fantasy Tamar bridge that is going to solve Launceston's traffic problems and they have a spot where they can probably design it. They would need a fair bit of geotechnical information on how to get across those mudflats just like they are going to have to get geotechnical information to know how to go across the mudflat there at Bridgewater. He did not mention that one so maybe you might want to get the intern to include that next time so we can have a bit more fun next time you get up and rabbit on with this sort of stuff.

Then we heard during the election campaign all about Bass Highway upgrades. The Liberals matched Labor's promise, so Labor had a promise in the federal campaign to upgrade the Bass Highway between Wynyard and Marrawah and yet we heard in recent Senate Estimates hearings that the majority of the funding for the Bass Highway upgrades will not become available until after the next state and federal elections in 2022. Do you see a pattern developing here? With everything the can is kicked down the road. If this Government has any option about delaying about whether to actually do something or delay it, they simply kick the can down the road. How do they do that? They go to a consultancy and maybe develop an action plan but make sure they have a media event to launch the action plan.

We have seen that with another project that is stagnated under this Government, which is Macquarie Point. Yet again we had the minister out there and this time he might have been turning a sod or something. There has been so many relaunches of that project that it is an absolute beacon highlight of Liberal incompetence, and it goes on and on. When the Australian Infrastructure Budget Monitor came out it ranked Tasmania seventh. I do not think I heard the member talk about that.

We should really treat this sort of motion and this sort of discussion by Mr Tucker with some contempt because it is simply a vehicle, or a bridge maybe if I talk infrastructure, for Mr Tucker to drive over laden with insults and Dorothy Dixers and self-praise.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, just on timing, has the member used his allocated time?

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** - No, he has not.

**Dr BROAD** - It should be treated with some contempt because all it is is insults and Dorothy Dixers and old Adam Brooks speeches rebadged to try to launch some sort of barb into the Labor Opposition and it is just a waste of time.

[5.58 p.m.]

**Ms OGILVIE** (Clark) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I think I have three minutes, is that correct?

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Until six o'clock.

**Ms OGILVIE** - I will be brief. It is a cry from the heart from the residents of Clark, my electorate, and Hobart traffic congestion is a primary issue for everybody in my electorate. It has been an awful couple of years. People are incredibly frustrated by the traffic and it is driving

everyone crazy. Many of my constituents have contacted me to ensure that a long-term solution is identified and put into place to alleviate this frustrating problem.

A key area of concern is Sandy Bay Road. People are very frustrated with the fact that there is no single point of contact to start to address or even to complain about the issues down that way. The King Street-Regent Street and Sandy Bay-King Street intersections are of deep concern and need proper traffic control systems. It is insufficient that the Hobart City Council has failed to act upon this and I have written to the Lord Mayor to ask for some action in relation to that.

We would also like to see an integrated transport and traffic solution which addresses not just the roads but extended transport as well, including a light rail extension to Risdon, the Huon and New Norfolk - one of the ideas that has been put forward by one of my constituents - and I think it has some merit to it. If you are going to go to that expense then extend things right out as you are doing the infrastructure work. Buses are a constant concern and need to be linked to whatever ferry system occurs. We would like to see a pilot for the ferry system operate perhaps over peak tourist season.

Another idea that has been put forward by another set of my constituents, the school run mums who I have a lot of time for because I am one myself, is looking at whether we could adopt a Canadian-style small bus system for primary schoolchildren to alleviate some of the transport pressures that young families have with their local schools or even when they have to go across town to school.

**Time expired.**

**Motion agreed to.**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

### **Lake Malbena - Federal Court Decision**

[6.00 p.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Deputy Speaker, an ad has appeared on Gumtree today, or maybe it appeared yesterday, but it says, 'Islands, islands, islands - \$1'. It is an ad that is based in Hobart. I do not know if it has come out of the minister's office, but it says:

Islands for sale in Tasmania. Perfect for development. Located in picturesque wilderness protected for decades for their natural values, now up for grabs.

I have \$1 here. That is what it cost Daniel Hackett to get a lease over Halls Island. We are wondering, if we pay \$20, could we get a lease over the whole TWWHA and look after it for future generations?

I wanted to go into some of the detail of the Federal Court's decision in relation to the Lake Malbena proposal. It is very clear, despite the Parks minister's histrionics this morning, that the decision handed down by the Federal Court yesterday is a mess that is all of this Government's making. The federal decision was based on a Reserve Activity Assessment which was written by the proponent, lodged at level 3 in a secretive process. A level 3 RAA means there is no requirement for public consultation, which promised a world of mitigation measures.

Standing there arm in arm with the proponent, the sadly politicised Parks and Wildlife Service said at every stage the risk to World Heritage values was low to moderate and could be mitigated. Guided by this Reserve Activity Assessment, the federal Environment department decided that the Lake Malbena proposal was not a controlled action so it was not captured by the EPBC Act. Justice Mortimer made it clear in her judgment that the federal Department of Environment should not have counted on the RAA in making its determination that the Lake Malbena proposal was not a controlled action because the RAA has no statutory weight. The RAA has no weight in law.

There were many promises contained within the Reserve Activity Assessment at level 3 that was lodged with the Commonwealth which was not made public. It was leaked to the Tasmanian Greens. It would not have been seen by the people of Tasmania unless someone had leaked it to us but, as Justice Mortimer confirms, because it is an RAA with no statutory weight, any number of the promises for mitigation can be broken within it. The crime against nature here is that the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service split that proposal in two and lodged a level 3 Reserve Activity Assessment just for the activities around Halls Island. It did not lodge with the federal Environment department any information on what he had created as a stage 2 which would have significant impact on Aboriginal cultural heritage values. This was a politicised Parks and Wildlife Service doing a national environmental law workaround for a private developer after this Government, in a process that was not made public, handed over a lease of not only Reg Hall's hut but the entirety of Halls Island to Daniel Hackett and Wild Drake Pty Ltd.

The Parks and Wildlife Service is at the heart of corrupting this process. Of course they have done that for their masters, the same masters that directed them to rewrite the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan to enable the EOI process and the developments and specifically, the proposal for Lake Malbena. It is a fact and it is now clear that matters of national environmental significance were not assessed by the federal Environment department. The impact of Aboriginal cultural heritage was not assessed by the federal Environment department because that information was withheld by the proponent under guidance from the Parks and Wildlife Service in order not to have that proposal elevated to a higher level of assessment under the EPBC Act. There was no impact on the wilderness values of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area under that flawed proposal.

Mr Gutwein did his lolly this morning when we accused him of being part of a process that was a stitch-up that shut Tasmanians out of having a say over developments in their public protected lands. He accused me of not knowing what was in this judgment. By his answer I can only gather that he either half-read this judgment or he really got a briefing on it, because if he read this judgment he would know it is a damning indictment on the expressions of interest process. It is a damning indictment on the way the Parks and Wildlife Service has been politicised.

There are chapters in here about the Parks and Wildlife Service where Justice Mortimer says:

Separating an action into components may affect the length and complexity of any process under the EPBC Act. It may also lead the Minister (or delegate) failing to appreciate the true level of impact of an action; or failing to understand how mitigation measures proposed to be taken (or which might be imposed) will operate in a context where further, and subsequent, actions are planned or proposed.

Again, 168 - it was the Parks and Wildlife Service, not Wild Drake, which split the proposal for the purposes of the RAA into two parts. A copy of the RAA documentation in the court book

indicates the proposal was divided into two stages under that process, in particular at step 8, draft final determination, where it is stated:

This RAA proposal has been broken into two stages of activities. Stage 1 has been approved while stage 2 activities require additional assessment and approval.

It was the Parks and Wildlife Service which split the action into two stages during the RAA process.

There are other really truly damning statements in here by the Justice. For any member of this House also concerned about the privatisation of Tasmania's public protected areas, I highly recommend that you have a look at this. The decision not to assess the Lake Malbena as a controlled action under the EPBC Act has been condemned by the Federal Court. It does not matter what spin this Government puts on it, it is a damning judgment, regardless of the hysteria we saw from the Minister for Parks today. The judge found the federal government's decision was not sound because, in shorthand, it was politicised and a corrupted process. I still have \$1 on the table for any island the minister for Parks wants to sell the Greens.

**Time expired.**

### **2019 Tasmanian Fire Brigade Championships Association**

[6.08 p.m.]

**Mr SHELTON** (Lyons - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise this evening to talk about a function I was at on the weekend. I was honoured to open the 2019 Tasmanian Fire Brigade Championships Association, the state firefighters championships, last Saturday, which was held at Invermay Park in Launceston on Saturday and Sunday, 9 and 10 November 2019. This year the event celebrated its sixteenth birthday and attracted a total of 39 teams from around the state - 19 senior teams and 20 junior teams from right across the state. I congratulate the organisers and organising committee for once again putting together a fantastic event.

More than 300 firefighters and their families were in attendance over the two days, as well as many Tasmania Fire Service staff and volunteers who worked together to coordinate this important annual event. The championships are also a terrific way of recognising cadets and juniors who form an integral part of the competition's format, which also naturally leads to them becoming our firefighters of the future. It is fantastic to see so many young faces eager to participate in these events.

There is a very important social aspect to the championships that allows members from different brigades around the state to get together and know one another and reacquaint themselves, which I believe is particularly important leading into the bushfire summer season where we have this transition of brigades from one area to another, particularly the volunteers who play a very important role. When they turn up to a fire I am sure it is very pleasing to them to meet up with another brigade and know the members in that brigade.

Tasmania has a strong emergency service contingent that is well trained in preparedness, response and recovery. As a government, we are committed to keeping Tasmanians safe. We will



continue to support our career and volunteer emergency responders. I hope all competitors enjoyed the competition and I look forward the next State Fire Fighters' Championships.

### **Teddy Bears' Picnic**

[6.10 p.m.]

**Mrs RYLAH** (Braddon) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to recognise the celebration of very young children which was held recently in Braddon. On 23 October the Teddy Bear's Picnic was held at the East Devonport Recreation Ground. Approximately 150 children aged up to five brought their favourite teddy bear or cuddly toy and joined in the many fun and learning activities. They included everything from face painting to climbing, a sort of gymnastics, story times, ball games and much more.

This event is hosted annually by Playgroup Tasmania and is part of the National Children's Week which ran from 19 to 27 October and coincided with Universal Children's Day on Wednesday 23 October. The National Children's Week campaign is always themed around the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This year the theme was 'Children have the right to be healthy, safe and happy'.

Not only does the picnic bring children together to socialise and have fun but it encourages families to play their part in creating environments with children's rights. While the kids had fun in a very relaxed way, their parents were able to chat and find out about the services available and parenting in general.

At the East Devonport event, there were nine different stall holders including the NDIS, the Devonport Community House, Family Day Care, Rural Health Tasmania, No. 34 Aboriginal Health Service, Devonport Library and the East Devonport Primary School. Three picnics were held across the north, south and north west of the state. An astounding 2200 people attended the picnic at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Hobart.

Children's Week is a national campaign, implemented across all states and territories in Australia that recognises the towns, skills, achievements and the rights of all children. Children's Week is an important opportunity to focus on celebrating and nurturing all children and to ensuring that they are supported to reach their full potential.

The Teddy Bear's Picnic brings state and local governments, schools and early childhood and community services together to show what programs and services are available to families and children in a fun way.

I congratulate Jacinda Armstrong and her team at Playgroup Tasmania, our state representative on the Children's Week Council of Australia, for convening the working groups and for all the planning, organising and hosting this very important annual event in celebration of children and childhood. I also congratulate Felicity Harris, the North West Development Worker, NDIS, Devonport Community House, Family Day Care, Rural Health Tas, No. 34 Aboriginal Health, Devonport Library and East Devonport Primary School for supporting this fabulous annual event and all the parents and carers who made it such a great day.

## Arthur James (Jimmy) Tatnell - Tribute

[6.13 p.m.]

**Ms BUTLER** (Lyons) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Jimmy Tatnell who passed away surrounded by his loving family on 21 September 2019. Jimmy's passing brought sorrow to his family and friends, particularly as the ties of love and friendship within the family were so strong.

Jimmy was named Arthur James Tatnell and was born on 12 December 1944. Jimmy was born to Hazel and Percy Tatnell. He was one of four children, his siblings Percy, Brian and Julie. Jimmy was born at the Sorell Hospital and spent his childhood growing up on the farm at Copping and Kellevie.

From an early age, hard work was introduced and respected, with long hard hours on the dairy farm. Hard work was instilled from an early age which lasted throughout his entire life.

Jimmy was a country boy and grew up into a man with the love of the country running through his veins. This love of country life ran freely through his veins over his entire life. Upon leaving the family farm, Jimmy moved to Risdon Vale and started working with the Department of Main Roads. Jimmy played football for his home suburb of Risdon Vale. He was a dedicated player and kept fit and he enjoyed the good company of his local team.

It was while living at Risdon Vale that he noticed a beautiful young lady who was living right next door. Apparently, he plucked up the courage and approached this lady for a date. Her name was Rhonda and she accepted. It was not long until this couple knew that they were meant for each other. According to the family he found the love of his life. They were soulmates.

Rhonda and Jimmy married in 1975 at the Uniting Church in Lindisfarne. They were married for 45 years. In Rhonda's words, they were the best 45 years; they were the happiest and the best years of her entire life. To be blessed with such a gentle man who showed his love to both her and the children, Jimmy was her world.

Jimmy was a gentle, kind, loving man who would do anything for anyone. His caring, thoughtful nature, made this man very special. He was a man who would help anyone who ever needed it. He never had any enemies, and also never, apparently, spoke a bad word about anybody. He was a man who had simple needs in life and who lived his life for those around him.

Following work at the DMR, Jimmy went on to work on the Bridgewater Bridge. His job entailed the lifting of the span for boats to pass through. Jimmy worked there for 15 years until he had a nasty fall where he did severe damage to his wrist. While working on the Bridgewater Bridge, Jimmy and Rhonda lived in Bridgewater. Jimmy then retired and they moved to Tunnack and dug their heels back into the country lifestyle which was so important to them both.

Jimmy and Rhonda enjoyed their family around them, David, Rob and Anita. Family times were really good times. Throughout Jimmy's life he loved shooting, proudly bringing his game home and cooking up a good batch of 'roo' patties and 'roo' tail soup. These were always good, hearty meals. The shooting and fishing trips would always involve the whole family. He enjoyed his fishing and trout fishing around the Lakes, camping trips up the east coast with the family, and fishing in salt water, even catching crayfish.

In later years, Jimmy enjoyed clay-bird shooting at Triabunna. Being an avid shooter, he excelled in this sport. Having such a straight eye, he won 50 sashes and many wonderful prizes.

Jimmy was someone you could always turn to. He added value to everything he did; his work, the community and his family. Jimmy always had hunting dogs and he a very little, special Jack Russell.

Jimmy was a private person. He was a laidback man. He was quiet, he was a deep thinker, and he would never argue. This man had made a solid imprint on this Earth. Family was his world; he was a born giver, not a taker. He was a family man who gave his heart if you gave yours to him.

Jimmy lived his life as an example to each and every person he met, that love is an action, not just a feeling, and the practice of giving ourselves is the truest way to honour family. To the world he was one man, to his family he was the world.

### **Beyond Blue Dinner**

[6.18 p.m.]

**Dr BROAD** (Braddon) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to talk about an event that I have spoken about before in this place and that is the Beyond Blue dinner, which this year was held last month, on 19 October. It is a fantastic event that is put on every year by the Rotary Club of Ulverstone West. It is always magnificent. Once again, it was at Zero One in Ulverstone.

The keynote speaker for this year was former 110-metre hurdler Kyle Vander-Kuyp who attended the 1996 and 2000 Olympics, as well as the 1994, 1998, and 2006 Commonwealth Games.

Kyle talked about his life as a young man, up and coming in athletics. He was very humble and appreciative of all the support that he received throughout his career, especially as a young man of indigenous heritage. He was adopted at five weeks of age by Pat and Ben Vander-Kuyp. He overcame all sorts of issues, and sport was his outlet. That was the thing he excelled at right from an early age. It was support from sponsors and indigenous organisations and the sheer power and effort of his mother, Pat, that got him to a whole range of events to allow him to develop into the athlete that he became.

As a junior, he received heaps of support. Some of the support was from Rotary, so that is one of the reasons why he was more than keen to come to Tasmania to come to the Rotary Club of Ulverstone West dinner, to talk about his issues that developed with depression. I have been to a number of these events and I get something out of it every time. There is always a gem.

Kyle Vander-Kuyp talked about his athletics career and the ups and downs. It was leading into selection for the 2004 Olympic Games when there were a number of challenges in his life. He had reconnected with his birth family. They were living in Sydney. He reconnected with his birth mother and that was creating some challenges for him in understanding who he was and where he came from. I think there was a relationship breakdown. Leading into the 2004 Olympics his form was not quite there. He did not quite make the qualifying standard and was forced to travel to Europe to compete in athletics competitions in order to attempt to reach the qualifying standard. He was in Europe, I think in Sweden, when Athletics Australia told him he was not going to be selected for the 2004 Olympics. That was a moment where Kyle fell into a depression. He was quite open and honest about it. Most of the speakers at these Beyond Blue events are open and

honest in talking about these issues. That is one of the reasons why things are improving and people are talking about these issues in a more open way.

What I got out of Kyle's talk was his approach to his depression. He thought of it like any other injury because he was an athlete who prepared well. He always kept himself in top physical shape. The way he treated his depression was like any other injury. He sought all the help that could be provided. He gives credit to Athletics Australia for providing the best resources in order to treat his depression. He came out the other side and was better for it. That is not to say that there are not ongoing issues but he sees treating his depression and managing it as an ongoing thing. It is like a grease and oil change or training that you need to do to stay in top shape. He was an open, honest and humble speaker. Knowing his talent as an athlete, it was a magnificent speech. After he had given that speech, when people started leaving, he was more than happy to have his photo taken, to talk with people about the issues they had raised and give advice. He was willing to take advice from people too. He was such a great person and a fantastic speaker.

The Rotary Club of Ulverstone West and Lindsay Morgan, who has been arranging these for a number of years, need to be congratulated. This is ongoing and I hope to inform the House of matters from next year's event.

### **Bushfire Control - Use of Backburning**

[6.23 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I need to make comment on the responses to questions this morning from the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management and to his response during the Greens' private members time today. It is clear that Liberal Government inhabits a dangerous fantasy world. It is one which we need to strongly counter. It is a type of climate denialism and it is clear it comes from an inability to want to respond to the changes that are happening, both the climate changes and the social changes happening in response to it.

Evidence at the global level, the Australian level and the Tasmanian level within the last year make it apparent that the long held position of conservatives in Australia, including the Nationals and the Liberals, that climate change is not happening and that there have always been extreme events is untenable.

Members like Michael McCormack and Barnaby Joyce from the Nationals are ruining their careers and utterly disrespecting the people who voted for them by their hysterical comments and their attempt to find saboteurs for what is their own party's flagrant inability to comprehend the changes that are happening around us. It is people like Barnaby Joyce and Michael McCormack who are responsible for the most awful slurs on families who have experienced bushfires in New South Wales. People who have died have been subjected to the most disgusting comments by those two men. They are backed up by an over-arching approach in the Liberals, the Nationals and the federal Labor Party whose members have not been absent from making disgusting comments denying the climate reality and pointing the figure at the Greens; pointing the finger at people who talk about the reality of climate heating and how it is creating supercharged mega-fires and the damage that is happening across Australia right now.

We heard the minister this morning talking about a fantasy story, a spurious idea that somehow the bushfires we have experienced in mainland Australia, the ones we experienced here in Tasmania only a couple of weeks ago, are due to inadequate backburning. Fuel reduction is somehow to

blame for these ever-more-serious whole-region mega-fires. It is utter nonsense. We, along with every other scientist, every other member of the rural community across Australia, reject it for what it is. It is an attempt to deflect from years, from decades of inaction on climate change: the backburning excuse which the minister continues to peddle as an excuse for the fact that he and his colleagues before him have not acted. They have not put in place the implementation or the resourcing, in response to successive bush fire reviews.

The backburning excuse is the most destructive. I am reading some comments from Guy Rundle who wrote that the inquiry into the 1939 Victorian bushfires which killed 71 people established that excessive backburning was those fires' principal cause. If you start fires, go figure, fires can start. When conditions are hotter and drier earlier in the year, backburning becomes more necessary as well as more risky. Eventually the lines of necessary and risk cross and the risk outweighs the gain. As Guy Rundle says, 'Like the situation where chemotherapy would save a patient but it would also kill them, the technique defunct'.

So the relentless invoking of backburning and other techniques is just an example of the quackery and the pseudo-religious thinking that people in the Liberal Party have about this topic, as though there is something magical and fantastical about the Greens' power to create mega-fires in the landscape because once there was a change in fuel reduction policy for one year in one part of the landscape. What a joke and what a disgrace for the people of Hobart and across rural Tasmania who are at high risk of fires this season. This minister is a climate denier who is refusing to act now on the reality of climate change, let alone prepare us for the future. Today we are not prepared for this fire season because he is continuing to treat this as a business-as-usual situation. Megafires in the landscape are not business as usual. We are looking at the potential for collapse of parts of rural Australia because of the cycle of drought and megafire. As has happened in California, some communities are becoming uninhabitable because of that cycle. We will get to a point where we do not have time to change.

**Time expired.**

### **Bothwell - GP Services**

[6.31 p.m.]

**Ms WHITE** (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise because today during question time I asked the Minister for Health a question about Bothwell GP services. In the response given by the minister she mentioned that she might have to correct the record and I was hoping she might come in during the adjournment tonight and provide some further information, because I will quote her response to my question. She said:

With regard to what we are doing there, my understanding- and I will correct the record if I need to - is that I have already written to the mayor subsequent to that meeting to outline that the Government will do further work on that proposal.

The minister then went on to say that she did not have the correspondence with her and could not provide further detail but was doing everything they could to work with that community.

To provide context, the doctor's surgery in Bothwell will close at the end of this week. It services 600 patients and is geographically isolated, about 50 kilometres from the nearest GP, if you can get in. There is not very good public transport and the demographics of that community

are such that the median age is 51 and the prevalence of chronic and complex of health conditions is higher than in other parts of Tasmania.

The work the minister said she was doing to further that proposal should have been in relation to the request from council for \$150 000 a year over three years to support a GP to operate at Bothwell to service the Central Highlands community. I understand from talking with the council that the letter written by the minister to the council did not reference that proposal at all, despite the minister saying she had written to outline the Government will do further work on that proposal. Instead, the letter from the minister said that the Government would assist council where they could, they encouraged the council to keep working closely with Health Recruitment Plus and clinicians to develop service models that meet the needs of the community, and that the Government is confident that the council and HR Plus are working hard to find a solution.

That is not the same as progressing the proposal to fund a GP service in Bothwell. I had hoped the minister might come in and clarify her earlier statements on the adjournment, which would have been her earliest possible opportunity to do so, but unfortunately she has not. It is disappointing because this service has been under threat for some time. The Government has been aware. I know you, Mr Deputy Speaker, have been to Bothwell and spoken with the council. I know that the council has spoken with the Premier and with the minister's staff member and adviser on health. This is not something that has come out of the blue. It is something the Government has been aware of for a very long time and something the council has been working very hard to find a solution to for a very long time.

They have put forward a proposal to Government that asks the Government to find money to assist that community retain a doctor service, which is entirely reasonable given that where we have difficulty in attracting and retaining GPs in other parts of rural and regional Tasmania, the Government supports provision of those services. Sometimes it is for an interim period until a more permanent arrangement can be arrived at. In this case, it appears the Government is not going to do that and the community of Bothwell will be left without a GP come the end of this week. That will mean 600 patients will have to find somewhere else to go and that could place extra pressure on the emergency departments in our hospitals, which we know are already under extraordinary strain, and on our ambulance service which too is under extraordinary strain.

I think that an investment in primary health care would have been smart, particularly for a geographically isolated community that has very few alternatives. I am very disappointed that the minister did not have any details with her today when she stood in this place to provide an answer and she has not come back at her earliest opportunity to provide those details. The community of the Central Highlands deserve better. They deserve a government that supports regional Tasmanians to access health care where and when they need it. The Central Highlands Council also deserves more respect from this Government than they have been shown.

**The House adjourned at 6.35 p.m.**