



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Wednesday 15 November 2023

REVISED EDITION

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Wednesday 15 November 2023

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

QUESTIONS

North West Transmission Developments

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.01 a.m.]

Your Government's decision to abandon critical sections of the North West Transmission Developments will have serious economic consequences for Tasmania. Six wind farms - Robbins Island, Jims Plains, Whaleback Ridge, Hellyer, Guildford and St Patricks Plains, plus HIF's eFuels plan, are all at risk of not proceeding because of your disastrous decision to cancel a critical section of the North West Transmission Developments. If they do not happen, ABEL Energy's Bell Bay project cannot happen either.

All up, you have put at risk \$1 billion of investment, more than 8000 construction jobs and 1200 permanent jobs lost to Tasmania, all of which would have been in the north and north-west.

This is a huge mess of your making and your new Energy minister clearly is not up to the job of fixing it. Will you intervene and ensure that the entire transmission project gets built, and gets built now or will you do nothing and allow your Government's chaos to drag Tasmania down with it?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. To the last part of the question, speaking of chaos, the only chaos I see is the chaos over there, the backflips, which have been well documented. I could not help but see a couple of tweets from a well-known journalist and past presidents of the Labor Party about the inadequacy of Labor to stand for anything. People will not always agree with what we stand for but, hell, we stand for something and we are proud of it. I am proud of the fact we have a very capable minister for Energy and I have 100 per cent support for him.

The Labor Party's modus operandi is talking Tasmania down, where you extract the worst news possible and put your spin on it to undermine confidence in the Tasmanian economy and the Tasmanian people. We will have none of it. Tasmania has all the ingredients -

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, interjections from my left should cease.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Tasmania has all the ingredients to be a world leader in renewables. That is why projects such as ABEL Energy are looking to set up business here. A \$1.4 billion Bell Bay power fuels project is currently under development by ABEL Energy. There is great interest in investing in Tasmania. This exciting project has the support of a global renewables

leader and involves a green methanol power facility to be built at the site of the old Hydro Tasmania Bell Bay power station. There is a lot happening. We talk about renewable energy and what is required to support our renewable energy, and, indeed, power connection across the globe. What do you need for power connection? You need cables. This is fantastic. We have SunCable choosing Tasmania as the preferred site, a combined effort of our Government, the Coordinator-General -

Ms WHITE - Mr Speaker, point of order, Standing Order 45, relevance. Can you draw the Premier's attention to the fact that he has not mentioned wind farms once, or his electorate once, and the investment that would be lost if he does nothing?

Mr SPEAKER - Order. This is not an opportunity to add to the question. The Premier has the call. I remind him about relevance. If you could conclude your answer in just over 30 seconds, Premier.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Mr Speaker, there is no more exciting examples of investment in renewable energy and significant projects than in Braddon, including wind energy. As I said yesterday, the irony of the questioning from a party who cannot make their mind up on any policy -

Mr SPEAKER - Your time has expired, Premier.

Robbins Island Wind Farm

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.07 a.m.]

The Robbins Island wind farm has been held up by your planning delays for more than six years, at a time that our state faces energy constraints and the TCCI is calling the situation a crisis. The Australian Energy Market Operator's summer readiness report, released today, finds Australia now faces the highest risk of summer blackouts in a decade and highlights the need for more renewable energy to be brought online.

We also know that if Robbins Island fails, the consequences for a range of other major energy projects would be catastrophic: ABEL Energy's project at Bell Bay, gone; the HIF plant in the north-west, gone; SunCable stuck without the power they need, not that you talk about that; and Tasmania stuck in an energy crisis with no end in sight and no plan for you to do anything about it.

Given all of this, it is unbelievable that your Government is fighting a legal case to impose conditions on the Robbins Island project that will make it commercially unviable. Will you drop the case immediately? Instead of blocking the building of wind farms, will you finally get behind it?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, talk about an example of a political party that aspires to be in government that constantly undermines Tasmania and, in doing so, Tasmanians and their confidence. As I said, we will have none of that. Towards the end of my last answer, I was speaking about the

Labor party not having a position on anything. That includes Marinus. We know you go very quiet when I mention the word Marinus.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Bass.

Mr ROCKLIFF - It is true. You cannot ask any of these questions without your 100 per cent support of Marinus. It will open up that renewable energy investment, bring to Tasmania wind and solar investment, which is what it is all about.

Of course, we are a strong supporter of Robbins Island wind farm, which is a key project -

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Opposition.

Mr ROCKLIFF - for Tasmania's legislated target to double its renewable energy generation by 2040. Our state needs renewable energy generation - and it is the irony of the member's question as well. Of course we understand - and the nation, if not the globe understands - the need for more renewable energy and renewable energy investment and the challenges the member points to. Tasmania - 100 per cent renewable; the investment in Marinus Link; and our commitment to the long-term investment of two cables which includes pumped hydro, an extraordinarily exciting opportunity for all Tasmanians. Tasmania will not only be able to put downward pressure on power prices and continue to have some of the lowest power prices in the nation, but also bring forward that investment.

I will tell the Opposition something: your price caps will not bring prices down and they will drive away investment - and you know that. It is a good slogan for you but you absolutely know it.

Ms White - You are misleading Tasmanians. If it's no good, how come it's still on your website?

Mr ROCKLIFF - What we are about, Mr Speaker -

Recognition of Visitors

Mr SPEAKER - Premier, I will just stand for a moment and allow everybody to settle down.

While I am doing that, I welcome the Home Education families to the Gallery. Good morning, everyone.

Members - Hear, hear.

Mr SPEAKER - I remind the Chamber that I do not wish to throw anybody out but if the constant interjections continue then I will.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Mr Speaker. Honestly, those people opposite continue to talk Tasmania down. We are getting on with the job. We are builders, not blockers, and that is why when there is a need for connection, we will connect it. When there is a need to build it, we will build it, and that absolutely includes the fantastic opportunities in renewable energy investment, including Marinus.

Lake Malbena - Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment

Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS, Mr JAENSCH

[10.12 a.m.]

The latest Aboriginal Heritage Council Year in Review reports four Aboriginal heritage projects were strongly opposed by your Statutory Advisory Council but you overrode that advice and approved them anyway. Yesterday, the federal Environment department requested more information from Wild Drake in order to fully assess the proposed helicopter tourism development at Lake Malbena. They need a comprehensive Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment, what should have been done as part of the Parks and Wildlife assessment and considered by you under the Aboriginal Heritage Act. The federal department is, yet again, doing the work you failed to do.

Of the four projects you approved against expert statutory advice in 2021-22, was one of them for chopper access to luxury huts on Halls Island? Have you issued a permit for the Lake Malbena development and was it given against the advice of the Aboriginal Heritage Council?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank Dr Woodruff for her question. As she knows, Aboriginal heritage in Tasmania is protected under law wherever it occurs. Whatever development encounters, it is required to take appropriate steps, as laid out in our legislation.

Dr Woodruff - As you know, that law is a failure. You have said it yourself.

Mr SPEAKER - Leader of the Greens, order. You have asked the question, allow the minister to answer it. Please, do not continue to interject.

Mr JAENSCH - As the member knows, we are currently in the process of developing new Aboriginal cultural heritage protection legislation for Tasmania. It is a long and complex process, we have had significant consultation on it and we will be shortly presenting more material for people to consider over the summer.

Importantly, a new feature of the Aboriginal heritage legislation will be for Aboriginal people, our Aboriginal Heritage Council, to play an even greater role in determining how Aboriginal cultural heritage is managed.

Every development that occurs in Tasmania needs to go through all of the relevant state and Commonwealth approvals processes. The Lake Malbena proposal is in that process now. They are required to meet the approvals and assessment processes under whatever legislation, including the Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act, federal legislation, and assessment of Aboriginal culture heritage as part of that and we would expect

the proponent to undertake anything required of them in that process. To my knowledge, there have been no specific permits granted by me or the state Government in relation to the matter that you raised for Lake Malbena. If I can find any further advice to update that, I will present it.

Cost-of-Living Pressures - Government's Long-Term Plan

Mr YOUNG question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.15 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Rockliff Liberal Government's long-term plan is continuing to address the cost-of-living pressures being felt by across the country?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank Mr Young for his question and interest in this matter. There is no doubt that this year and last year have seen extraordinarily high inflation rates driven by national and global factors. Our Government recognises the real challenges that this has presented for many Tasmanians and their day-to-day living costs. One of the biggest impacts has been the interest rates applied by the RBA, which have significantly constrained family budgets. I have said this a number of times before but the average Tasmanian mortgage holder is now paying \$1400 more on interest repayments because of that increase in interest rates and as a result of the federal monetary policy settings.

Fuel prices have also increased again. The average price for unleaded petrol in the week ending October was 215.5 cents per litre, above the national average price of 211.2 cents. The cost of a doctor's appointment is over \$100 and the Medicare rebate, which is determined by the Commonwealth, simply has not kept pace. All of this adds to the burden of individuals and families and businesses as well.

Our Government will always act on the cost of living where we are able to, and we have. This year, across the Budget and forward Estimates, we are providing \$347 million in concessions to help Tasmanians with a wide range of day-to-day living expenses, including electricity, and add to that our investments of \$45 million into the National Energy Relief Fund, which provides \$500 over two years to estimated 140 000 households or approximately six out of 10.

That means over the next four years we will deliver nearly \$400 million in bill relief, which is an increase of more than 28 per cent compared to the 2022-23 budget. It means concession customers will receive a total of \$880 in power bill relief. That is 42 per cent of the median concession customer's bill. Eligible small businesses including community sector organisations will also receive a total rebate of \$650 this year. On top of this, we are delivering a renewable energy dividend, so when Hydro profits exceed \$90 million, Tasmanians directly share in that dividend.

Last year and this year, we have increased in indexation to community sector organisations to 3 per cent and 4 per cent respectively to help them better support those in need. An example of that is investing more in our highly-valued Neighbourhood Houses, and because concessions are linked to inflation, our water and sewerage concessions have increased by

7.2 per cent and the prices are capped at 3.5 per cent as part of our Government's agreement with TasWater.

Over the past two years, we have announced an additional \$2 million over two years in food relief and helped Loaves and Fishes and Foodbank with funding for new trucks, and I commend those organisations for the wonderful work they do. We have put in place the Veteran Wellbeing Voucher. We have made aurora+ free and expanded the Private Rental Incentive Program to deliver even more affordable rentals.

We are helping school students with their digital inclusion. We have expanded NILS to cover rental bonds and initial rents and lifted the NILS cap to expand access to household essentials. We have removed the co-payment for patient travel, expanded the school lunch pilot and increased accommodation and travel allowances for apprentices and trainees attending TasTAFE.

As I have said, our Government is acting and will continue to act on the cost of living for those who need help the most. We will always be in Tasmanians' corner and those who are doing it tough. That is why I am proud of our team and the investments we are making.

TasNetworks - Finances

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.20 a.m.]

You have been treating Tasmania's energy businesses - key economic assets for the state - as the ATM for years. Since 2015 you have pulled more than \$400 million out of TasNetworks as dividends. All the while their debt grows to \$2.2 billion. That debt now means they cannot finance critical infrastructure projects which has put more than \$10 billion-worth of investment and thousands of jobs at risk. Are you concerned that TasNetworks would have been unable to repay their borrowings if they proceeded with the entire North West Transmission Developments? If not, why was TasNetworks blocked from getting the finance it needed?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I explained a lot of this matter yesterday, around the rescoping of Marinus Link and the like. The member should well and truly recognise that. My wish as an alternative government is that they stand for something. They might not like what we stand for as a Government but at least we do stand for something, unlike the 'BecFlips' we constantly see over the other side, which must be wearing very thin on the Labor Party. The BecFlips day in, day out. I know it is wearing thin on the former president of the Labor Party -

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Mr Speaker, I seek your guidance with the use of appropriate titles. Can I ask you to consider whether it is appropriate for the Premier to keep using that word?

Government members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - I remind all members that they should be using appropriate titles when dealing with other members of the House. I will allow the Premier to continue.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Mr Speaker, I was not referring to the member personally, Ms White the Leader of Opposition. I was referring to the action and not the actual person. It is well known in Labor circles that the 'BecFlips' are really wearing thin particularly, as I said before, for the former president of the Labor Party.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Mr Speaker, I seek your guidance again.

Mr SPEAKER - I need to stop the clock for a second point of order. So, yes, on the point of order.

Ms WHITE - I seek your guidance, Mr Speaker. I do not regard it to be an action. I have not heard it described as an action previously. I believe he is referring to me personally -

Mr SPEAKER - First of all, it is not a point of order. The Premier was explaining himself. If somebody takes personal offence then I can ask the Premier to withdraw. There has not been a personal offence issue raised. If any member believes there is an alternative position to be put then you know the processes within the House to be able to argue that case. It is not here and it is not now. The Premier has the call. The time can start again.

Ms White - I bet you he does not answer it.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, what will happen if people constantly interject is that I will ask them to leave.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am well accustomed since my days at Sassafras Primary School about the use of verbs and action: building is a verb, walking and 'BecFlipping' are also verbs. It is important we highlight these matters because -

Ms White - Can the Premier answer the question.

Mr WINTER - Point of order, Mr Speaker, the Premier has not been relevant to the question for a number of minutes.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, order, I will not stop the clock. I will ask the Premier to continue. I am not taking the point of order because it was a conversation that should still continue, but if you could get back to Standing Order 45, relevance, Premier.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Marinus Link is an example of where the community needs to know where the Labor Party stands. Do they support the opportunity and investment, that partnership with the federal government which unlocks all that huge wind potential, wind and solar, which is terribly exciting? Now, I am not sure -

Ms DOW - Point of order, Mr Speaker, Standing Order number 45, relevance.

Mr SPEAKER - I will stop the clock this time -

Ms DOW - This is a really important question. This is about billions of dollars of investment in the Premier's electorate and he has gone nowhere near answering the question.

Mr SPEAKER - And the point of order?

Ms DOW - Relevance. Standing Order 45, which I said at the beginning of my point of order.

Mr SPEAKER - Now I am standing, you can sit. Thank you.

There have been constant interjections on the Premier. I reminded the Premier of Standing Order 45 and relevance. However, as we all know, in one minute there is always significant preamble and other issues raised. I need to afford the person answering that lenience to be able to go there. I have asked the Premier to get back to relevance.

I take it that this is the third point of order taken on the question. There will not be any more. The Premier will be allowed, in silence, in the last minute, to get back to the question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - If I go back to the original question, which I thought I was answering, and the preamble to the question, I got the sense that the member does not want us to invest in those essential services such as health, education and housing. We are working with our GBEs. The facts remain and are very simple. That is, when it comes to renewable energy development, what needs to be connected will be connected -

Ms Finlay - A Premier who does not understand or cannot speak about finance. Unbelievable. No wonder it is such a mess. If you cannot answer the question, sit down.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Bass, you can - sorry, Premier, stop the clock.

Member Suspended

Member for Bass - Ms Finlay

Mr SPEAKER - The member for Bass can leave the Chamber. It appears I wasted my time asking members of the Opposition to listen to the last minute in silence. You interjected at least twice on the Premier in 15 seconds, so you can now leave the Chamber until the end of the Matter of Public Importance. We had better put a time on that, so 11.30 a.m. would be a better time. Thank you.

Ms Finlay withdrew.

Mr ROCKLIFF - When it comes to our state's future energy requirements, we are sticking to our long-term plan, our Tasmania First Energy Guarantee, which we have spoken about many times in this place, which ensures the lowest power prices in the nation and the

supply that we need. We are getting on with it. The TasNetworks North West Transmission Developments are of strategic importance to this plan as a contingent project to Marinus Link, to which we are committed. The Labor Opposition needs to detail exactly where it stands.

Housing Connect - Flexible Funding

Mr O'BYRNE question to MINISTER for HOUSING and CONSTRUCTION, Mr STREET

[10.28 a.m.]

Your proposed new Housing Connect model includes flexible funding designed to assist those participants with the highest housing needs. There are things, such as emergency overnight accommodation in a hotel, one-off funds to stabilise tenancy, or access to essential health and community services. It is a critical and key component of intensive housing support that vulnerable Tasmanians rely on. However, the flexible funding amount under your Government's proposed Housing Connect reform is equal to just \$39 per participant per year. Do you and your Government really think that \$39 per year of flexible funding for the highest-needs housing applicants is in any way sufficient?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question. With regard to the Housing Connect process, I spoke about that yesterday in response to the member's question. I am very confident, having worked with Homes Tasmania over the last period of time about the reforms that we are putting in place for Housing Connect 2.0, that we are going to have a better Housing Connect process. Like I said yesterday, that is not to not acknowledge the queries, criticisms and suggestions that have been made throughout the tender and procurement process for this service, but I do want to thank the current Housing Connect providers who have all worked with the Government or Homes Tasmania in the development of Housing Connect 2.0.

In addition to what I said yesterday, Mr O'Byrne, what I can also add is that to address the concerns around resource allocation and caseloads, Homes Tasmania and the successful providers, when they are chosen through the new procurement process, will have the ability to reassess and make necessary adjustments if the initial allocations fall short. That is in recognition of some of the discussions and feedback. Again, I am backing Homes Tasmania and the procurement and tender process they are going through for Housing Connect 2.0. I believe them when they tell me that we will have a better Housing Connect system going forward. That is not to talk down the effort of the providers currently providing the Housing Connect process, which is nation-leading in terms of the support to people who come through that process.

As I said, I am more than happy to meet with any stakeholder or any participant who is using Housing Connect. Lived experience has been incredibly important in developing the new model, and people have provided their feedback through that process. I have an open door in terms of speaking to any stakeholders in the system or people with lived experience who have further concerns about the Housing Connect process we are going through at the minute. I look forward to talking to them in the future.

North West Transmission Developments - TasNetworks Funding

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for ENERGY, Mr DUIGAN

[10.31 a.m.]

A shocking new report from the Auditor-General was tabled yesterday showing that TasNetworks' debt has skyrocketed to \$2.2 billion. That is just below the company's \$2.5 billion borrowing limit and explains why they were unable to finance essential parts of the North West Transmission Developments. Can you outline the estimated cost of the new stage 1 of the North West Transmission Developments? Can you explain how TasNetworks will fund even the totally inadequate stage 1, given that it is set to cost more than \$1 billion and the company has already effectively maxed out its credit card? Is the entire transmission project at risk?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question and the opportunity to revisit the Tasmanian Government's exciting plan for delivering more renewable energy into our state. As the Tasmanian economy grows, we will need more energy. We need more on-island generation. We also need greater access to the National Electricity Market because that provides energy security but also opportunity for Tasmania, because this is a market that we enter and compete in on very favourable terms. There are benefits elsewhere but this is a huge opportunity for Tasmania.

We have been presented with a complex set of circumstances in how we best progress this. It requires careful consideration. It is a heavily regulated space. The regulator will be important in framing how we are able to move forward.

With regard to TasNetworks, I understand you are interested in this space but the rescoping of Marinus and the subsequent rescoping of the North West Transmission Developments has nothing to do with the TasNetworks debt or debt cap.

Ms White - Why not pay for the second element to facilitate all that private investment?

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Opposition.

Mr DUIGAN - As part of the tripartite agreement with the Victorian and Australian governments, access to concessional financing for Marinus Link, the North West Transmission Developments and the Battery of the Nation projects will be provided through the Australian Government's Rewiring the Nation initiative. I thank the Premier and the former treasurer for their tireless efforts.

TasNetworks, as a transmission network service provider, manages that connection process and is the main point of contact for proponents. We will continue to work through this -

Ms White - You are getting nowhere because you cancelled it.

Mr DUIGAN - We have cancelled it?

Ms White - You cancelled the second stage.

Mr DUIGAN - What an extraordinary statement. On this side of the Chamber, we support and have promoted the Marinus Link proposal to connect Tasmania. It requires we support that.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr DUIGAN - We do. We know where we stand. I understand the shifting sands upon which you find yourselves and the terrible place you are in. Mr Winter on 5 September was talking about how the North West Transmission Developments were going to negatively impact on power prices. Here he is today wondering about how we are going to pay for connecting it and what that is going to mean for investment. I will tell you what your policy would mean for investment: your policy will drive it away, goodbye.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, the minister has the call and should be the only one in the Chamber making a -

Mr DUIGAN - The North West Transmission Developments project is currently in the design and approval stage and subject to FID (Final Investment Decision) in December 2024. As such, the cost for the project is yet to be finalised. I understand TasNetworks has recently finalised a procurement process and I expect to have that advice in coming days.

Mr SPEAKER - Minister, your time has expired.

Agriculture - Government Support

Mr WOOD question to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER, Ms PALMER

[10.36 p.m.]

Tasmania's agricultural sector is known for punching above its weight. Can you update the House on how the Government's investment is supporting our primary producers to grow their businesses and their contribution to the state's economy and regional communities?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question. Agriculture is one of the key pillars of the Tasmanian economy and, with the ongoing support of this Government, it is well-positioned to maintain sustainable growth, job creation and a strong, vibrant future for our regional communities.

As Primary Industries minister I am particularly proud of our Tasmanian agri-food sector. Even in the most challenging times, our agricultural sector continues to do well. The Tasmanian agri-food scorecard shows Tasmanian agriculture had a farmgate value of

\$2.34 billion and a packed and processed food value of \$5.62 billion for the 2020-21 year. The farmgate value is almost double that from 2014. The value of seafood was worth \$1.18 billion in 2021, some 75 per cent more than in 2014.

The fundamentals of Tasmania's agriculture are strong, underpinned by significant government investment in irrigation infrastructure. We know delivery of this high-surety irrigation water continues to change the agricultural landscape and gives farmers the confidence to invest and diversify. The Tasmanian Government has invested millions of dollars to deliver more than 100 000 megalitres of irrigation water each year through irrigation schemes.

We also understand the importance of innovation and working with industry. Since 2017, \$4.15 million has supported the primary production sector through the Strategic Industry Partnership Program, with projects including the Tasmanian Agricultural Productivity Group (TAPG) Ag Innovation Expo and the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association biosecurity program. A further \$2 million is being committed through the 2023-24 state budget into the Agricultural Innovation Fund, which has already supported research into smoke taint in wine grapes and using native seaweed as a feed supplement to reduce livestock emissions.

We have strengthened our border protections through enhanced screening at our mail centres and additional measures at entry points. Our five-year biosecurity strategy, released last week, ensures our systems are well placed to protect our valuable Tasmanian brand against future threats from pests and diseases.

Together with industry and the Commonwealth, we are taking steps to further enhance traceability through electronic identification of sheep and goat herds.

More than \$4 million is being invested in the joint Farm Business Resilience Program to build the capability of our greatest asset, our people.

There is further support for producers through an extension of the on-farm water infrastructure rebate scheme, providing financial assistance to buy, install or repair damaged on-farm water infrastructure.

We have introduced legislation to support future growth and streamline regulation in our hemp industry and to support community management of irrigation schemes.

There is so much to celebrate in Tasmanian agriculture. I encourage all Tasmanians to take time this week to recognise our primary producers who continue to punch above their weight, investing in sustainable growth and fostering innovation and value-added production. On Friday we will mark National Agricultural Day, recognising the world-class food and fibre grown right here in Australia. With the catchcry 'Grow you good thing!', this national day is a chance to celebrate and learn about this incredible sector and to say thank you to our primary producers who are part of our lives every single day.

Hate Speech

Ms JOHNSTON question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.41 a.m.]

It has been reported that Hobart City councillor and newly minted member of the Liberal Party, Louise Elliot, has had her case for allegedly inciting hatred escalated by the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner to the tribunal. In comments to the media yesterday, Ms Elliot said that the matter she was being investigated for impinged on her right to free speech and she is prepared to take her fight all the way to the High Court in a blatant attack on our gold-class anti-discrimination laws. I hope that you can agree with me that Louise Elliot's public statements about trans people are deeply hurtful, disrespectful and full of hate, not to mention they are just plain wrong and have no place in Tasmania. If she takes her fight all the way to the High Court, will you ensure the State of Tasmania intervenes to defend and protect our gold-class anti-discrimination laws and send a clear message that Tasmania will not tolerate such hate speech?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, first, I want to say that I do support Tasmanian laws as they currently stand, absolutely 100 per cent. I am aware that a matter has been referred to the Tasmanian Civil and Administration Tribunal, TASCAT, by the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner regarding a complaint under the Anti-Discrimination Act 1998. I am unable to comment on individual matters or interfere in the independence of the tribunal. We have strong protections against hate speech in Tasmania under our antidiscrimination legal framework and our Government emphatically condemns any breach of our laws.

Cost-of-Living Pressures

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.43 a.m.]

It is not just TasNetworks your Government has completely mismanaged, it is every entity business that Tasmanians own. You have been using Hydro as a cash cow for your broken budget with no regard to the cost-of-living pressures this has placed on everyday Tasmanians. Joining us in the Chamber today is Todd Gittus. He is one of many Tasmanians who is finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. Todd's power prices have gone up so much that in order to keep the lights on he has cut back on groceries and other essential household items. He has had to skip any treats like chocolate and does not have enough money in reserve to pay to take his cat to the vet. People like Todd, everyday Tasmanians, own the Hydro. Tasmanians have invested in it for 100 years. How can you justify ripping \$100 million in profit from Tasmania's Hydro while people like Todd struggle with massive power price rises?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question and I acknowledge Todd in the Chamber today. My previous answer acknowledged people such as Todd who find themselves in similar circumstances as result of the cost-of-living pressures around Tasmania. I pointed to a number

of examples around energy, power prices, food. I also referred to interest rates. I know many Tasmanians have various complexities in terms of cost-of-living pressures. Not everyone would experience exactly the same, although all Tasmanians will understand the cost-of-living pressures around the increase in energy prices.

That is why we have been very clear on ensuring that vulnerable Tasmanians, first and foremost, are looked after by our Government with very generous concessions in comparison to other states and jurisdictions. That is why we have worked hard with the federal Labor government around a \$90 million investment to support people during these times. It is why last year we reached in and supported Tasmanians with their power bills with the Winter Bill Buster program.

I spoke also of people and the organisations that do so much good to support vulnerable Tasmanians. Part of our package delivered to support Tasmanians last year was supporting Neighbourhood Houses, as an example, with a greater contribution to supporting Tasmanians in need.

I am always interested in listening to Tasmanians and understanding the unique circumstances that people find themselves in. That is why we do what we can to support and tailor concessions. I have mentioned the investment we are making of over \$400 million in concessions over the course of the next four years.

The member mentioned the Hydro. Tasmanians proudly own the Hydro and have done so for generations. We owe it to our forebears to support our Hydro and further energy - industrialisation, if I can put it that way - and renewable energy as well. In recognition of Tasmanians' Hydro, that is why we have the RED or renewable energy dividend, which ensures that when Hydro makes money, dividends are returned to Tasmania's wealth to further support, in addition to the existing concessions we may well have across a range of areas, including partnership between the federal and state governments.

The other matters the member refers to is that the dividends are a very worthy investment into our essential services as well. The member is suggesting that we should not utilise the support of our GBEs, including Hydro, and not invest in essential services such as health and education. Perhaps the member needs to be very clear about Labor's policy.

Budget Spending

Mrs ALEXANDER question to TREASURER, Mr FERGUSON

[10.48 a.m.]

Your Budget this year spends \$3.7 billion more than the total spending when the Hodgman government was elected in 2014. Your spending spree includes funding a huge increase in bureaucracy, with more than two additional public servants added to the payroll every day for the past eight years. That includes a 55 per cent increase in the number of central government bureaucrats in the Premier's department. Tasmanians want to know how it is that while you are spending these billions of dollars, you cannot find at least \$105 million to fully fund our frontline firefighters and SES without a proposal for massive increases in the fire tax. Could you please explain how the Government landed in this situation?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I really appreciate the question from the member for Bass, Mrs Alexander, and her interest in public finances. I am very clear that as a government we are unembarrassed about our very deliberate strategy of investing in stronger public services. It is something we have really focused on since coming to office in 2014. I will never forget being a member of this House on the other side of the Chamber, when I watched the O'Byrnes take their knife to police officers around Tasmania, nurses and mental health workers and surgeries here in Tasmania.

It was a pretty devastating time to be a parliamentarian in Tasmania, because we saw public services slashed and, of course, who could ever forget the Labor-Greens government trying to forcibly close 20 schools, mostly in regional areas around Tasmania, many of which were in the north. They were dark days and we have had to work very hard to repair the budget, to restore stronger public finances to allow us to reverse all of those destructive Labor cuts.

I appreciate that implicit in the question is a recognition of the increase in public servants we recruited to deliver those stronger public services. You cannot provide that record number of surgical operations to get our elective waiting list down as much as we have without employing the surgeons, the nurses, the allied health professionals and the support workers in our hospitals.

So we will continue, Mrs Alexander, and my colleagues will continue to work prudently through our careful budget management, noting that I have been very deliberate as Treasurer in the two Budgets that I have presented to the parliament to not make disruptive changes to our economy, noting that the economic headwinds across Australia are very real and for a small state we need to navigate through those economic headwinds very carefully. That is why we have functioned in the way that we have.

I will refer the member to the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report which I presented to the House last month. We did see an improvement in the operating balance for 2022-23. I was really pleased about that and it was a significant reduction in the original Budget forecast deficit. We will continue as a Government to work very closely to ensure we prudently invest, including in those areas of the economy where we make strategic investments that can get a leverage and a multiplier out there, as we have been able to do with major investment attractions such as SunCable - a \$2 billion investment in the Tamar Valley, Mrs Alexander, in the electorate that we share, the best electorate in Australia, Bass.

Mrs Alexander and colleagues, you asked me about the TFES reforms. We need to see these reforms. It has been a longstanding practice in our state since the 1970s, in fact, I think 1979, when I was in kindergarten. Since I was in kindergarten, we have had the TFS funding model which is based on a levy system taken through local government council rates notices and motor vehicle and insurance levies. We are trying very hard to modernise and get those arrangements to fit with these times, not the 1970s, the 2020s. They are out of date. We need to reform them. It has been a difficult road, that is for sure.

I pay tribute to my colleague, the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, for his work here. Reform is hard and reforms are successful when those who wish to be in office would lend bipartisan support to sensible, sustainable, effective reforms that keep Tasmanians safe so we will continue.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - They arc up when their 'BecFlips' are called out, Mr Speaker. They called on us to reform that levy and they have made it very much their business to try to disrupt and destroy. We will not be distracted from it. It is a difficult reform. We will continue to work through it and make it as fair and effective as we can but ensuring that we have a levy that is in place that keeps all Tasmanians safe.

Cost-of-Living Pressures

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.53 a.m.]

Chris Myer, who is also joining us here today, is another Tasmanian who is struggling with intensifying cost-of-living pressures after 10 years of the Liberal Government. Chris is staying in an outbuilding on a friend's property which is not fit for purpose. He cannot afford rent, food, power and medical expenses when the cost of everything is going up. He is unable to work because of spinal injuries he picked up in his younger years working as a scaffolder. He relies on food relief. He said, and I quote:

I probably go without food for myself so I can feed my dog. It is not ideal but I care more about him than myself.

Do you accept, like your minister for community services, that people like Chris need more housing and cost-of-living help than they are getting now and, if so, coming in to Christmas, what additional support will you provide to ensure that people like Chris do not have to skip meals?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question. I acknowledge Chris who is in the Chamber with us today, and many individuals around Tasmania who are doing it tough as a result of the increase in the cost of living across a range of areas whether that be food, clothing, fuel, as I mentioned this morning, and electricity.

To the last part of your question, Ms White, can we do more? Yes, of course we can, and we are doing more as evidenced by the fact that there are forward investments when it comes to housing and I have often said that every Tasmanian deserves and has that fundamental right to be safe and have a roof over their heads. Every Tasmanian needs to be supported particularly when it comes to the basics in life such as food, clothing and shelter.

Since 2018 we have committed more than \$9 million towards the delivery of food relief across the state and I mentioned Foodbank and Loaves and Fishes today in my first question and commended those organisations for the wonderful work they do in partnership with the Tasmanian Government. The \$9 million I speak of has been delivered to more than 40 organisations both large and small to deliver produce food hampers and ready-made meals to Tasmanians in need. More than 7.5 million kilograms of food has been distributed by our

two target food relief providers across the state to more than 260 organisations. I recognise the many volunteers who support these organisations as well and I have often shown great interest in the work of Gran's Van in my local area, and Loui's Van and Missionbeat that we have supported as well.

I will always listen to and take great interest in the circumstances of individuals such as Chris and such as Todd as well because these are the ways that we learn as governments and truly have an understanding of individual needs which is why we respond accordingly and have continued to respond to the needs and the pressures of cost of living when it comes to energy prices and food support. We are investing in housing and these are pressures being experienced right across the globe but also of course in every other state and territory in Australia. That is why we need to ensure that the federal government also has the policy setting things right as well, working in partnership with the federal government when it comes to cost-of-living relief in terms of energy which we have done, but it is also very important that the federal government understands these pressures locally as well, which I am assuming they do through the engagement of the local members within the government.

I acknowledge the circumstances that many Tasmanians face and we will build on and continue to build on over the course of over the last two or three years in particular when there has been that severe inflationary effect. For the first six years of our Government inflation was very low but with global pressures and national circumstances as well, inflation has increased, although the CommSec report pointed to the fact that we have the lowest inflation in the nation and hopefully that will of course continue.

Mr SPEAKER - The Premier's time has expired.

Ambulance Tasmania - Mental Health Assessments

Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mr BARNETT

[10.58 a.m.]

Everyone in this place agrees Tasmania's paramedics do an incredible job, often under unthinkable circumstances. The coronial inquiry into the tragic death of paramedic Damian Crump highlighted the trauma and strain faced by these critical workers. For years, the Greens have called on your Government to introduce a program of regular psychological assessments for paramedics. In July, the coroner handed down her report and formally recommended this approach. It is a crucial step to give people much-needed support to make sure nobody falls through the cracks and to have a sustainable and healthy workforce.

Have you accepted the coroners recommendations? Will you commit to providing the extra resourcing needed for Ambulance Tasmania to provide formal mental health assessment and a support program for paramedics?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question and her special interest in this matter. I also want to say upfront how important our paramedics are - and Ambulance Tasmania - and that is why we are investing record funds into our health system at \$12 billion over the next four years - more than \$8 million a day. As to Ambulance Tasmania, as I shared yesterday,

there are some 220 extra paramedics and officers since we came to government and just short of 50 in rural and regional areas. In terms of their work, it is fantastic and much appreciated.

As to the question regarding the coroner's report, that is something I will take on board and consider very carefully. When I have further advice to report with respect to that I am more than happy to update the House in terms of the Government's response.

Dr Woodruff - It has been a long time, minister, and those paramedics are working under intolerable circumstances now.

Mr BARNETT - If I have more information to provide I am more than happy to give advice.

I would like to provide some more information I have to hand in terms of acknowledging those frontline responders. They go above and beyond, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, and they experience a range of very difficult situations. I have been there with them and support them incredibly. In 2017 the state Government allocated \$1.5 million each year for a new wellness program initiated by the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management, which Ambulance Tasmania is engaged with. The member asked about mental health and wellbeing and that is part of that response and as the minister himself has just noted, it is a great program. In 2019 Tasmania became the first jurisdiction in Australia to legislate a presumptive provision for workers suffering from PTSD, removing barriers to public sector workers and first-responder volunteers diagnosed with PTSD -

Dr Woodruff - But that's not the issue. None of that is specific support for paramedics to debrief them from the circumstances they experience.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Greens.

Mr BARNETT - accessing workplace support. I remember that it was nation-leading and I am very pleased and proud of our Government's initiative to progress that in 2019, which is now well underway. Being proactive with early identification and mental ill health warning signs - which is part of your question - adopting preventative measures and providing support to emergency services will help workers continue to do their job and provide assistance when required.

In conclusion, I indicate that if I have more detail in terms of the answer, I would be more than happy to update the House accordingly.

Educational Reform and Improving Educational Outcomes

Mr BEHRAKIS question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, CHILDREN and YOUTH, Mr JAENSCH

[11.03 a.m.]

Could you update the House on the Liberal Government's transformational investment in educational reform and how the Government continues to prioritise improving education outcomes in Tasmania?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank my colleague, Mr Behrakis, member for Clark, for his question. Regardless of background or circumstances, every young Tasmanian deserves a quality education. In 2014 Tasmania's education infrastructure was suffering due to chronic underinvestments. Our education outcomes were significantly worse than they are today, and 20 school communities had been forced to justify their existence to the former Labor-Greens government. The education and training sector had barely started to recover from the disastrous Tasmania Tomorrow debacle and unbelievably, Tasmania had a school funding agreement which saw funding to non-government schools increasing at a faster rate than government schools.

As an incoming government, Tasmanians knew where we stood on education. To us, education is the key to Tasmania's future social and economic prosperity and under this Premier as then Education minister, we set about fixing the mess that we inherited.

The Education Act 2016 replaced 20-year-old legislation to provide a contemporary framework for Tasmanian schools, including the right for all Tasmanian children to attend kindergarten at their local school and increasing the school leaving age to make it clear that school finishes after year 12, not year 10.

To back in the legislative changes to the school leaving age, the Government set about removing more barriers by extending all Tasmanian high schools to offer senior secondary education. As a result, there are now more than 11 000 young Tasmanians enrolled in years 11 and 12 at their local high school, which they could not do before.

A major part of the Government's commitment to education is the revamped National School Reform Agreement signed in 2018. Our bilateral agreement is seeing \$490 million in additional investment in Tasmania's government schools over 10 years to 2027, and funding growth to non-government schools at a lower rate.

The 2018 agreement has directly supported the next wave of education reforms led by this Government, including the nation-leading education adjustments funding model for students with disability, funding to support students impacted by trauma, safeguarding leads in every government school, and the 2022 teacher wage agreement with wide-ranging supports to give our teachers more time to teach. Amazingly, Labor has tried to say that all of these initiatives were funded from existing budget allocations, revealing how little they understand the National School Reform Agreement and how little interest they have in education.

We know that the physical environment in which learning occurs has a major impact on student access, engagement and participation in learning. In 2014 we stepped up to the significant task of bringing Tasmanian schools into the twenty-first century. Several major upgrades have been completed since then and we have a \$255 million pipeline of new investment in the current state Budget, including exciting builds at Loongana, Brighton and at the North West Support School.

We know that improving education outcomes requires long-term commitment and that is exactly what we have done and continue to do. In 2023 we rolled out major reforms to the teaching of literacy in Tasmanian schools; the Early Learning for Three-Year-Olds Initiative for kids in the year before kindergarten; and new, contemporary governance for our critical

education regulators, including schools-based boards. Through our Education Workforce Roundtable, including stakeholders the AEU, the TRB and UTAS, we are developing initiatives that will have immediate benefits for our teacher workforce in 2024.

The Rockliff Liberal Government's investment, achievements and commitment to education are there for all to see. Tasmanians know what we stand for on education, but they are waiting to hear more from federal Labor, who committed to increase funding for government schools at the last election and must now come good.

Mr SPEAKER - The minister's time has expired.

Mr JAENSCH - They certainly expect more from state Labor, who do not even mention education in their Right Priorities plan.

Mr SPEAKER - Your time has concluded, minister. Next question.

Housing Stress - Provision of Suitable Housing

Ms HADDAD question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.07 a.m.]

After 10 years of Liberal government, Tasmania has gone from an affordable place to live to one where tens of thousands of people are in housing stress. Yesterday, the annual Rental Affordability Index reaffirmed that Hobart renters are facing the harshest conditions in Australia, with rents blowing out by a massive 60 per cent since 2016. Joining us in the Chamber today is Lorraine McGovern, one of the faces of your failure on housing. Six months ago we raised the fact that Lorraine's government home is no longer suitable since she suffered a number of strokes which have affected her mobility. She has still seen no progress and is now effectively housebound, without support. Will you give Lorraine a commitment that you will find her somewhere new to live before the end of the year? Will you acknowledge that it should not be so difficult to move Lorraine into a suitable home and someone else into the home she is in now?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I acknowledge Lorraine in the Chamber today and the circumstances in which Lorraine finds herself. We are investing and working very hard on these matters to ensure that people such as Lorraine and others around Tasmania are afforded the fundamental right to be safe and have a roof over their heads. That is why we are investing in not only supports for people but also the supply side as well of social and affordable housing.

We are delivering what is the most comprehensive - and yes, ambitious - housing plan in Tasmania's history. This investment includes crisis and supported accommodation, new social housing, the release of residential land and affordable housing through new and innovative programs like the successful MyHome shared equity program which helps Tasmanians build or purchase a property.

In the 12 months to September this year, Homes Tasmania has successfully delivered 1308 more social and affordable homes as part of our ambitious target to deliver 10 000 more social and affordable homes by 2032. This also includes addressing the immediate housing needs of vulnerable Tasmanians by delivering more crisis and supported accommodation. I thank Homes Tasmania and many people in this space - partners, community housing growth providers. Homes Tasmania has seen the construction of over 1000 new social housing dwellings across 20 local government areas.

We will always be interested in the individual circumstances of Tasmanians. One of those is understanding the direct needs and working with individual Tasmanians to support not only their accommodation needs but also any other circumstances in which government services are needed to support them.

Skills Training - Update

Mr YOUNG question to MINISTER for SKILLS, TRAINING and WORKFORCE GROWTH, Mr ELLIS

[11.11 a.m.]

Can you outline how the Government's investments in skills and training have benefited Tasmanians and how the Government is supporting the next generation of Tassie workers?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, it has been a massive year for investment in terms of skills and training. I was very pleased to be with the member for Franklin out on site at the Master Builders Tasmania facility they are building in the beautiful electorate of Franklin. It is an incredible facility and it is there to support our Hi-Vis Army funding. They are pumped as it is coming out of the ground. It is looking beautiful and they are getting on with it. It will be open next year, training the next generation of Tassie builders who are going to be building massive projects like SunCable, the stadium and a whole range of others because we are builders, not blockers.

I was also out at Seafood & Maritime Training with our new member for Clark, Mr Behrakis. We were getting a run on the high-tech simulators, Tasmanian-built for Tasmanian learners. They are looking incredible and they are going to help us make sure that we have the best possible seafood and maritime industry in this state but also in the country. It is a project driven and funded by industry then supported by government as Tassie technology training Tassie workers. It is a fantastic set-up. It is boosting their capacity to deliver training in a big way.

At TasTAFE, it has been a bumper year for new facilities, new buildings because we are builders, not blockers. We have delivered the water and trade centre of excellence, nation-leading, a \$26 million project. It is the best facility of its kind in Australia and it is already training the next generation of Tassie plumbers, gas fitters, sparkies and others.

We have opened the brand-new Agricultural Centre of Excellence. I pay tribute to the Premier for his passion over many years. It is a world-class facility in the heart of Tasmania's

rural economy, the best electorate in the world, unfortunately, Deputy Premier, in the beautiful north-west.

We have delivered new butchery facilities here in Hobart, a new cybersecurity operations centre that is leading the way for tech vet qualifications and we have finished the brand-new student service learning hub at Clarence.

With all these facilities coming online, it is no wonder that teachers are flocking to join TasTAFE -

Ms WHITE - Mr Speaker, point of order, Standing Order 2. The minister just misled the House. Teachers are not flocking to TasTAFE. Look at what the Australian Education Union put out today.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, that is not a point of order. As you know, if you need to follow that up, there are other forms of the House, although the members do have an opportunity to state what they believe is correct.

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Mr Speaker, it is true they are flocking to TasTAFE. The numbers are clear. TasTAFE has recruited 40 FTE additional teachers over the last couple of years. That is a 10 per cent increase. There is more to come as we deliver our \$118 million plan for TasTAFE.

In terms of the broader skills and training landscape, the latest stats from the National Centre for Vocational Education and Research shows that just over 3800 apprentices and trainees completed their training across Tasmania in the year to March 2023. That is up almost 10 per cent on the previous 12 months and more than 30 per cent on five years ago. It shows that our strategy is working: our strategy of putting learners at the centre is getting results. And there is plenty more where that came from. We have a strong plan for Tasmanian skills and training.

Next year, we will be building more accommodation, more learning hubs and we will start on a brand-new health and care industries training facility at Alanvale. That is outstanding.

We will keep delivering the funding for thousands of Tasmanians to get their start and to take the next step in their career. We will keep working closely with industry with more industry skills compacts to be signed, just like the one I signed yesterday with the energy industry and the Energy minister.

This is what a plan looks like. This is what vision looks like. This is what a government that believes in backing learners looks like, as opposed to those opposite, who blew up TAFE and do not even know where they stand.

Time expired.

TABLED PAPER

Question on Notice - Answer

The following answer to a Question on Notice was tabled:

No. 94 of 2023 – POLICE – MANDATORY FAMILY VIOLENCE TRAINING

Ms O'Byrne to Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, Mr Ellis

See Appendix 1 on page 144.

WATER MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS (DELEGATION AND INDUSTRIAL WATER SUPPLY) BILL 2023 (No. 33)

Bill returned from Legislative Council with amendments.

[11.17 a.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Leader of the House) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the message be taken into consideration at a later hour.

Motion agreed to.

RACING REGULATION AND INTEGRITY BILL 2023 (No. 41)

RACING REGULATION AND INTEGRITY (CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS) BILL 2023 (No. 42)

First Reading

Bills presented by Mr Ellis and read the first time.

MOTION

Commission of Inquiry Scrutiny Committee - Establishment

[11.19 a.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Leader of the House) (by leave) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the following motion establishing a Commission of Inquiry Scrutiny Committee be agreed to:

That the House of Assembly appoint a Commission of Inquiry scrutiny committee, with leave to sit on 5 and 6 December 2023 to inquire into the Government's response to the Commission of Inquiry in accordance with the following schedule and rules.

The schedule is as follows:

Tuesday, 5 December 2023	09.30-11.00, 11.05-12.20 Premier (2hr 45mins) 12.25-12.45 Minister for Mental Health (20mins) 13.30-14.30, 14.35-15.35 Minister for Health (2hrs) 15.45-16.45, 16.50-17.50 Minister for Education, Children and Youth (<i>Out of Home Care</i>) (2hrs)
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Wednesday, 6 December 2023	10.00-11.30 Minister for Education, Children and Youth (<i>Education</i>) (1hr 30mins) 11.40-13.00, 14.00-14.40 Minister for Education, Children and Youth (<i>Youth Justice</i>) (2hrs) 14.45-16.15 Attorney-General (1hr 30mins) 16.20-17.20 Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management (1hr)
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MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE -

- (1) The Committee shall consist of five Members appointed by the House as follows -

Mr *Wood* (Chair);

Ms *Johnston* (Deputy Chair);

Two Members nominated by the Leader of the Opposition; and

One Member nominated by the Leader of the Greens.

- (2) During sittings, substitute Members may be allowed.
- (3) If a vacancy occurs in the membership of the Committee, the Speaker may nominate a Member in substitution, but in so doing has regard to the composition of the Committee appointed by the House.
- (4) The Committee may proceed with business despite a vacancy in its membership.
- (5) The Chair of the Committee has a deliberative and a casting vote.
- (6) The quorum of the Committee is a majority of Committee Members.
- (7) If at any time a quorum is not present, the Chair will suspend proceedings of the Committee until a quorum is present or adjourn the Committee.
- (8) Any time lost for lack of a quorum shall be added to the time allocated to that session.
- (9) Members of the House who have not been appointed as Members of the Committee, may participate in proceedings by asking questions, but not more than two in succession; and may not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purposes of a quorum.

SITTING TIMES

- (1) The Committee meets only in accordance with the timetable adopted by the House or as varied by the Chair.

- (2) A minimum 45 minute period shall be provided each day at the discretion of the Chair for the purpose of a luncheon break.
- (3) The Committee may sit only when the House is not sitting.

HEARINGS

All hearings of the Committee are open to the public except that any evidence stated by a witness to be of a confidential nature shall, if requested by at least one Member of the Committee, be heard in camera. Any such evidence shall not be published or in any way divulged by any Member of the Committee or any other person unless the Committee recommends it to the House and the House resolves that the information be made public.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

- (1) When the activities of a portfolio are to be examined at a Committee hearing it shall be represented by the responsible Minister.
- (2) Questions may only be put directly to the responsible Minister.
- (3) The Minister may be assisted where necessary by officers of the relevant Government Department in the provision of factual information.
- (4) Officers may answer questions at the request of the responsible Minister but shall not be required to comment on policy matters.
- (5) Time limits of one minute for a question and three minutes for an answer shall apply in the Committee.
- (6) Questions may be asked on a ratio of three Opposition, one Green, and one Independent or in such form as the Committee determines.
- (7) A Minister may advise the Committee that an answer to a question, or part of a question, will be given later to the Committee, and where possible that Committee sitting day.
- (8) Additional information may be provided to the Committee about an answer given.
- (9) Additional information -
 - (a) is to be written;
 - (b) given by a time decided by the Committee; and
 - (c) may be included in a volume of additional information laid on the Table of the House by the Committee.
- (10) If any Member persistently disrupts the business of the Committee, the Chair:
 - (a) names the Member;
 - (b) if the Member named is a Member of the Committee, suspends the sittings of the Committee until he or she has reported the offence to the Speaker; and
 - (c) if the Member named is not a Member of the Committee, orders that Member's withdrawal from the sittings of the Committee until he or she has reported the offence to the Speaker;
 - (d) as soon as practicable, the Chair advises the Speaker who then gives notice that the Member of the Committee be replaced.

- (11) If any objection is taken to a ruling or decision of the Chair:
 - (a) the objection must be taken at once and stated in writing;
 - (b) the Chair, as soon as practicable, advises the Speaker who makes a ruling on the matter; and
 - (c) the Committee may continue to meet but may not further examine the matter then under consideration.
- (12) Television coverage will be allowed, subject -
 - (a) to the foregoing provisions contained under "Hearings"; and
 - (b) to the same guidelines that apply to televising of the House of Assembly itself.

TRANSCRIPT

An unedited transcript of Committee proceedings is to be circulated, in a manner similar to that used for other Committee transcripts, as soon as practicable after the Committee's proceedings.

Evidence taken *in camera* shall be printed on coloured paper and shall only be circulated to the Committee Members and shall not be divulged in any way to any other person.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

- (1) A Report of the Committee is to be brought up by the Chair or the Deputy Chair to the House by 7 December 2023 and shall be the transcript of the public hearings and the minutes of the meetings of the Committee.
- (2) The Report may be taken into consideration at once or at a future time.
- (3) The following time limit applies to the debate to take note of the Report:

The Premier, Leader of the Opposition and Leader of the Greens - 40 minutes, the Attorney-General, Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management and Minister for Education, Children and Youth - 30 minutes, any other Member - 20 minutes.

I note that there are some amendments to take into account feedback from those around the Chamber to extend some times.

[11.19 a.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, the Labor Party supports the timetable that has been circulated for the Commission of Inquiry Scrutiny Committee. I thank the minister's office for the engagement we have had around the allocation of times and some adjustments that have now been reflected in the motion before the Chair. It is important that we allocate enough time, particularly in the Premier's portfolio, and that has been accommodated. So, we are satisfied with the way the timetable has been agreed to and we appreciate the work that has gone into that.

I understand there is some other work that is happening around how the days themselves will be managed and presumably some advice will be provided to us with respect to how victims/survivors will be accommodated in this building so they can watch the proceedings as

well as other supports that may be provided to make sure their experience is a good one and that they can access any assistance they may need throughout the day that is necessary.

With respect to the motion itself, it is satisfactory to us. Congratulations, Ms Johnston, on becoming the deputy chair of the committee. It is the first time to my knowledge that a truly independent member of the House, elected as an Independent, will be serving as a deputy chair of a committee. I think that is quite a notable inclusion in this particular motion.

I also note that the Government is choosing not to ask itself questions and we are grateful they have taken that step. To my knowledge, there will not be any DDs asked throughout the proceedings. The motion before the House speaks about the allocation of questions and does not mention government members, so we are grateful to the Government for their flexibility in regard to that as well, because we think this committee should operate as an appropriate scrutiny committee of the Government, not of the Government asking itself questions, particularly given that the time allocated is fairly brief for the matters we will need to get through following the implementation plan being published on 1 December.

This is really important work. This is work that has come about through a motion in this House and the work of particularly the Leader of the Greens, Dr Woodruff, in the motion that has been put forward by them to extend the sitting of the parliament for this additional week in December. Pleasingly, we have been able to work cooperatively across the Chamber to see not only the additional week of scrutiny, including the Thursday where we will be returning and the time allocations there are to our satisfaction as well, but also an opportunity for question time again on Thursday 7 December, which will be the last question time for the year.

[11.22 a.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, I thank the Premier for working this process through and for taking up the obvious need from victims/survivors, whistleblowers and other advocates in the community to have clear eyes and transparency on the Government's response to the commission of inquiry report. It is the largest and most significant commission of inquiry Tasmania has ever had. It certainly is going to be something we will all be working on over the next years to come. This important process of the response and the time frames for action, the resourcing that is going to be allocated: all these matters we will be looking at in that scrutiny week.

I would like to get some clarity from the Government about the time they will provide that report to members on Friday 1 December and recognising that it is welcome that the Government is moving the reporting time forward from what was going to be Monday until the Friday beforehand, it will be helpful for members, given that we have staff, that we do not get that at 5 o'clock on Friday afternoon. It would be really helpful if we got that by the middle of the day, so it would be great to get some clarity on that.

There has been a fair bit of backwards and forwards in negotiating this. It is an unusual process to have an additional week of parliament on this matter and I recognise there has been goodwill in the conversations between the Premier, the Leader of Opposition and myself.

I will read into *Hansard* the words of Alysha, Tiffany, David, Azra, Kari, Jack and Jeff who all support and underline the importance of transparency and accountability. They said:

What is currently causing unnecessary trauma is a lack of answers, transparency and accountability.

They put on the record that while the additional week of scrutiny may be traumatic for them, not having the answers they were promised the commission of inquiry would be empowered to have, is significantly more traumatic for them.

They also said:

As victims/survivors, witnesses and whistleblowers, we feel that it is of the utmost importance that that time is used to ensure the most information possible can be provided. We understand it will look like Estimates hearings typically do, with two rooms hearing from ministers and heads of agency simultaneously. Is that accurate? That seems to be the best way to ensure this precious time can be used to provide the long overdue and urgently needed answers that so many of us deserve.

I recognise that when that was written, there had been a conversation about having a joint House committee, but clearly the intention of the Greens was that we would have two days, as we would in a Budget Estimates process, of proper scrutiny time of ministers. There would be a meaningful number of questions and an ability to really get answers to questions we have about the Government's response. Where we have landed is a process that is broadly supported by victims/survivors, whistleblowers and advocates. I welcome that.

I am concerned, though, at the way the proceedings of the committee have been drafted. Paragraph 3 says:

The minister may be assisted, when necessary, by officers of the relevant government department in the provision of factual information.

Paragraph 4 says:

Officers may answer questions at the request of the responsible minister but shall not be required to comment on policy matters.

I certainly hope that ministers will not interpret that to shut down genuine questions that might need to be answered by heads of agency and cannot really be answered by ministers. Obviously if we are talking about matters of government policy, that is a matter for ministers. We will all approach this in a genuine multi-partisan way and I can speak for the Greens in saying that the questions we will ask will not be about politics. They will be about substance and getting real answers. I hope that the ministers around the table will not try to do any unnecessary gatekeeping and prevent difficult, probing questions being answered in the detail that we all need them to be answered.

Let us face it, we want to start off in the best way with transparency and openness. If there are challenges to the way the Government is proposing its response, victims/survivors are calling on us to have the conversation and get some movement and sense of negotiation and understanding coming from ministers and their heads of agency.

The last point I want to make is that we have removed Dorothy Dixers from this period. That was a conversation the Leader of the Opposition, the Premier and I had and it was obvious that Dorothy Dixers were never going to be included there. In other words, questions from Government backbenchers would not be part of the rotation in this commission of inquiry scrutiny week. I want to make the obvious point that the reason it was clear that they should not be part of this is because there was a recognition that Dorothy Dix questions in a scrutiny process are political. That is why they are there. They are unnecessary. They are about politics.

I make that point on behalf of the Greens because that has always been our view about government backbenchers having a question in the rotation in the Budget Estimates process, in the government business enterprises process, and now in this commission of inquiry scrutiny week. They should never be there. Scrutiny is about scrutiny. There is a very short amount of time in a parliamentary year to ask questions of ministers and heads of agencies about the matters that they manage so we commend the Premier for coming up with this arrangement. It is, obviously, sensible.

We will work in good faith to bring to light the questions that people might have asked of us in the community about the Government's response and to seek to understand exactly how the Government is going to be acting with the urgency that the commission of inquiry has called for and on the matters that they have recommended.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Order of Business - Thursday 7 December 2023

[11.30 a.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Leader of the House) (by leave) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent:

- (a) The order of business for Thursday, 7 December, next, being as follows:
 - (i) Acknowledgement of additional people
 - (ii) Prayers and reflection
 - (iii) Questions seeking information
 - (iv) Take note debate on the Commission of Inquiry Scrutiny Committee Report
 - (v) Adjournment of the House.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Energy

[11.31 a.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: energy.

I rise to speak about the state of Tasmania's energy sector today. Unfortunately, what we have heard today in Question Time is more deflection from the Premier, in particular, and his new energy minister about what their plans are now that we have reached such a critical stage for energy in this state.

For 100 years Tasmania has benefited from Tasmanians paying Tasmanian prices for Tasmanian power and from us having renewable, plentiful power right here in the state. This Government after 10 years has led us to the point where that is no longer true. We no longer pay Tasmanian prices, we pay mainland prices and this Government, despite promising that it would cap power and return the rebate scheme for small and medium-sized business, refused to that. The reason that power prices went up by 22.5 per cent for Tasmanian small businesses and households since June last year is because they broke their promise and they refused to act.

When coal and gas prices went up because of a war in Ukraine, they did nothing at all about it. Instead of holding on to their policy that used to be to de-link from the National Electricity Market, today they extoll the virtues of it. Instead of capping power prices like they promised they would, now they attack Labor for trying to protect Tasmanian households and businesses from massive increases in power prices. It is not right that Tasmanians pay more because of coal and gas prices going up when we do not burn coal for our energy generation here in terms of our grid. Of course, at Boyer and in concrete making we do, but that should not be impacting the price for Tasmanian households and consumers, yet it is.

We need to have a situation in this state, and we have always until this, had a situation where we had a comparative advantage where we had the ability to reap the benefits. The benefits for Tasmania should be greater now than ever before. When the great Eric Reece built Tasmania's hydro dams, I do not think he was talking about climate change or worried about climate change, but we are very thankful that he did. Those investments should be an even greater competitive advantage than ever before because we have the firming capacity here, we have the baseload energy here that is renewable, it is clean and it does not contribute to climate change.

The settings should be right for Tasmania to take advantage and yet this Government is squandering the advantage. Every day they are squandering the advantage. There are billions of dollars of capital wanting to come to Tasmania because we have the best wind resource anywhere in the world, and they want to come to Tasmania and yet they have been held up. The Robbins Island development is, I think, the most important economic development in Tasmania for the last 20 years. The decision that TASCAT will make could be the most important decision that has been made for 20 years. Without Robbins Island going ahead, I do not know what they are going to do. Everything hinges on this project. It must be approved and yet in that TASCAT tribunal at the moment the representatives of the Tasmanian Government are in there arguing for the conditions that make the project unviable.

That is what is happening at the moment. They are arguing that the project cannot go ahead unless it is prohibited from operating for five months of the year. That is what representatives of the Tasmanian Government are doing right now in that case. They are not arguing that the project should go ahead. In fact, they are arguing against Tasmania's economic interest that it should not go ahead. That is effectively what they are doing. You have the Bob Brown Foundation arguing that it should be rejected altogether and you have the Tasmanian Government arguing that they should keep the conditions in place that make it unviable.

So the most important economic project in 20 years is on the table and available. If it goes ahead this would provide power for Able Energy, would provide for SunCable, would provide for HIF and yet this Government does not seem to understand what a critical point in time this is. They do not know what to do about this, I am sure. I do not think they understand how important it is. I do not think Tasmanians quite understand how delicate this situation is. When we heard Twiggy Forrest come out and say 'I cannot get power at any price for my development at Bell Bay' that was the first warning sign because on the one hand you had a Government that was saying to proponents like FFI, Origin and Woodside, come to Tasmania, we have plentiful renewable energy. It is in the glossy brochure.

While they were saying that, there actually was not any power for them at all. We heard it from the proponent and since then those three organisations have left the state. It is extraordinary and it presents sovereign risk and it shows to business looking to invest their capital that Tasmania might not be the right place to deal with this Government, because of this Government. So we have the natural resources, the wind, the water and the historic investments led by the great Eric Reece available for business to come here to Tasmania and invest but we have a Government that is incompetent. We have an energy minister who cannot answer questions and we have a Premier who wants to deflect back in time every time we ask him a question.

This is important. If the premier wants to take on the economic development portfolio he actually needs to take it on. The Robbins Island development must go ahead for Tasmania's economy. The reason our economy is shrinking is because there is not enough power for it to grow. If there had been enough power, if they had got the wind farms that have been proposed on board and online years ago then perhaps FFI could have invested here. They could have made FID in early 2022 like they wanted to. Perhaps Origin Energy could have been started by now, like they wanted to. Perhaps Woodside could have been building jobs at Bell Bay. But they have got it all wrong. Since 2016 when they almost blacked out the state, they have got energy policy drastically wrong. It is shameful the way they have got this wrong and no one should be surprised that because of their shameful approach to energy that the economy is shrinking.

The minister for energy should have got up today and apologised for misleading the House yesterday when he said that Tasmania's economy is growing. It is not, it is shrinking and all the evidence is there. Saul Eslake says there is a technical recession in place. The Government needs to be honest about where they are and how important Robbins Island is to our economy going forward.

[11.38 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Deputy Premier) - Mr Speaker, it is wonderful to be able to speak about our energy plan and the really positive progress that is being made by our Government in partnership with our state-owned energy businesses and the private sector to

continue to deliver more renewable energy generation for our growing state. I have to say, as I did yesterday, that the reason we have so much interest in new energy generations is because our economy has grown. Our economy is significantly larger today than when we came to office, far outweighing natural growth in value of money in that same time frame. Our economy is going very strongly and no one can deny it.

In fact, we have been leading CommSec's state of the states for 12 of the last 14 quarters and even recently when Tasmania moved from first place, CommSec made it very clear there is little to separate the top states and that was very clear and Tasmania continues to be a strong and vibrant economy. Yesterday, I was pleased to tell the House about the NAB business survey which had Tasmanian business conditions strongest of any state in this country. We want to continue the momentum, noting, as I said in question time this morning, that there are economic headwinds and we have to chart them carefully. Inflation, interest rates and the cost-of-living pressures on rents are very real for Australians. Tasmania is not immune from that.

I cannot understand what Labor stand for in relation to energy. Their statements are hollow, they promise things they cannot deliver. Who could forget that the Labor Party, when last in government, said what they are now saying in opposition. They said, in government, that they would cap the retail price of electricity. Lin Thorp said, 'We will cap electricity price increases on retail power bills'. Guess what they did when they were re-elected, with the Greens, in 2010? They said it could not be done. Guess what they are saying now, in opposition?: 'We will cap retail electricity bills'. It is very hollow, from this very hollow Opposition. Their statements do not stand the test of scrutiny.

Further to that, it depends on what day it is as to whether Labor support North West Transmission Developments, Marinus Link, the staged approach to Marinus, where they wanted to give Chris Bowen all the credit for the new deal we negotiated but yesterday in the parliament they were shooting it down. As I hope the shadow minister may know, major electricity developments in our state want Marinus: they are enthusiastic for it. It is no good coming in here talking about the baseload power generation capability of Hydro and its firming capability, and rubbishing Hydro, as Mr Winter did -

Mr Winter - When was this?

Mr FERGUSON - for its trading performance in the early part of the last financial year. You did.

Mr Winter - Oh, right. At least I know what you are talking about.

Mr FERGUSON - Then this morning, his leader was attacking Hydro for its financial performance, which has led to dividends to the public purse to pay for public services. Rubbishing Hydro. Mr Winter wants to have a look at himself in the mirror. Why did Hydro do so well? They did well because they are good at trading, at selling power at high prices and buying power at low prices because of the firming capacity and the storage; not because of the power prices paid by consumers, which is regulated by the Economic Regulator, away from government, away from the Opposition, thankfully, very much at two arms' distance from politicians, as has been the case for many years.

You cannot stack Labor's statements on energy side by side and have any understanding of what they stand for. What the former Labor Party president, Ben McGregor, had to say overnight about this party is true. They stand for nothing. In fact, when they claim to stand for something and say, 'this is our position', as Ms Haddad did yesterday, deciding to back us on mandatory sentencing for paedophiles, they then say they do not even believe in that position, shooting down their own position. It is incoherent and you wonder why Tasmanians are confused.

As for people who do not want to pay increases in electricity bills, who could disagree with that? The cost-of-living increases being felt by Australians, by Tasmanians, are real and we are acting. People on concessions in Tasmania receive the highest level of concession toward their power bill of any of the states. Mr Winter might be surprised. The Economic Regulator published a comparison of all the states and territories: Tasmanians are paying Tasmanian prices for their Tasmanian power; they are paying the cheapest. The Economic Regulator has been direct in his assessment on these matters and I commend the report to the member.

The combination of the lowest regulated power tariffs per kilowatt hour in the country with the highest concessions means that the annual electricity concession will be approximately \$630. Combined with the \$250 Energy Bill Relief Rebate, concession customers will receive a total of \$880 in bill relief - 42 per cent of the median concession customer's bill in a year. Like the Opposition, we are proud of our state-owned Hydro. We are pleased with our energy plan, which is about further downward pressure on the cost of power into the future. Unlike the Opposition, our statements are coherent and consistent.

Time expired.

[11.46 a.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass) - Mr Deputy Speaker, Tasmanians know that Tasmanians' investment in Hydro was meant to create clean, cheap energy for Tasmanians but Tasmanians right across the state, whether they be in business or in homes, are struggling under this Government's out-of-control power prices.

Tasmanian Labor have repeatedly brought to this place a plan to cap power prices. It is the right thing to do for Tasmanians - Tasmanians we have had in the Chamber today, Tasmanians we have in our offices every week, Tasmanians struggling under the pressure of this Government's mismanagement. Not just their mismanagement of energy policy in Tasmania but mismanagement of everything, which is contributing to the rising pressures of cost of living and cost of doing business in Tasmania.

Tasmanian Labor have a plan. Our plan to support our community is around capping power prices and making sure that the benefits that Hydro gain through their trading are passed on to Tasmanians. Tasmanians invested in the Hydro and expected, with that investment, that Tasmanians would be looked after, in homes, in families, but also in business, so that we could invest, attract and continue to support businesses manufacturing and creating jobs for Tasmanians in Tasmania.

What we have right now is a government that, after almost 10 years in this place, 10 years to create this future pathway to a secure energy future, have done almost nothing to create what has been needed to support Tasmanians. We have a minister just recently sacked who was not

able to bring on board any projects to contribute to the false advertising of this Government to bring in big companies, to say, 'we have power, we have water' - false advertising by this Government, who attempt to attract people to Tasmania then cannot deliver. There is nothing worse than a government that falsely advertises to attract people because it is embarrassing and damages the brand and the great reputation of Tasmania. It is embarrassing that when they get here, they then cannot manage the negotiations to ensure they can stay here. We have people come down and look to invest, first, fast, in Australia, because it is promised they could do that in Tasmania, and they walk away because they cannot get power at any price and they cannot get water.

Tasmanians are being burdened by the inabilities of this Government. Tasmanians are hurting because of the failures of this Government. In my portfolio area of Primary Industries, there are farmers who have had delays in the provision of their irrigation scheme in the Tamar Valley because there is an attempt to provide water to Bell Bay. That has frustrated them and the process has been distracted where they have had delayed access to their water. The farmers and landowners under the north-west transmission lines have been frustrated by the inability of this Government to negotiate openly and fairly about how that would be. Continued uncertainty because of the changes of this Government.

This Government are blockers. They are blocking capacity for the future of Tasmania with their actions now. They are blocking the capacity of Tasmania because of their inability and the questions we ask, whether it is intentional misrepresentation or complete incompetence, over the 10 years they have been in government to provide for and create opportunities in Tasmania through what they call an energy plan. This energy plan sees us in an energy-constrained environment, defined by the TCCI as an energy crisis, where the pressures of power bills for Tasmanian families and businesses is causing devastation and uncertainty to household budgets, individuals who are having to make difficult decisions in their daily living and surviving around how they pay their rent, and whether they prioritise medications or groceries, things for their children or services they need, whether they be medical or other.

The inability and the failure of this Government to provide a clear energy plan that ensures we have a secure energy future is causing hurt to Tasmanians and Tasmanian businesses, so this Government cannot continue to stand up and say they have a plan and are creating opportunity. We know right now with the blocking of Robbins Island and the failure of being able to bring on board at least six wind farm projects we are aware of, whether it be Robbins Island, Jims Plain, Whaleback Ridge, Hellyer, Hillford, St Patricks Plains plus the HIF eFuels plant, this Government says that we should be proud of our renewable efforts but they have failed to bring on and are blocking the opportunity to bring on renewable energy projects at a time we need it most, not only just across Australia but absolutely in Tasmania.

This morning the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) summer readiness report said that Australia now faces the highest risk of summer blackouts in a decade and highlighted the need for more renewable energy to be brought online. This Government has needed to be able to protect Tasmanians from these challenges and has had plenty of time. The former minister has been sacked and the new minister cannot get across the portfolio in time to be honest and upfront about the challenges and the decisions he is making and Tasmanians are paying the price. Tasmanians are hurting because of this Government's inability to attract and be honest about what is possible in Tasmania.

We have international and national companies lining up and there have been announcements made as recently as just the last couple of weeks, for example with the SunCable project. They announced the opportunities here but we know they cannot provide the power to actually make it happen. Where we have this incredible locally backed and locally envisioned project with ABEL Energy again going to be slaughtered by the lack of power available to that project in the electorate of Bass, it is an embarrassment that this Government is mishandling this so much that we have proponents investing masses of amounts for future projects that this Government knows they are misrepresenting and knows that they cannot deliver on the energy requirements.

Tasmanians deserve a government that is upfront and honest and deliver on their needs. Tasmanian houses and businesses and industry expect and deserve a government that can provide the energy for their future for Tasmanian jobs and families.

[11.53 a.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to bring us back to why we are talking about energy. We are talking about energy because we are talking about renewable energy, or at least that is what the Greens are talking about. The Labor and Liberal parties are interested in talking about energy as jobs and corporate support, money for big corporates and their donor interests. That is the kind of prism through which the Labor Party and the Liberal Party look at energy in Australia. They look at the fossil fuel corporations. We had Senator Penny Wong only last week attacking the Liberal Party for saying no to Santos and Woodside. She was standing in parliament and attacking the Liberal Party for not opening up and doing everything that those major fossil fuel corporations want, so let us not pretend that the Labor Party along with the Liberal Party nationally and in Tasmania are not joined at the hip with the interests of large corporations, whether they be fossil fuel corporations or large-scale international renewable corporations.

Where the Greens are coming from is that we are in a climate crisis and we are in a biodiversity crisis. Both of those things mean that we need to look first and foremost at bringing down emissions in Tasmania that we already emit from sectors that are growing every single day. I want to speak for a moment about the work of Rachel Hay from the Tasmanian Australia Institute. She wrote a piece this week saying Tasmania's draft transport sector emissions reduction and resilience plan reveals a frightening lack of commitment to reducing emissions and preventing the worst effects of climate change. She could not be clearer. She wrote:

To achieve and maintain the target of net zero by 2030 in the Climate Change Act, lutruwita/Tasmania needs to reduce its continued emissions. The transport sector, at 21 per cent of gross emissions provides opportunities for immediate abatement.

The Tasmanian Government legislated to develop plans to decarbonise the sector by November 2030, and at Climate Tasmania they expected to see that the plan would see the Tasmanian Government follow other states and territories and commit to policies that reduce transport sector emissions.

When they read the plan, which is open for consultation until the end of next week, they were shocked to see that it was only a plan in name and makes no further commitments that will reduce emissions in the transport sector, merely identifying current actions and future

opportunities. I want to correct the record. Ms Hay works with Climate Tasmania, not the Australia Institute.

They make the incredibly important point that that is what we are trying to do here. We are trying to reduce emissions and we are trying to protect environmental values that are utterly threatened by the heating of the planet and by habitat destruction. When we look at what both the Labor and Liberal parties are doing in Tasmania, we can see that that is why we are in the spot we are in, where we have the Liberal Party doing deals behind closed doors for billions of dollars of taxpayer money on the Marinus Link that we do not know about. We do not know how much it is going to cost us as taxpayers now, let alone how much it is going to cost us in our power bill increases into the future.

Then we have the Labor Party paying the Liberals to go harder, stronger, to chop down more of the north-west threatened forest communities, to go into to what should be protected agricultural areas and to basically have an open-slather, open industrialisation of the north and the north-west. We have no doubt that what the Labor Party are really about here is trying to talk big on investment and trying to talk big like they know what would be good for Tasmania in the future.

We are speaking for children and young people today who want a future on a habitable planet and that means bringing down emissions that we can deal with, and we need a government that is planning for the renewable energy transition, and this Government has not planned for renewable energy. We have a situation with the Robbins Island wind farm, a wind farm in the worst place on the planet, where the critically endangered far-eastern curlew, the curlew sandpiper, the great knot and the orange-bellied parrot are all being threatened by this wind farm. I have been and seen those birds in their thousands and thousands, flocks of them coming from the Arctic and Siberia. They come across the southern hemisphere to make Robbins Island and Boullanger Bay their summer home, and what would happen is that the place they rest, breed and nest in would be turned into an industrial site.

There are places for wind farms in Tasmania. There are renewable energy opportunities, just like the 300 megawatts that is planned to be produced on already cleared land at Connorville. We have the Cattle Hill and Granville wind farms that are up and going and they work, but there has been no planning under the Liberals at all, and what I hear instead is that they have asked Parks to do an assessment as part of the renewable energy zone approvals process. It is important to have the planning, but they have asked Parks to do an assessment of all their reserve areas and grade them from 1-5. It is deeply concerning that all the reserves are in the category, rather than looking at opportunities to reduce emissions that we know we have from transport and other areas, as well as providing real opportunities for planning in places that are suitable, and for having smaller scale, diversified, renewable energy next to the areas where they need to be used.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - The member's time has expired.

[12.00 p.m.]

Mr BEHRAKIS (Clark) - Mr Deputy Speaker, we just heard from the Labor Party, Ms Finlay, say that we need a government that is open and up-front and honest, which would have merit if it did not come from the same people who put out false power bills to try to instil fear in the community.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Mr Behrakis, the time has expired for this item.

Matter noted.

MOTION

Fire Tax - Negatived

[12.01 p.m.]

Mrs ALEXANDER (Bass) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House -

- (1) Notes the Government's decision to abandon the fire tax proposed by the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, Hon. Felix Ellis MP and welcomes this decision.
- (2) Further notes that -
 - (a) the Minister's failed proposal for massive fire tax increases in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis follows the failure of his proposed operational fire management changes, which were rejected out of hand by three former chief fire officers, professional firefighters, and the volunteer fire brigades;
 - (b) after criticising the former Labor Government for overspending, the Government is now spending billions of dollars a year more than Labor ever did;
 - (c) the Government has lost control of both its budget and the size of the public service with thousands of new jobs added to the public payroll under the Liberals; and
 - (d) while the fire service and SES have been starved of funds, the numbers in the Premier's department have increased by 55%.
- (3) Calls on the Government to urgently revise its priorities to fully fund frontline emergency services before continued expansion of its bloated bureaucracy.

I rise today to speak on Motion 215 and indicate that a vote will also be required at the end.

This motion acknowledges a rare sign of common sense by the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services in abandoning the massive fire tax increases that he was proposing for Tasmanian farmers, businesses and many individuals. It was far too late in coming. This sort of ambit tax grab should have been dismissed out of hand when it first emerged as a thought bubble on a Treasury to-do list.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my observation over the short time I have had in politics has been that, unfortunately, common sense has been somehow in short supply at times when it comes to some critical Government actions. The outrageous fire tax is a good example of how badly the Government is lacking skills in areas of change management and project implementation. An essential reform of our fire services has been talked about for a number of years, but has been handled so badly that the Government has managed to alienate a good number of different sectors in our community. It is a perfect example of how to win friends and influence people, and I say this with tongue in cheek, obviously it is in reverse, the concept of winning friends and influencing people in this instance.

I am digressing here, but I cannot help but reflect that the Liberal Government will celebrate 10 years in office in March next year and it will, no doubt, be accompanied by a resounding burst of congratulations, no doubt written and produced by the highly-paid spin doctors. Sadly, for far too many people, the reality today is the cost-of-living crisis that is being made worse by a Government that appears intent on taxing Tasmanians to financial debt in order to cover the out-of-control spending habits.

For years, Tasmanians were lectured by the Liberals about the need for budget discipline and spending restraint in order to deal with what they claimed was a financial mess inherited from Labor, including \$1.1 billion in forecast accumulated deficits and net debt heading towards \$400 million.

Ten years on from the last Labor budget, let us look at the current record. The Government's spending in this year's Budget stands at \$8.7 billion which is in effect an increase of 74 per cent over the \$5 billion which was outlaid in the last Labor budget. I will say that again: 74 per cent increase from that last Labor budget. That is vastly more than the rate of inflation. It is not as though the Government is only spending the money it has in its Treasury coffers. Using the Government's own yardstick, the current Budget papers set out the sea of red ink with forecast accumulated deficits totalling almost \$4.1 billion and net debt is on track to reach \$5.6 billion by 2026-27.

The Government regularly reminds us about how bad things were under the last Labor government. I am not saying that things were quite rosy under the previous Labor government. I remember when my husband and I moved to Tasmania in 2010, there was not the same vibrancy and a flurry of activity by small business and self-employed people as we see today. However, what I am saying is that over the last nine years, soon to be 10 years, of Liberal government, the state debt has increased but essential services have not improved, education is still lagging behind, power costs and cost of living are significantly higher and, generally, the fiscal conservatism and conservative policies the Liberal Government has talked about in the past have not been implemented.

Former British prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, used a great line quite often against her Labour opponents, saying that 'The trouble with socialists is that they eventually run out of other people's money'. However, I am not sure that this quote, in our current times, is applicable to socialists only. If we go by our current Government's performance, we can see a significant amount of spend, spend, spend. When it comes to decision-making and costs, unfortunately, the Government have a full-blown spending addiction. That was highlighted by the revelation in the *Mercury* newspaper on the enormous blowout in the bureaucracy under the Liberals.

For the past eight years, the Government has been adding almost 1000 public servants to the public payroll every year. The total increase since 2015 is 7746, taking the total number of public sector employees to 35 275. That is an increase of 28 per cent, two-and-a-half times the increase in Tasmanian population over the same period. The Government claims it is all about frontline services, which we heard earlier this morning, but those claims can be quickly dismissed because the biggest increase of all, of 55 per cent, is in the Premier's own department. That is an increase in the central bureaucracy that is five times faster than our population is growing. For many years the Liberal Party has been constantly telling us that it is the party of private enterprise. What these numbers tell us is that it has become the party of the public sector and the bill is always being home-delivered to the taxpayer.

There is a multi-billion-dollar spending splurge and, inevitably, new funding sources are being sought. Unfortunately, it appears that one of these funding sources is taxpayers, who happen to be in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis. We have had the bin tax; the parks tax at Cradle Mountain, which added to the park entry fees, was, in effect, a double taxation; and the disastrous proposal of the fire tax.

Mentioning the taxes, I cannot but mention the biggest tax grab of all, which is the power tax. The tax attack on our power bills is extraordinary. The Government has had a hand in your pocket or your purse literally every time you turn on the light or kettle. Over the past two years we have seen regulated power prices rise by 11.8 per cent and 9.51 per cent respectively, far in excess of the rate of inflation. The Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS) has warned repeatedly about the impact of those power bill increases in a cost-of-living crisis. In June this year TasCOSS said:

The latest increase will be the final straw for many household budgets already at breaking point, representing a rise of \$210 on the average annual bill for families already struggling with rising interest rates, record rent increases and higher than CPI increases in food and fuel prices.

Food Growers Tasmania criticised the hike in power bill, saying there was no plausible justification and the only reasons prices were increasing so significantly was that the Government was using electricity pricing to tax power users. That has been confirmed in the most emphatic way: Hydro Tasmania have reported a profit of \$186 million and a government dividend, which is, in effect, the tax transfer of \$105 million. That increase is 31 per cent over the \$74 million Hydro dividend paid last year, or roughly five times the rate of inflation. But do not expect any disclosure of these outrageous tax grabs by the Government. Instead, what we have received is more spin, claiming that they were doing Tasmanians a big favour by handing back some petty change. Meanwhile, hundreds of dollars are coming out of the wallets of Tasmanian families and businesses.

The Government's big announcement was that it would return \$30 on average in energy bill relief. That was based on the redistribution of \$7.5 million of the Hydro dividend. What the Premier, Treasurer, and minister did not say was that, on the same basis, the \$97.5 million Hydro dividend retained by the government represented a tax fall about \$390 on the average power bill.

I am sorry to say, as I was once part of this Government, but unfortunately it has lost its way. It is only a few years ago that the former premier was stating the bleeding obvious: you cannot tax your way into prosperity. At the same time, it was promising no new taxes. Where

are we now? That is the question. It is high time the Government started honouring its promises and listened to the community. Spend some time listening to the people and go back to formulating policies that actually deliver long-term financial risk management and fiscal responsibility. That would be my strong advice. Policies that tackle the issues with cost of living and what actually matters to people most. I also urge the Government to cost your policies better and value every single taxpayer dollar like it was your last dollar in the bank. Just stop the waste.

The fire tax is basically what brings me today to talk about the motion, how this fire tax and reform of the fire service has been approached. The Government decided to overturn the minister's disastrous proposal for a new fire tax and this is a welcome decision. What it shows is that we have a minister who has steadfastly refused to listen, even after months of fierce objections. It is interesting that, in referencing some of the media and information that has been placed on various websites, there is a lot of discussion around how the model was arrived at, following extensive consultation, yet the key stakeholders are claiming that that consultation did not properly happen and to the level that they would like to have engagement and contribution to how the model ended up being.

The problem we have here is that, basically, there are two significant issues. One is a financial issue, which is how we are going to end up with a fire tax. That is something that will hit hard: businesses, people out there, pretty much every single person who lives and breathes and has a property will have to pay an increased level of fire tax. That is one issue. The other issue is how the restructuring of the fire services is occurring and who they are going to be reporting to and their capacity to self determine and control their own budget and make their own decision. That is another issue which has upset many in the fire services.

This is a government which is spending \$3.7 billion every year more than the total budget, when it was telling Tasmanians strong action was needed to get the budget under control. The problem is not a lack of revenue. It is a total lack of discipline and a complete absence of sensible priorities in the allocation of government funding. Emergency services should be at the top of the list when it comes to government priorities. Our community would be in peril without our police, fire, ambulance, and SES services.

It is a simple thing, but Tasmanians actually do not pay for police. Also, Tasmanians are not required to pay for treatment in public hospitals and we do not pay for ambulance services. In fact, I have to stop here and say, in a burst of common sense, the Premier recently ruled out any suggestion that we should pay a charge for calling an ambulance. That is a welcome clarification.

The question is, Mr Deputy Speaker, why is the fire service any different? I repeat, if we do not pay for police, an ambulance service, or treatment in public hospitals, why is the fire service treated any differently? When buildings are burning or a bushfire is coming over the hill, Tasmanians need protection and it is not an optional extra. The fire service and SES should be fully funded from the billions of dollars washing around in the state Budget, and the Government should stop trying to tax Tasmanians.

The operational expenditures of the SES such as wages should not be covered through taxing the public. This will take a fundamental change of approach by the Government and this minister. What we have is a minister who allows his ego to get in the way of backing out of a disastrous proposal and poor decision, even at the expense of his constituents and those he

has been appointed to represent through his ministerial position. His attempts at fire service reform are indeed an indictment of the minister and the Government. It seems that it has been one failed proposal after another.

In July, the Independent member for Lyons practically laid out the steps the minister should take when it came to fire service reform. One of the key steps identified by the Independent member for Lyons, Mr Tucker, and it was a blatantly obvious step, was to talk to those with experience and expertise in the field. It was not as though there was a shortage of people with experience and capability who were very willing to provide advice.

There are 430 career firefighters and emergency service personnel, 4000 members of the volunteer fire brigades across the state, and a number of more than qualified former fire chiefs, who were all more than willing to lend a hand. Everyone in the TFS and SES agreed on the need for reform. It is an issue that has been on the books for years and it has been examined to death. Yet even with all the support for reform behind him, the minister still managed to turn that support into complete condemnation.

We had three highly experienced chief fire officers publicly condemning the minister's reform proposals, as well as a number of highly experienced firefighters and volunteers and yet the minister and the Government were more than willing to overlook them.

Let us listen to what they had to say. The United Fire Fighters Union Australia said:

Royal commissions over the past few decades all point in the same direction. There is an additional loss of life and property when decisions on firegrounds, or doing a flood, are not made by firefighters or SES. It is also when decisions made in the weeks, months and years leading up to the event aren't made by people with operational knowledge.

We all agree that reform was needed, but the proposed reforms have meant decision-making powers have shifted to the departmental secretary. At the moment, the Chief Fire Officer doesn't even have the power to take basic actions he needs to take in order to keep his firefighters safe. His concerns were that this reform locks in the current model and makes it even more extreme and erodes other powers away.

Then there was a comment from a career firefighter, who said:

I do not believe the proposed reforms, as they are, are service-worthy. I don't believe we will be able to deliver the services that we do now under this new reform.

Mike Brown, a highly regarded former Tasmanian fire chief officer, said:

Fire, the Botanical Gardens, Parks, SES, first responders and a few others had to come under a departmental secretary for limited range of purposes, and it worked quite well, but as time went on, for some reason, it changed to being under Police. The pressure has come on from Police for more control over the Fire Service.

The police have undoubtedly a very difficult job. You've got youth crime going through the roof and motor vehicle accidents. Surely they must focus on law and order and not on the broader spectrum of emergency management.

I think there has got to be some real reconsideration done to the arrangements that have been put forward at the moment. We are going to be approaching a fire season that is not too far away, and most probably the entire senior management, or senior operational management arrangements in the TFS, are going to be put in acting arrangements. I think that's a pretty dire situation we've got ourselves into.

Perhaps the minister would have wasted less of everyone's time and gotten his proposed reforms right the first time, if he had started by talking to those with experience and expertise in the field. Instead, the minister put his blinkers on and headed down a one-track path leading him straight back to where he started, which is engaging and having some consultation.

The minister's proposed fire taxes are absolutely no different, but to tax people more in order to fund what should be a government-funded service during a cost-of-living crisis is a disgrace and shows just how out of touch the minister is.

It gets even worse when so many of the people that this minister wants to tax are the very same people who are in effect volunteering in the fire brigades across our state. These are the people who donate their time, expertise and equipment, quite often being farmers, and they do all that in a volunteer capacity to keep their community safe year after year. Every time we have a situation volunteers come and donate their time and the use of their equipment. They deserve our support, not to be hit with a whacking rate tax increase.

It is time that the Government acknowledged it has totally lost direction and control and started to align its priorities with the fundamental needs and aspirations of the Tasmanian community. That needs to start with a genuine help for people battling the cost-of-living crisis, not with a never-ending list of tax demands accompanied by an ambition to create the biggest spending government in Tasmanian history.

I listened to the recent announcement about the working group that will be organised to provide advice to the minister about going back to the drawing board and getting things more involved from the community, but at the same time I was a little confused because the community consultation is still concluding on 1 December, so in effect we have two actions that contradict each other. One is that in 14 days the community consultation will be closed but at the same time we have an announcement that says, 'We will take our time to get this thing right and we will do it in consultation with the community'. If you want to take your time to get things right and consult with the community but at the same time you have a consultation process that closes on 1 December, you have two opposing actions, so the question I am asking is how can you have two opposing actions happening at the same time?

The other concern I have is how transparent is the process in selecting the members of the working group? Let us not forget that this is a very complex situation that has been sitting there for a number of years. Everyone is saying we need reform. Everyone wants to see this thing done, but at the same time we know that our communities are very diverse and we know a significant number of stakeholders come from rural, regional and different other parts, small business, you name it. In setting up this working group, how fast can they work, considering

we are getting to the end of the calendar year, but also how are the people are selected and who is going to be part of this working group?

I would not like to see a process whereby the minister taps various people on the shoulder to participate in the working group and some of them may be people who represent interest groups that have an interest to support what the Government has been trying to do with this fire tax, rather than have a cross-section of our community properly represented so people have an opportunity to genuinely put their concerns forward.

What I am saying is that it is important to be transparent in the way in which this working group is selected so eventually we do not end up at the same point and it has just been a waste of time, a waste of resources, a waste of everything, because the end result is predetermined even before we started this process that we are calling a new consultation process. If we are consulting, we have to do it on a genuine basis and make sure we have a good representation of our community, our key stakeholders, but also a process that, as the minister indicated, takes its time. I am trying to understand how the process can take its time if the community consultation closed on 1 December.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I request that a vote be conducted at the end of the debate.

[12.25 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank Mrs Alexander, member for Bass, for moving this motion. I will flag the Government's intention to vote against it, but I am happy to discuss this important matter more broadly. I appreciate the opportunity when it comes to the critical fire and emergency services reform that our Government is bringing in and the next steps to flag for parliament because this will be a significant responsibility of all of us in this parliament.

There is massive legislative change that is needed in fire and emergency services so that we can secure the services of our first responders for a more challenging future and having that pathway clear will be a good thing. I will also flag that our Government is very proud of our investment in the public service when it comes to more nurses, doctors, teachers, firefighters, police and a whole range of other people who ensure our society is well cared for, well educated and kept safe.

I might begin with fire and emergency services specifically, just as the motion begins, and say that multiple independent reviews as well as a committee and inquiry of this House have found that Tasmania needs to act to secure fire and emergency services for a more challenging future. This has been a long journey and, in many ways, started in earnest after the disaster of the Dunalley bushfires in 2013 and the review from that.

Our House held an inquiry into the State Fire Commission. I commend the work of those involved at that time. Following that, an independent report was commissioned. First it was the Harris Review and then to do with matters with Mr Harris and some personal matters it was then transferred to Mr Mike Blake who delivered a very significant report into fire and emergency services that had submissions from across our society whether it was local government, business, our first responders and others, acknowledging the need for change, for significant reform, and that an act that was put in place in 1979 that is no longer fit for purpose needs significant change.

After Mr Blake provided his important review, Mr Mike Stevens was commissioned to consult on that review and went back out to the community and sought views from across our society, from first responders, local government, the business community and civil society because this is one of the most critical reforms that we have seen in many years, particularly when it comes to fire and emergency services. They made a range of expert recommendations and those recommendations form the heart of what we are looking to achieve in these reforms. Treasury has also provided a consultation options paper which was provided to the community and particularly to the business sector, local government and others with an opportunity to review that.

It is worth noting that the legislation we are consulting on right now has that range of important stakeholders because it is about three key things. It is about uniting fire and SES for the first time. We created the Tasmanian Fire and Emergency Service which will improve our first responders' capability to save lives in Tasmania. The second is around governance and ensuring there is a strong and clear chain of command. I note commentary earlier in the year before the draft bill was released for consultation, and people wanting us to commit to what we said we would commit to in January last year which was stronger and clear chain of command that created a new Tasmanian Fire and Emergency Services commissioner, so that we have a first responder who leads our important first-responder agency and that is exactly what the legislation delivers. If you look at the new legislation, the commissioner of TFES is empowered throughout that document and given significant new powers.

Mrs Alexander mentioned the current state of affairs where the chief fire officer has to report to the State Fire Commission as well as the secretary of the department as well as the State Fire Management Council. We are significantly streamlining it, bringing it much more in line with other states, with best practice, with putting our first responders - our uniformed personnel - in charge so that they can lead the response but also lead the preparation. We know that time spent in preparation is absolutely critical and because we have had that long journey of reform I think everyone agrees on the need for reform.

We have many diverging interests across our community - many business sectors that would like to pay the same or less as they are currently, many local councils that would like to pay the same or less as they do currently - but we all have a shared interest and that is ensuring that fire and emergency services have the resources they need to save lives in Tasmania for a more challenging future. A more challenging future looks like more extreme climatic events and more frequent and more severe natural disasters. I do not know anyone in Tasmania who thinks we are going to see fewer of those disasters that put lives and property and community at risk.

This is why we need to be investing and the principle that we are hearing consistently is the community's acknowledgement that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. When it comes to delivering fire services so that with a rapid way of attack we can prevent fires from getting out of control, that means that we need more resources upfront but what it does is save in the long run.

Regarding the funding model, everyone agrees that the current model is broken. It is from 1979 and it no longer works. It no longer reflects the communities that we live in and it no longer reflects the needs of the future. We currently have three fire levies in Tasmania. That is important to note when we are talking about whether this is a new arrangement that we

are proposing or whether it is fixing the existing arrangements. We have three levies: we have a fire insurance levy, we have a fire property levy and a fire motor vehicle levy.

What we propose is to completely remove the fire insurance levy because that is one of the most unfair levies that you can possibly get. It prevents communities from being able to rebuild during a national disaster, which was a key finding of the Royal Commission in Victoria into the 2009 Black Saturday fires that killed 173 people. We propose to abolish that levy for those reasons. The recommendation we have clearly had from our expert reviewers is also that we need to reform the arrangements that we have with the property levy in this state and this is where the big opportunity for securing the future of fire emergency services lies.

That levy is a sound one, it is based on good principles of sharing the burden for a service that we all use widely but lightly, but it is deeply distorted across council boundaries. We have more than 29 different rates across our 29 different councils which does not make sense as far as a way to fund the fire service because our first responders do not stop at the council boundaries. Indeed, they will go far afield. They will cross the state, they will go to places like Dolphin Sands even though they are nowhere near that community, because they believe in protecting the lives of Tasmanians because we are all Tasmanians and so making a much fairer statewide approach makes sense.

There are also huge inequities. Mrs Alexander, in your community in Launceston, people in the suburbs currently pay a higher rate than people here in the city of Hobart. Why that is I do not know. There is no good explanation for that. Why is it that people in Burnie pay the highest property rates for fire in the state? There is no good explanation unfortunately, and so that needs reform.

The third levy that is existing is the motor vehicle levy and we think that is a broadly sound principle. Our first responders are road crash rescue responders and so ensuring that they are available to help is important.

As far as the funding model is concerned, it is important to acknowledge that the SES is not included in the current funding arrangements under the three fire service levies and that is driving deep problems in the way the SES is funded. Currently it is funded by local councils but we need to be moving to a statewide model because our population moves around so much more and when we have major natural disasters we need help from more parts of our state so that we can respond and save lives. Whether you are driving around our beautiful state, wherever you are, you should get the best possible service if you are sadly involved in a car crash, but the current arrangements are based on that local council's capacity to pay, both for their ratepayers and others.

The West Coast Council is a good example of this, where a huge proportion of the people using the roads on the west coast are not ratepayers there and yet that tiny council, with a population of a little over 4000, actually pays more than a council like Kingborough which is larger in population. That inequity means we are getting emergency services based on a council's capacity to pay rather than allocating the resource we have across the state to the risk where it is needed. We propose under our new Tasmanian Fire and Emergency Services - that merged body - that the funding streams would come together so that we are supporting our SES first responders, just like we do our fire first responders. Wherever they are in the state, they should have the access to the best possible equipment and that is really critical.

In terms of the next steps for this process, Mrs Alexander mentioned the working group. This is a critical next step in the consultation. The working group is based off the round table we held about a week ago that represented members right across our society. To give you a sense of who was involved in that working group, obviously we have our first responders, both fire and SES; we have first responder personnel representatives so our volunteer association, our retained volunteer association, the United Firefighters Union and the SES Volunteer Association. We have local government represented through LGAT; we have small business represented through the Tasmanian Small Business Council; we have the business sector more broadly with the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry; and we have the forestry and timber industry because they are critical first responders for us through the Tasmanian Forest Products Association.

We have our major industrials - our miners and manufacturers and energy - because they have their own first responding capability through the Tasmanian Minerals, Manufacturing & Energy Council (TMMEC). We also have the Insurance Council because the insurance side of this is a critical reform and it is also insurance companies that we look to to help rebuild our state when disaster strikes. We are more than open to any other suggestions around people who would like to work with that group because, as I say, it is critical that we work together.

In that round table which we formalised into the working group, there was a strong acknowledgement of the need for reform and I do not think this parliament should forget that. I should mention the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association as well, Mrs Alexander; forgive me. There is broad acknowledgement of the need for reform in this space and that we need to work together so we can secure fire and emergency services for that more challenging future.

Obviously, as part of that, compromise needs to be struck. As I mentioned before, there are those who would like to pay the same or less. There are those who believe in a flatter rate, whereas our proposal initially has been that business pays a higher rate than households. That reflects the fact that we are abolishing the insurance levy which is levied on only business rather than households, but in that space it is deeply unfair because we raised those levies only from the businesses that take out insurance. That means that a mum and dad retailer on one side of the street may pay that \$42 million levy we collect every year whereas the major multinational on the other side of the street, because they are uninsured, under-insured, self-insured or buying insurance from an overseas fund, do not pay that \$42 million levy at all. That is a deeply unfair situation and it is deeply anticompetitive. I hear consistently from business that they want to level the playing field. That is part of why those reforms are important.

Regarding the time frame from here, Mrs Alexander, you mentioned that the formal submission consultation process is to conclude on 1 December and that is correct. The working group will extend beyond that. That is partly to do with the nature of the legislation. If you go to the financial section of the legislation we have proposed, the rates table we are consulting on is not actually held within that legislation. It is a decision for the Treasurer around the way the rates will be levied across the community so that it can be done outside of legislation. Finding that right number ahead of the Treasurer's decision for next financial year is important, but it is also important that we have broader legislation we are working on uniting fire and SES, delivering a strong, clear chain of command that empowers a new Tasmanian fire and emergency services commissioner, and making sure that those financial arrangements are fair, sustainable and ring-fenced for our first responders.

It is a critical piece of work. I mentioned before the need for prevention. That was a strong area of focus among the round table that has now become the working group. That is because there is a strong understanding that the cost of resources in the Fire Service is nothing compared to the cost of rebuilding after some of these natural disasters. The Dunalley bushfire is estimated to have cost \$89 million in insurance rebuilding costs, more than the cost for the entire Fire Service for the year 2013 when it happened. Businesses, farmers, households and the whole community was devastated for years following that event.

The recovery efforts following the 2016 floods, which impacted my community and more than 20 different councils across the state, resulted in three deaths, sadly, and impacted a huge swathe of our state, was estimated at \$180 million. That is more than the cost of our Fire Service and SES combined. It is nearly double. We will never get those lives back. The total damage bill for the flash flood in Hobart in May 2018 was \$137 million. For the Hobart City Council alone it was \$20 million. The Fingal fires of 2019 burned 22 000 hectares of forest worth more than \$70 million because they were production forest. The 2019 fires in the Huon Valley devastated tourism ventures, wineries, houses and farmland. Just in terms of the cost of responding alone, it was \$60 million to put those fires out. That is nearly the entire budgeted cost of the Fire Service for that year in that one event and included the devastating fires in the TWWHA that burned over 200 000 hectares.

I acknowledge that my shadow is in the room and I will pass over to her very soon because I know she wants to make a comment. I will note that there is strong stakeholder support for the broad need for reform. Our SES volunteers said they thoroughly support the reform of our emergency services, not only in governance but more importantly for a sustainable funding reform.

While some areas across the state may see an increased levy to support our agency, that will provide surety that our members are equipped with the equipment, assets and training so that they can save lives. Do you think that it's unfair to pay a little more to ensure a volunteer can respond at any time, at any day, to potentially save your life and protect your property?

That was from Lance Mulligan, the president of SES Volunteers Association, and he spoke so powerfully about some of the road crash rescue fatalities he has been to in the last month and the commitment that he makes to his community, where he does not benefit a cent, but would like to see a stronger funding model.

This is from Robert Atkins of the volunteer association:

The TFES funding model will require additional funds to take TFS and SES into the future. Funding has been a challenge for decades and sustained future funding will require a realignment with fire levies. What we need is levy reform with growth built into the model that recognises that all Tasmanians should contribute to the fire and emergency services that they rely on when faced with bushfires, house fires, road crashes, floods and other natural disasters.

Andrew Taylor, president of the Tasmanian Retained Volunteer Fire Association said:

The association is supportive of a contemporary funding model to encompass that philosophy, which will ensure that the appropriate resourcing, equipment and structures supporting our volunteers and career staff to make Tasmania a safer place.

The United Firefighters Union says:

The current funding model fails to provide a sustainable funding model for the additional specialist career fire crews and field officers needed to provide effective coverage as regional communities grow and risk profiles increase.

The Tasmanian community has a choice: we can pay more through increased insurance costs to maintain the status quo or we can back our firefighters and provide them with the tools they need to do their job more effectively.

In the local government space, the mayor in my neck of the woods, Teeny Brumby says:

Burnie ratepayers are significantly subsidising the surrounding municipalities. A Burnie ratepayer pays \$260 but one in Somerset pays \$75. That is where the inequity lies.

We are proud that we are going down this path of reform. It is critical work we need to do to save lives in Tasmania. We cannot put our heads in the sand. It is part of our Government's plan to invest more in the essential services that all Tasmanians are reliant on. We are looking forward to working closely with members of the working group, right across our community and this parliament to ensure we can set up our fire and emergency services for that more challenging future, acknowledging the outstanding work they do to save lives in Tasmania.

[12.46 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank Mrs Alexander for bringing the motion before us today in her private members' time. It covers a range of things. I will address some of those issues, as the minister did, around fire service crisis funding and the approach we are taking to that.

I also want to touch on the issue of bloated bureaucracy. I am a massive fan of public service. There is a significant role for the Government to invest in public services and people who work in that. The question I think you are raising, though, is not that there should not be a public service and public service investment, but that there concerns about some of the choices being made. Certainly, we have seen some significant resources in ministerial and political environments, political frameworks, that leads to a level of concern.

There is a piece of work I am trying to find, which I will share it with members if I can find it, that talks about the number of people between the decision and the delivery of service: the damage done the more people you have sitting in between that decision-making and the actual delivery of service. There is always scope to look at making sure we are not adding things in that protect ministers, that protect government positions, rather than invest in those services. There is a lot that can be discussed around that.

The overwhelming majority of our public servants are good, hard-working, decent people who are delivering those frontline services every day. The question is not so much about the administration because administration is frontline. The person who makes sure that the firefighters get paid is important. The person who does the workplace health and safety - almost 14 per cent of police officers are on workers compensation, is a frontline important role.

I share your concerns about the growth in political staffing, the layers put around ministers that seem to be around protection of the minister rather than delivery of service. That is something we should explore further.

The rest of the motion goes very much to the funding of the fire service. I will touch on the first line in the statement we are being asked to support:

Notes the Government's decision to abandon the fire tax proposed by the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Service Management and welcomes his decision.

I am not clear that has happened. He has not abandoned that process. The minister has said that he is open to looking at the models, the two unpopular models he designed and no one really knows where they came from. In an interview yesterday - and the minister might respond by interjection because I do not want to misrepresent him, the impression I had from the minister's interview yesterday on ABC radio was that through your next process, your next iteration, it may well be that we end up with one of those models. It is not necessarily that one of those options will not be put to us. It is not fair to say that the Government has abandoned it. It is too late to do any amendments to resolve that but it is important that the commentary makes that point.

We still do not know where that model came from, or what has informed the decisions that made those models possible. We do know there has been significant concern about the implementation of it, and the Government's process of consultation. We cannot safely say that those two models are dead and buried because I do not think they are. Possibly they should be because I am not sure that coming back to either of those models is going to be acceptable to anyone at the round table or in the community.

There are a number of issues facing our firefighters at the moment. A big issue we need to consider, which the minister will be aware of, is that we are quickly getting to a point where 100 of our career firefighters are going to have less than four years' experience. As the minister would know, it can take seven to 10 years to train people up to those senior station leader and senior roles, those people who would become aerial observers, for instance. I know a challenge already this season is getting aerial observers into planes.

Dr Woodruff mentioned some issues around our aerial response in question time earlier this week. There are a number of issues around that. The one she mentioned in terms of the Tasmanian Government Radio Network (TasGRN) is one of them but also we have not entered our national contract yet. We have signed it but we are not eligible for it yet. It cannot start soon. One of the things we need to be aware of in terms of that funding challenge is that our fire season used to start later than the mainland. Now that is not the case.

Dr Woodruff - It used to be a season.

Ms O'BYRNE - It used to be a season but what is happening now is that there is a significant resource being needed on the mainland at the same time as we were fighting fires this last weekend. So, there are some challenges in a number of areas within the fire service.

I want to leave time for Dr Woodruff so I will touch on the other issues around this fire service levy.

The minister gets up and speaks very reasonably about our need for reform. Nobody doubts that. In fact, everyone is keen to bring our fire and emergency services together because that fit makes a lot of sense. What there has always been some concern about is them coming in under the police commissioner of the day. There are significant concerns that operational decision-making will be made by somebody who does not have that type of experience. That matter has yet to be resolved.

There are a number of issues in the draft consultation bill that do not make a lot of sense. We are moving from a brigade model into a district model, which I am assuming is going to align with police districts, but that is not clear. I have gone through and done my cursory drafting of the bill. There are a number of things that still need to be explained and need to be resolved. One of those is the obligation to provide first aid, what training comes with that and what protections come around the people doing that. There are a number of issues within the bill that still need to be addressed. That work has to go on because people want to see a connected service.

We also do not know what the SES costs because councils have been funding it. I am sure the minister's work has assumed that, with the SES coming into this TFES model, so will come the buildings, infrastructure and engagement around that. That is not guaranteed. That work still has to be done, so there are a lot of unknowns about what the SES costs are.

The minister has been talking about \$105 million and Mrs Alexander mentioned \$105 million but that sum does not cover last year's costing of the fire service. If you look at the report from the State Fire Commission, that does not cover the expenses we had last year with the unknown expenses of the SES. We do not know what the cost is going to be now, let alone what our growth costs are going to be in the future. We are trying to design a model around something we have not done. When those two models came forward from the minister, they were based on supposition, best guess, a little bit of information, but no one can produce a document that says this is exactly what the fire service will cost and what we need to fund in the future.

I disagree with the minister on the insurance levy. We raise \$25 million to \$40 million from the insurance levy. We are not the only jurisdiction that does it; New South Wales does it as well. The point around offshore companies and people being able to avoid the levy because of that insurance model is well made. I do not believe that the day after legislation comes in that gets rid of the insurance levy. All of a sudden everybody's insurance is going to go down. The risk assessment will be recalculated by the companies and the money will probably remain the same. However, we do need a fairer model.

The minister talked about the historic differences in the legislation and, historically, people paid for the local brigade that came to them. The model was really cast around that. It came in after the horrific southern bushfires, which were terrible bushfires. It was a really progressive model at the time. I am a big fan of growth-funding for models, but it does not

reflect what happens now. At the moment, using some Hobart examples, if you are living in Mt Nelson or living in Kingston, your fire levy is quite different but the people who are going to turn out to your fire are the same.

You are going to get the same number of volunteer brigade people, you are going to get the same number of city brigade people, whereas historically, when this model was being designed, the assumption was that if you had a fire in Winnaleah that it would be a local brigade only that would get there. That is not how the fire service operates and not how our emergency services operate, so we do need a new model. The problem is the way it has been gone about. I think everyone has gone into the process of fire service reform with a positive attitude. Career firefighters want it, volunteer firefighters want it, broadly the community wants it, it is a good thing, we need to reform and have a fit-for-purpose, funded into the future, sustainable model.

Unfortunately, we have then moved in to try to jump very quickly into solutions that do not connect with the problem and that has meant that a whole lot of trust and goodwill is lost. People who were supporting the fire service have been protesting. It is no secret that there have been tensions between our career and two volunteer services historically over the years. The one thing this process has done is unify them in a way I have never seen them unified and that is a pretty spectacular thing to do, if it had been the intention. The reality is that it is an outcome of the minister's inability to get that shared engagement. The fact that the roundtable occurred only this last week is indicative of a failed process because people put in submissions about the modelling and could not see where those submissions were listened to that resulted in the draft that the minister provided.

We will be supporting it, putting on the record, of course, the fact that we do not think the minister has walked away from the previous funding model, the two models that he has put on, and we do believe fundamentally in a well-resourced and supported public service, of which the fire service and emergency service should be part. The reason we are having trouble with it is not because we do not need it, it is because the minister has not been capable of bringing people to the table and getting an outcome that is both fair, equitable and completely understood by a community who genuinely want to make sure that we are safe into the future from fire and emergency situations.

[12.57 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not have time to address Mrs Alexander's motion in detail. I thank her for bringing it on today. There certainly are many things in here that we agree about, particularly that the minister's proposal for the fire tax increases in the two options he has provided in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, has created an enormous amount of anxiety in the community and it is really not okay to put out things which come with a bottom line cost to people without having had some consultation around that beforehand.

There is no doubt that the way minister Ellis has badly managed his fire portfolio means that he has been deeply disrespectful to former fire chiefs and has created a situation which led to our Chief Fire Officer walking out of the job at a critical point.

We do not agree, however, with part (c), that the size of the public service, with thousands of new jobs added to the public payroll, is a problem. We are openly calling for more paramedics, more nurses, and more teachers. I cannot support that part because, while it is true that these things come at a cost, we know and we argue that the cost is well worth it for

Tasmanians. People want to be seen on time in an emergency department. That is just a bottom-line cost people want the Government to be paying for.

We do however totally agree that too much money has gone to the top-end of the Liberals' budgeting to shore up ministers and protect them from risk and there is a bloated SES and especially the Premier's department could not agree more, not to mention the number of GBEs that have been let sail and have enormous salaries, like in Marinus Link, the new Macquarie Point Development Corporation and so on.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - The time for debate has expired. The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The House divided -

AYES 10

Mrs Alexander
Dr Broad
Ms Dow
Ms Finlay
Ms Haddad
Ms Johnston (Teller)
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms White
Mr Winter

NOES 10

Mr Bayley
Mr Behrakis (Teller)
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Mr Jaensch
Ms Ogilvie
Mr Shelton
Mr Street
Dr Woodruff
Mr Young

PAIRS

Ms Butler

Mr Rockliff

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - In accordance with Standing Order 167, I cast my vote with the Noes.

Motion negatived.

Sitting suspended from 1.09 p.m. to 2.30 p.m

WAIVER OF GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS' TIME

[2.30 p.m.]

Mr YOUNG (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, in accordance with standing order 42(d), I indicate that the Government Private Members' business is waived for this day's sitting.

SITTING TIMES

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Leader of the House) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That for this day's sitting the House should not stand adjourned at 6 p.m., and that the House continue to sit past 6 p.m.

We have three matters that we would like to get to: the motion to establish the GBEs; to finalise the water bill; and the order regarding Dismal Swamp.

Motion agreed to.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Mr SPEAKER - Honourable members, I welcome to the gallery Grade 5 and 6 students from the Perth Primary School. Welcome to parliament.

Members - Hear, hear.

MOTION

Government Businesses Scrutiny Committee - Establishment

Continued from 2 November 2023 (page 48).

[2.32 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, on the amendment and perhaps I can provide some assistance to members so they can decide what else they need to discuss.

Our amendment is to include scrutiny for entities that we believe require further scrutiny and can be accommodated through the additional times to be included in our amended motion.

I understand debate has occurred since this matter was withdrawn in the last parliament. However, if I could reiterate the decision that the Labor Party has taken and why, it is that we believe that Macquarie Point Development Authority, Stadiums Tasmania, Homes Tasmania and TasTAFE should each be scrutinised through this process, given the significant public interest in these entities and the fact that today the Australian Education Union - Tasmanian Branch has outlined its significant concerns about the reform the Government has undertaken to TasTAFE, that the Labor Party opposed, turning that essentially into a corporate entity, and the significant impact that has on staff entitlements and conditions which were all promised by the Government, would not happen. Of course, the consequences of that reform agenda mean those teachers will be worse off under the Government's changes. We believe that deserves appropriate scrutiny.

Then there is Homes Tasmania. When we have a housing crisis, it is our firm belief that this is the appropriate opportunity for us to interrogate the operations of that entity. Through the debate on the changes in this place to that legislation there was significant exchange across

the chamber about how important it is for us to be able to see the operations, to be able to understand the financial considerations and indeed to be able to assess how productive that entity has been in delivering new homes for Tasmanians. The exchange occurred again in the Estimates scrutiny hearings and now the annual report has been tabled in this House. It is the appropriate time for us to call Homes Tasmania before us to understand their operations and how they are delivering new homes for Tasmania.

Then, of course, Macquarie Point Development Corporation, which is a corporation and it should be heard during this period of scrutiny because it is the appropriate place for it to be scrutinised. It is important because of the commitments the Government has made about building a stadium there. We would like to understand the information that has been provided to them through the Macquarie Point Development Corporation, and then, of course, Stadiums Tasmania which has a significant responsibility for delivering infrastructure projects for the Tasmanian Government, particularly with respect to stadiums which, of course, is a very hot topic and a matter of important public interest.

That is why the amendment, that is before the Chair at the moment, has been moved for debate. It remains our view that our amendment is the best way for us to approach the session after this week has concluded and that we need to be able to have an opportunity to scrutinise those particular entities for the reasons I and members of the Labor Party have outlined in the debate that occurred in the week before last. I encourage members to think about that. I know many stakeholders in the community are hoping that this parliament will agree to that too - whether in the housing or the education space. I hope the motion can be supported.

Mr SPEAKER - The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The House divided -

AYES 9

Dr Broad
Ms Dow
Ms Finlay
Ms Haddad (Teller)
Ms Johnston
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms White
Mr Winter

NOES 12

Mrs Alexander
Mr Barnett
Mr Bayley
Mr Behrakis (Teller)
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Mr Jaensch
Ms Ogilvie
Mr Street
Mr Wood
Dr Woodruff
Mr Young

PAIRS

Ms Butler

Mr Rockliff

Amendment negatived.

[2.42 p.m.]

Mr STREET (Franklin - Minister for Housing and Construction) - Mr Speaker, I move-

That all words prior to the heading 'MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE' be left out and the following words inserted instead:

That the House of Assembly appoint a Government Businesses Scrutiny Committee, with leave to sit on 21, 22, 23 and 24 November 2023 to inquire into Government Businesses (GBs) in accordance with the following schedule and rules.

For 2023 the following Government Businesses are allocated to the Committee as detailed below:

Tuesday, 21 November 2023	0900-1100: Metro Tasmania Pty Ltd (2 hours) 1100-1300: Tasmanian Water and Sewerage Corporation Pty Ltd (2 hours) 1400-1500: Motor Accidents Insurance Board (1 hour) 1500-1600: Tasmanian Railways Pty Ltd (1 hour) 1600-1700: Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation (1 hour)
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Wednesday, 22 November 2023	0900-1200: Tasracing Pty Ltd (3 hours) 1200-1300, 1400-1500: Aurora Energy Pty Ltd (2 hours) 1500-1600: Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority (1 hour) 1600-1800: Tasmanian Irrigation Pty Ltd (2 hours)
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Thursday, 23 November 2023	0900-1100: Tasmanian Ports Corporation Pty Ltd (2 hours) 1100-1330: Hydro Tasmania (2 hours 30 mins) 1430-1700: Tasmanian Networks Pty Ltd (2 hours 30 mins)
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Friday, 24 November 2023	0900-1100: TT-Line Company Pty Ltd (2 hours) 1115-1315: Public Trustee (2 hours) 1415-1715: Sustainable Timber Tasmania (3 hours)
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[2.43 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Leader of the House) - Mr Speaker, I thank members for their engagement and feedback on this over the course of the last little while. We have circulated the amendment as proposed. Following feedback from members, we expanded the number of entities to be scrutinised per the schedule proposed by this amendment. I note that the other place established their committees earlier in the month and this schedule avoids clashes with those hearings, while ensuring that entities are scrutinised on the one day.

I wrote to members earlier in the week to provide an update. I reiterated the commitment that we will refer this matter to the Standing Orders Committee and I will write to that committee on behalf of the Government to formally request their consideration, including a cross-jurisdictional analysis of Estimates processes in other Australian parliaments. It will be the Government's intention for that committee to report back to the parliament in March 2024.

Speaking with colleagues in the Legislative Council about these matters this morning, and their interest in looking at opportunities to pursue these matters via a re-established working arrangements committee, we are open to this following the completion of the work by the Standing Orders Committee. We are committed to working across the Chamber on this. I also note that under this amendment the proposed committee membership remains at six members: two Government members, two Opposition members, one Greens member and one Independent member. Committee rotations also remain as initially moved.

We acknowledge the parliament's interest in these matters and commend the amendment to the House.

[2.44 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I knew that Mr Ellis had a high opinion of himself and then I saw the original timetable come out that showed him presenting both at the Legislative Council and the House of Assembly at the same time. I thought he really must have very high expectations of himself in being able to present to both places at the same time.

I understand that in the amended motion - of course the other one was never tabled - he does appear to be able to do both things at once, which is very good. However, last time we spoke about this - two weeks ago - I spoke about how it is up to the House to decide what constitutes a business for the purposes of government business enterprise hearings. I heard support from the Greens that entities such as Homes Tasmania, TasTAFE, Stadiums Tasmania and Macquarie Point Development Corporation could and should be incorporated into our GBE hearings process. I provided that advice to the House in advance of the motion so that everybody knew what we were doing.

Since that time, unfortunately for transparency of government, it appears the Greens have done a deal with the Government that has led to them opposing the amendment. That is really disappointing.

Dr Woodruff - That is such rubbish - nothing that you have not been informed about and you have not wanted to be involved in discussions around.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr WINTER - I am only saying what I have observed. That is, when we left this debate two weeks ago the Greens were indicating support for the Opposition's amendment. Today, they have voted the amendment down and voted against scrutiny for Homes Tasmania, TasTAFE, Macquarie Point Development Corporation and Stadiums Tasmania. That is now on the record.

It is important that the parliament is able to scrutinise these entities. We have had a system over many years now where the parliament scrutinises all the GBEs, including for this year TasNetworks and Hydro Tasmania. The Legislative Council does a very good job in performing its role of scrutinising all the GBEs that go to it and I have seen people like Ruth Forrest and Tania Rattray do an outstanding job during GBE scrutiny hearings, as well as members of the Opposition who have done a great job scrutinising members of government through GBE hearings every year. We have full confidence that they can and will do that and we will do that this year with Hydro Tasmania and TasNetworks.

For the Greens to decide to prioritise for their own benefit Hydro Tasmania and TasNetworks this year, and the scrutinising of that for them rather than the House, they appear to have traded away -

Dr Woodruff - That is hilarious coming from you. You had no confidence in this Government because of questions around TasNetworks and you do not want to scrutinise them.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Dr Woodruff - What is your narrative here?

Mr SPEAKER - Leader of the Greens, order.

Mr WINTER - They have traded away the ability to scrutinise Homes Tasmania, TasTAFE, Stadiums Tasmania and Macquarie Point Development Corporation because they wanted to ask the questions. They were not satisfied with Ruth Forrest or Labor asking the questions because they wanted to ask the questions. This parliament has had a tradition over many years now where GBEs alternate between the House and the other place every year. They were not satisfied so they have traded away the ability to scrutinise important new entities that this Government has corporatised so that they can ask the questions. It is all about me, me, me, isn't it, Dr Woodruff?

Dr Woodruff - It gives Tasmanians more opportunity to have questions around the issues they care about.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Greens.

Mr WINTER - There have been significant changes led by this Government around Homes Tasmania and TasTAFE. This is a government that said they wanted to make TasTAFE more like the businesses they served. They have turned it into a business and that requires this place to scrutinise it as a business after the annual report comes through.

All members have heard this morning from the Australian Education Union, Tasmania branch, and Brian Wightman, I believe, who says:

It gives me no pleasure to correspond with you to inform you that concerns raised during debate on the bill to transfer TasTAFE to a government business enterprise have come to fruition. Members of the Legislative Council, members of the Australian Education Union Tasmania branch and all 900 TasTAFE employees were promised that no employee would be worse off under the transfer of a state instrument to the jurisdiction of the Fair Work Commission.

We were also incorrectly informed by the state Government and TasTAFE that no TasTAFE employee would be worse off with terms and conditions of their employment when moved to the jurisdiction of the Fair Work Commission under the TasTAFE (Skills and Training Business) Act 2021.

The Greens have just voted against scrutinising TasTAFE on the back of that letter. They have decided that they do not want to know what is going on for the teachers at TasTAFE or what has happened for the students at TasTAFE because they did a deal with the Government on this issue. I never thought I would stand here and see the Greens voting against transparency and against dealing properly with government businesses. That is what TasTAFE has been turned into. They have voted against that and they need to take responsibility. Cassy O'Connor would never in a million years have stitched up this deal. They have voted against transparency for TasTAFE and against transparency for Homes Tasmania. They are doing it because they want to ask the questions of the government businesses. That is what the new Leader of the Greens has done by stitching up this deal, yet again, with the Government.

I move the following amendment to the amendment in my name:

That the following entities be added to the relevant tables:

21 November, Homes Tasmania, (1700-1900);
22 November, TAFE Tasmania, (1800-2000);
23 November, Macquarie Point Development Corporation, (1700-1900);
24 November, Stadiums Tasmania, (1700-1900).

That puts those entities back into this motion. I implore the Greens to support this motion to add them back in, to do away with whatever deal they did with the Government and add this scrutiny. There is nothing stopping this House today from properly scrutinising this Government for decisions they have made. Just because they have turned TasTAFE into a business does not mean we should not scrutinise it. Just because they have decided to set Homes Tasmania up as its own entity and, effectively, take some of it off the books so that it cannot be scrutinised at Estimates does not mean we should not scrutinise it. If you want to set up an organisation, call it a business, give it a board, give it a CEO, then it deserves to be scrutinised.

Dr Woodruff - We just did it. We did it at Estimates. We are getting a process for it. That is what we just organised.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr WINTER - It is an interesting new dynamic in this parliament because not only do you get the Government defending itself, you also get the Greens defending the Government. That is what is happening here today: the new Leader of the Greens is defending the Government, not just of the last division but the division before that and probably on this one too because the Greens no longer believe in transparency and they will not hold these organisations to account. I never thought I would see the day when the Greens would stitch up a deal like this the way they have. It is appalling that they would do that.

We have serious questions about the Macquarie Point Development Corporation. It should have been a GBE the whole time. Are the Greens going to vote against scrutiny of the Macquarie Point Development Corporation? By the sounds of it, they will. If they vote against this amendment they will be. We want to know what is going on at Macquarie Point Development Corporation. There has been \$130 million bought into that organisation over 10 years with almost nothing to show for it. We want to know what is going on in Stadiums Tasmania. They are pulling stadiums from all over the state into that entity and we want to know what is going on.

It is our job to know what is going on, not just the Opposition but the Greens and the crossbench. That is why we want to scrutinise all these entities. I cannot believe that anyone on the crossbench or in the Greens would vote against scrutinising these entities, particularly with that letter about TasTAFE from Brian Wightman of the Australian Education Union.

If you believe in holding this Government to account, you will vote for this amendment. If you do not believe in holding this Government to account, you will oppose it. It sounds like that is what the Leader of the Greens is preparing to do today.

GBE hearings are a critical component of what we do here. Just because the Government wants to turn these entities into businesses does not mean they should not be scrutinised. They should be heavily scrutinised and we want to do that. All we are doing is asking for this House to do its job. There have been significant changes, particularly for TasTAFE and Homes Tasmania, over recent years. That is why we want to scrutinise it. Our priority is making sure that this parliament, both places, can scrutinise everything this Government is doing in the space of government business enterprise. We are committed to doing that. I am interested to hear what the Leader of the Greens is going to say about this because she should support the amendment.

[2.55 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, on the amendment, I thank the members we have had many conversations with over weeks as well as the staff, particularly, of Mr Street's office, and the Premier about these matters. Also the Leader of Government Business, Independent members and Labor, who I have sent information to and thought had kept abreast of where things are up to. I am surprised at what Mr Winter has just said. He seems confused about what this is all about. This is about trying not to politicise the processes of the House and trying to get as much scrutiny as possible.

What we have been able to achieve by working cooperatively across members of the House is that eight more GBEs will be scrutinised for nearly two-and-a-half days extra this year. That is what the Greens have achieved through our work on this. This year we will all be able to ask questions of the Government for an extra two-and-a-half days of parliament time about the issues we all consider important.

I know the Labor Party has lots of questions to ask TasNetworks because they wanted to have no confidence in the minister last week and this week. We had the whole of parliament derailed on Tuesday because the Labor Party was very concerned about the Energy minister and about the North West Transmission Developments. I thought that would have translated into support for having the GBEs include TasNetworks this year. I thought, on first principles, they would have supported that.

I get that they are interested in the statutory authorities they have proposed to be scrutinised. Personally, I would like to have every single statutory authority in Tasmania in front of us -

Mr Winter - You supported it two weeks ago. Why are you opposing it?

Dr WOODRUFF - Because they are not GBEs, Mr Winter. They are statutory authorities. We need to understand why the Labor Party has hand-picked four statutory authorities. I get why we would want to have Homes Tasmania and TasTAFE answer questions. We would also want to have the EPA come and answer questions. We would want to have the Tasmanian Heritage Council come and answer questions.

Ms Haddad - Add them in.

Dr WOODRUFF - We do not take this place as a plaything, Ms Haddad. We take it seriously.

Ms Haddad - Scrutinising spending on housing is not a plaything.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Clark.

Dr WOODRUFF - The process for scrutinising statutory authorities is in the Budget Estimates. We agreed.

Ms Haddad interjecting

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Clark.

Ms Haddad - Sorry, Mr Speaker.

Dr WOODRUFF - We think it is poor, which is why we supported Ms Johnston's proposal for an amendment to have a review of the whole process. Mrs Alexander has also been pushing for that. She is very clear. All the statutory authorities are woefully underscrutinised in the Budget Estimates process. We agreed and that is why we supported -

Mr Winter - When you go against this, you are only defending these guys.

Mr SPEAKER - Member for Franklin, order.

Dr WOODRUFF - We put it to the Leader of Government Business that this would be a condition we are concerned to make sure happens, that there is a review of the whole process. The way GBEs have only been half of the GBEs every year is appalling. It has been like that the whole time I have been an MP. What a joke that you only get to scrutinise these important bodies overseeing billions of dollars of taxpayers' money once every two years in this place.

We are representatives of people and we work in this place, so we are not concerned about what the Legislative Council is doing. That is their business. It is our business to look after the work of this place. To not be able to scrutinise TasNetworks and Forestry Tasmania every year does not wash with us or the people we represent. We want to hold the people who are making these decisions to account. That is why we have fought to have all the GBEs and I am pleased to say, on behalf of people who care about the deals being done around Marinus and what is happening with the destruction of native forests, that we will be able to sit down and have those conversations.

Why did the Labor Party pick Macquarie Point Stadium and Stadiums Tasmania?

Mr Winter - Why not?

Dr WOODRUFF - I do not know why you would. There is a level of dishonesty that they are trying to peddle with Tasmanians about their position on the stadium. You hand-picked those things to virtue signal to people and try to continue the pretence that you do not support the stadium. Meanwhile, you have waved it through to a process where the whole thing is going to be assessed by the Planning Commission. Why would you want to waste parliament's time to bring a statutory authority back into the GBE process. It is so you can have another go at trying to pretend to Tasmania. You have faux concern about the over \$1 billion that is going to be spent on the stadium. Why would you want to do that? Only for the politics of it.

Mr Winter - Well, scrutinise it then.

Dr WOODRUFF - We have all seen how you play politics recently.

Mr Winter - I hope Cassy is not watching this.

Dr WOODRUFF - I do not really mind whether Ms O'Connor is watching. I hope she is gardening. I think she has more important things to do.

You should be supporting the full set of GBEs, because it includes an opportunity to talk to TasNetworks.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. It is not good enough. I understand the Leader of the Greens interrupted the member for Franklin when he was making his commentary. I tried to pull that up. It is not good enough that we all harp while the Leader for the Greens is making her contribution. Please, she should be heard in silence.

Dr WOODRUFF - Scrutiny is a word that you can throw around in this place. Why do we not move to scrutinise Labor over their position on the stadiums in the Macquarie Point Development Corporation hearings? Why wouldn't we? It would be a blatant politicisation of the process. It would be a good idea. We would all like to know just as we would like to know exactly what the Government is doing. We want to know why Labor has changed their position. That would be fair, but we are not going to do that. We are not going to be so disrespectful of the processes of the House.

There is a distinction between statutory authorities and Government Business Enterprises, state owned corporations. None of the things that you have proposed, Mr Winter - Homes Tasmania, TasTAFE, stadiums or Macquarie Point Development Corporation - are GBEs. We welcome the opportunity to have a change to our Budget Estimates so that those organisations can be properly scrutinised. We absolutely agree with you that they do not get the scrutiny that they deserve.

We are not supporting this motion because it does not make any sense in terms of the processes of the House.

While we are on this subject, I raised this with the Leader of Government Business, and I believe I raised it with all members: you are aware, Mr Winter, that the motion is to remove the Dorothy Dix questions.

Mr Speaker, I move -

That the motion be amended by in proceedings of the Government Business Scrutiny Committee -

Leave out 'one Independent and one Government'.

Insert instead 'and one Independent'.

Ms Haddad - Is this an amendment to Mr Winter's amendment?

Mr SPEAKER - We are dealing with Mr Winter's amendment. We are adding those days, as he proposed, and we cannot deal with yours until we complete Mr Winter's amendment to the Government's amendment.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have concluded what I need to say on this amendment.

[3.04 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I will be brief. When there is an opportunity to open up transparency and an opportunity for the parliament to ask questions of significant organisations that are effectively in control of Government, you take it. You do not squib it.

This is a unique parliament that we are dealing with. This is an opportunity for us to have organisations such as Homes Tasmania and having 15 minutes to 20 minutes in Estimates in the middle of the year to talk to bureaucrats or contracted bureaucrats or employees of corporations that report to government to me is not satisfactory. This is an opportunity to bring some accountability and transparency. I do support the amendment.

Regarding the amendment to the motion put forward by the Government, I made the point a fortnight ago that the current Estimates system is not working and the GBE hearings are not working for Tasmanians in terms of the turnabout in the upper and lower Houses. That is no reflection on the upper House. These are large organisations that need to be scrutinised by parliament. I thank the Government for extending the historical list of corporations that can be scrutinised by this place. That is important.

I was expecting some level of cooperation and communication from the Government. We had that intense debate where it was quite clear that the Government had lost control of that debate. With goodwill, we all said let us adjourn and have a conversation. That was Thursday a week ago. The very next time I heard anything directly from Government or someone, not second-hand rumours about what may or may not be in, was when we all got the email late on Monday night heading into what was an expected debate yesterday.

If you are going to treat the crossbench with a bit of respect, how about you pick up the phone and have a conversation with those members to say, 'Here's where we are at, these are the ideas that have been put forward, what is your view?'. That may very well have avoided this shemozzle where we have amendments to amendments to amendments. This is just a rabble. This is embarrassing, not only for the Government, but for all of us. Here we are, moving amendments to amendments to amendments, because the Government cannot pick up the phone and sit down with people and treat them appropriately.

This is an absolute disgrace. There is goodwill around these things. There is more we agree on than disagree, but here we are fumbling around and wasting the parliament's time with all these amendments to amendments. Talk to people. Have a proper process. Be professional about it.

[3.07 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I rise to support the amendment moved by the Leader of Opposition Business. The simple fact is that this parliament has within its own capacity the ability to decide what committees it establishes and the makeup of those committees and who they call to provide information to those committees. It is entirely within our control to do that. The Leader of the Greens effectively went around in riddles trying to defend the Government and the Greens' position here but she ignored the fact that this parliament manages its own destiny. We have the ability to set committees up however we like and call before them whoever we like.

The opportunity we have right now is to accept the work that has been done in the break to include the other entities that have been provided for on Thursday and Friday. In addition to that, why do we not use the power this parliament has to make sure that we can also properly scrutinise other entities whose annual reports have only been tabled in this House in recent weeks? That is information that was not available for us to scrutinise through the Estimates process.

Dr Woodruff - All the entities' annual reports have only been tabled in recent weeks. There are so many of them.

Ms WHITE - The opportunity for this parliament is to do what it wishes. We could add amendments to include other entities, but we have been very clear for over a week now, or more than that, that these are the four entities in particular that we wanted to scrutinise. If other

members had suggested other entities that they wanted to include we would have been willing to work with them about flexibility needed for the schedule to accommodate that. We did not hear those representations. We obviously have seen an amendment that includes the Thursday and Friday session that deals with other GBEs and certain companies, but if members in this place wanted to, they could have made suggestions about other entities and we would have been willing to talk about how we accommodate that flexibly.

Ultimately, this parliament decides how these committees work and who they call before them. This is the best opportunity we have had in a very long time to get more information about Homes Tasmania, whose annual report was only tabled for the first time this year in October. We have not had an opportunity to really delve deeply into the work of that entity. This provides the first chance for us to do that.

There is TasTAFE and I already mentioned how the Australian Education Union Tasmanian branch has raised significant concerns today about what is happening at TasTAFE. Why would we not take the opportunity to call them before us and ask questions about what is happening there?

Then there are the other two entities the Labor Party wants to call: Stadiums Tasmania and Macquarie Point Development Corporation. If members want to use the opportunity to invite other statutory authorities, there is nothing that has prevented them from suggesting that and we could have accommodated that because ultimately this House decides what the makeup of the committee is and who we call before it.

Therefore, the arguments that have been put do not make any sense to me. They are constrained by traditional conservative views of how this parliament has operated in a majority government circumstance, which is not how this parliament exists at the moment. I urge the Leader of the Greens to reconsider because we may not get another opportunity like this. This is a very important issue where we have a lot of public interest in the operations particularly of Homes Tasmania and TasTAFE. I feel that if we do not take this chance we will not get it again.

There has been discussion about how the Estimates process might be reformed, but that may take a very long time-

Dr Woodruff - No, it is not going to take a long time. It is going to be decided by 1 April; that is what we are agreeing to in this motion.

Ms WHITE - As somebody who sits on the Standing Orders Committee, I can tell you that I do not see a lot of progress happening very fast through the reforms that have been previously spoken about in this place to how this parliament operates. Granted, maybe there is going to be a sudden change of heart. There also may be a change of government in that time - and I hope that is the case. What we have right now is an opportunity, so why not take it? Why not use it? Why not, as a parliament, say next week we are going to use the privilege we have as representatives of our community to call these entities before us and ask questions on behalf of key stakeholders and our community about what is going on. Why wait until April next year? Let us do it now.

Dr Woodruff - Well, if there is a change of government you can just let it happen.

Ms WHITE - Again, that is next year. We are talking about next week and the opportunity we have -

Dr Woodruff - You do not want to scrutinise TasNetworks.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Greens.

Ms WHITE - The responsibility we have as elected members in this place right now is to do something about next week. That is what I am interested in because that is the motion before the Chair. I am very happy to discuss how we can reform the Estimates process and the GBEs because both of them stink. Let us make next week work a bit better and get some of those entities before us where there is significant public interest, especially around housing and skills. I urge the Greens to reconsider the position they have outlined so far through this debate. There is enormous merit in us taking opportunities of parliament to think about how we use next week. It is in our hands.

As parliament we can do as we please and right now this is a minority government situation which enables us to make these types of decisions for next week, not next year. I believe members should use that opportunity.

[3.13 p.m.]

Ms JOHNSTON (Clark) - Mr Speaker, I will be very brief so I will stay here for my contribution. I will be supporting the amendment moved by Mr Winter. I have given it a great deal of consideration since we discussed the original motion a couple of weeks ago. My position is that where the opportunity arises to have greater scrutiny of the actions of government and their corporations and enterprises, that ought to be taken at every opportunity.

I do not feel, hand on heart, that I can go out of this place tonight and say to my community that I let the opportunity to have, particularly, Homes Tasmania and TasTAFE not scrutinised. My community would be very disappointed given all the issues around that particular opportunity.

I am relatively new to this place but it struck me that the process of Estimates and GBEs is clumsy. It does not serve this parliament well in terms of the appropriate forms of scrutiny and the ability to scrutinise entities in particular. The requirement to go through the minister to ask questions in Estimates is clumsy and often means we do not get to the heart of the matter that our community expects us to get to and scrutinise. I firmly believe that this is an opportunity, although in a bit of a clumsy form this year, to enhance scrutiny of entities in this place. I very much look forward, and I take the Leader of the House on his word that there will be a referral to the Standing Orders Committee to review how Estimates and GBEs work because, quite frankly, these entities work for Tasmanians, and this parliament as representative of those Tasmanians and should have the opportunity all the time to be able to scrutinise them adequately.

In having discussions on how this would work for this particular year, I have had representations that these particular entities and statutory authorities in particular would not have time to prepare for the hour or two hours we would be scrutinising them for, or it would be costly. Quite frankly, I expect that all these entities, at any time, would be prepared to answer questions from the representatives of the Tasmanian community, us here in parliament. We are not scrutinising them for days on end. We are only talking about a relatively short time.

These entities should not be surprised at the kinds of questions they will be getting because the issues we are concerned about, and that Tasmanians are concerned about, have been regularly aired in this place. I expect Macquarie Point Development Corporation to be able to come in here and answer basic questions about their operations, strategies and policies. They should be able to do that at any point in time because, quite frankly, they could get those questions in Question Time via the minister as well.

I will be supporting enhanced scrutiny. I agree it is a bit of a dog's breakfast this year. It is not ideal. We are trying to do things on the fly, that is not a good look, but I hope that what we can do moving on from this year, with the collaboration from the crossbench, Opposition and Government, is come up with an Estimates and GBE process for next year that enhances scrutiny, which means we can scrutinise all GBEs and call statutory authorities that we find particularly relevant at that particular time. I commend the amendment to the House and congratulate Mr Winter on bringing it.

[3.16 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Mr Speaker, I will be quick because I did put my views on the record when we moved an amendment last time. I am disappointed and quite shocked that there is a lack of support from the Greens to scrutinise Homes Tasmania in particular. I will not go into the other statutory entities because I do not want to use up all the time in this debate.

We are in an unprecedented housing crisis right now. There is national data that came out yesterday that shows that Tasmania is the equal least affordable place to rent a home in the country, in line with Sydney. Sydney and Hobart: who would ever have imagined that Tasmania would be as unaffordable as it is? Recently, Homes Tasmania has been established. It is a brand new entity. It is not actually a statutory authority - remember they had to find a new place in the Budget papers for Homes Tasmania to sit. It is an 'other entity', so the Government was making things up as it went along. They have created an 'other entity'.

I do not buy into the argument that Dr Woodruff gave that these are statutory authorities and therefore there is a different process to look over them and we should not support them having them at the GBE table this year. What did we say in the debate? Both Cassy O'Connor and I asked in the debate on that bill, 'when will we be able to scrutinise Homes Tasmania, minister?' He said, 'At the regular Estimates'. 'Will we have all the information, minister?'. He said yes, we would. We got to the Estimates table and we had seven pages. We could not see any of the capital investment, we could not see the spending on homelessness programs, and we could not see the full agency chapter that we used to see. The minister said, 'Well, they are here now; you can ask the questions', but we did not have the information because we were waiting, as the minister pointed out, on the corporate plan and the annual report to be tabled. We now have that information.

Estimates was in June. The corporate plan was tabled in August. The annual report was tabled in October. We now have the information. If now is not the time to scrutinise Homes Tasmania, when is? Unless there is wholesale reform of the Estimates process, which I do not hold a lot of faith in, we will get to the Estimates table next year with last year's annual report and last year's corporate plan, and seven pages of Budget information. Again we will say, 'Minister, we do not have all the information we need to scrutinise Homes Tasmania at this point in time at the Estimates'. 'Oh you can try again in December'. Well, what is the point? It is going to become a ridiculous circular argument of saying we want to be able to scrutinise this. Why do we want to be able to scrutinise this? It is because of the public money and

because it is a moral and ethical duty of the Government to provide housing and to provide housing support for people who need it.

We now cannot see that until we see the annual report and the corporate plan. We cannot scrutinise it in the way we could when Homes Tasmania sat in the public sector in Housing Tasmania. We simply cannot. You can say that you will reform the Estimates process, but until you have the information we actually cannot see that public money, we cannot account for it and we cannot scrutinise it.

What I asked last time, and what I will ask again now is, where does this stop? Can the Government just carve off more and more parts of the public sector, create more and more statutory authorities, or as Homes Tasmania is not a statutory authority - an 'other entity' - and hide that information from public scrutiny and from the scrutiny of the parliament?

What is next? Will they start an 'other entity' for the health system? Will they start an 'other entity' for infrastructure? Will they start an 'other entity' for any other area? Child protection? Finance? Anything that the public sector runs? Will we suddenly not see those portfolios of Government scrutinised by this parliament any more because we will not see Homes Tasmania scrutinised, we will simply not, because next Budget year when we sit down in June, we will not have the information we need, just as we anticipated would be the case when we debated the bill in this place.

I am bitterly disappointed, because this is a fundamental function of parliament. Regardless of political colours, it is our job to scrutinise the spending of Government money. It is a technical argument to say we cannot scrutinise them now because they are not statutory authorities. We are supporting the Government's amendment -

Dr Woodruff - Technical. Wow, from you. And you are a legislator -

Ms HADDAD - You said it is a technical argument that we cannot scrutinise statutory authorities at GBEs because they are not GBEs -

Dr Woodruff - And you have decided that we would rather have two-and-a-half days of GBEs and have it processed for statutory authorities.

Ms HADDAD - Yes, we are supporting that.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Greens. Ms Haddad has the call.

Ms HADDAD - I will respond to that interjection, because we support the Government's amendment. She is trying to say that we do not want to look at statutory authorities because we want to look at the GBEs. We are supporting Mr Ellis's amendment; we are supporting the extra days. We will be scrutinising all those GBEs in both Houses. We support that but it is our job to scrutinise the spending of Government money.

Homes Tasmania is not a statutory authority, it is an 'other entity' and that money that the Government is responsible for is being hidden from public view and I wonder how much more this Government is going to do or what other deals have been done with the Greens to make sure we cannot see the information that is our job, as parliamentarians, to scrutinise, when it comes to the spending of Government money.

I will not go into the others as well, but I do want to make this point: where does Homes Tasmania sit? They are not a statutory entity, they are not a GBE, they are not an agency of government any more and we cannot scrutinise them in the way that we should, but it is our obligation to do so.

[3.22 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Leader of the House) - Mr Speaker, I will keep my comments reasonably brief, and I appreciate the engagement from all members around this. As we have mentioned before, we want to be constructive as part of this process. As part of the original amendment, we proposed what really is a quantum leap in terms of the transparency and time available for GBEs as part of these discussions. We take on board the comments from Mr O'Byrne, the member for Franklin, around engagement, and certainly in terms of the standing orders committee. We are very keen to engage as part of that process, the jurisdictional analysis by the clerks, and then as part of the engagement with the upper House as well. I think a working arrangements committee referral would then be helpful.

The feedback I am hearing around this chamber is that the process for GBEs and Estimates needs reform. Certainly, let us do that. If we are really concerned about the years to come - and this parliament is a long-term deliberative body - then we need to be making decisions that are in the best long-term interests. Regardless of who is in Government, we must find a structure that works for all of the parliament for the long-term. That is what our commitment is, as well as for this GBE scrutiny period, the large expansion in terms of TasNetworks; Sustainable Timbers Tasmania, which is another one in my space; a whole new two days of lower House GBE Estimates scrutiny.

We are committed to working constructively with all members in this place and our parliamentary officers, so that we can find the right landing for the long-term interests of transparency for the people of Tasmania.

[3.24 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Mr Speaker, I will not talk for a long time, but I did want to articulate that it is quite galling to hear the Labor Party talking about disappointment and their disappointment in the Greens.

Ms Haddad, we had to listen to a whole speech of yours on mandatory minimum sentencing yesterday, articulating why it is a bad thing. It is the same speech we have heard from you over the last several times that we have debated that legislation in this House, only for you to turn around with the last line and indicate that the Labor Party is actually going to support it in this instance. That is on top of the political donations reform and squibbing on the opportunity to block the stadium full-stop in the upper House and waving it into the assessment process and prior to that the pokies legislation.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Mr Speaker. I ask you to remind the member of the standing order about reflecting on votes in this House and the other place.

Mr SPEAKER - Again, if you could resist.

Mr BAYLEY - I am happy to withdraw that, Mr Speaker. Everybody knows the position of the Labor Party when it came to that issue. I want to correct the record, Ms Haddad, when it comes to statutory authorities. You and Mr Winter were saying that Homes Tasmania and

Macquarie Point Development Corporation were public corporations, but the Tasmanian Audit Office has them in here as a statutory authorities.

Ms Haddad interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BAYLEY - The reality is we have negotiated two-and-a-half extra days of scrutiny of state-owned corporations, keeping within the spirit of the GBE hearings and how this House has done it. We have agreed also to the review process to look at this in the longer term. We are perfectly comfortable with the approach we have at the moment. It is utterly galling and disappointing to hear -

Ms Haddad interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BAYLEY - It is underwhelming to hear the Labor Party talk about disappointment in us as the Greens. I can tell you there is a whole world of disappointment out there in the community about the Labor Party's position as it stands at the moment. We have brought into this place genuine reform that can help to ease the cost of living here, ease pressure on renters, ease pressure on public transport users and the Labor Party has voted it down every single time. We are perfectly comfortable with this arrangement and we have delivered additional scrutiny of the GBEs and will look forward to that opportunity.

Mr SPEAKER - The question is that the amendment to the amendment be agreed to.

The House divided -

AYES 9

Dr Broad
Ms Dow
Ms Finlay
Ms Haddad (Teller)
Ms Johnston
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms White
Mr Winter

NOES 12

Mrs Alexander
Mr Barnett
Mr Bayley
Mr Behrakis (Teller)
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Mr Jaensch
Ms Ogilvie
Mr Street
Mr Wood
Dr Woodruff
Mr Young

PAIRS

Ms Butler

Mr Rockliff

Amendment to the amendment negatived.

Mr SPEAKER - The time being past 3.30 p.m. it is now Opposition members' time.

MOTION

North West Transmission Developments - Financing

[3.33 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - I move -

That the House orders the Treasurer, the Hon. Michael Ferguson MP, to table the following information by 6 p.m. on Thursday 16 November 2023 -

- (1) Any advice or other information produced by the Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation regarding the financing of the North West Transmission Developments.
- (2) Any information held by TasNetworks regarding the financing of the North West Transmission Developments.
- (3) Any correspondence sent or received by the Minister for Energy and Renewables or the Treasurer regarding the financing of the North West Transmission Developments.
- (4) Any advice or other information produced by the Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation regarding the level of debt held by TasNetworks.

Mr Speaker, I also indicate that a vote is necessary.

The Labor Party has sought to move this motion today and bring it on for debate because of the unsatisfactory answers we have received from the Minister for Energy and Renewables when we have asked about the way the Government plans to fund the transmission developments across the north-west and how much they are going to cost. It is another situation that I find similar to the one we had in our previous debate where the Government refused to provide an update about an estimated cost for Marinus. This House again ordered the Government to provide updated information and provide transparency to the Tasmanian public about these significant energy investments.

We find ourselves in the same situation today, where we are calling on this parliament to join with us to order the Government to share information that we regard as being of public interest and should be in the public domain. We are talking about information that goes to the operations of TasNetworks and TASCORP, but, ultimately, at the discretion of the minister who sets the direction for the Government.

It was alarming to hear the Minister for Energy and Renewables respond this week to questions that we asked in this place, saying that it had nothing to do with him. It is everything to do with the minister and his responsibility to set the policy direction in his portfolio and to make sure that what he says he can do, he can actually deliver on.

This is a minister who says we will build it. How will he build it? How will he finance it? How much will it cost? Who will carry the debt? These are all questions the Labor Party has been asking of the minister since it came to our attention about 10 days ago that TasNetworks had decided it was not proceeding with the second stage of the transmission development in the north-west. TasNetworks also informed proponents and some residents in the municipalities associated with those developments that it was not proceeding. The Government did not proactively share that information.

The minister got up in this place. He would have been aware when we were sitting that week in the parliament, as would the Treasurer, that these decisions had been taken. They did not proactively share that information with the parliament. They did not share it with the public. They left it for people to find letters in their mailbox about the changes that the Government was taking and for proponents to find out about this directly from TasNetworks. The Government did not have the courage that it should have demonstrated by sitting down with those proponents and explaining to them that \$10 billion of investment, 8000 jobs and 1200 permanent jobs were at risk.

At a time Tasmania is energy constrained, at a time when we have the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry saying we have an energy crisis, at a time when we have major industrials like Norske Skog at Boyer asking for 50 megawatts of power and being told by this Government that there is none, we have the Government saying to energy proponents who are looking to invest in on-island wind generation in the state that their plans are on hold indefinitely. This Government cannot tell wind farm developers on the north-west coast what the likely timeframe might be for them to be able to proceed with their investments.

Investments worth \$10 billion have been put on ice by this Government because of their incompetence and the incompetence of the minister for Energy. He has been unable to answer straightforward questions about a cost estimate for the first stage of that project, who will finance it and who will carry the debt - simple questions that this parliament expected the Government to be able to answer.

Here we are, with a motion before the Chair that orders the Government to share that advice by tomorrow at 6 p.m. I expect the Government can share that information with us today. I suspect that they have some of it and are able to table that information for the House's benefit, whether that be information relating to the financing of the North West Transmission Developments or information held regarding where the debt would be held. We are talking about many billions of dollars of investment at a time when TasNetworks is already loaded up with \$2.2 billion-worth of debt. We had the Premier come in here this week to say that they lifted their debt ceiling to \$2.5 billion. All the headroom that they have left, \$3.5 billion, is not going to build a transmission line on the north-west coast.

It is necessary that these developments go ahead. These wind farm projects can be built to supply Tasmanians with power, not just export the power - which is what the Government says it needs to do - but provide Tasmanians with power so our major industrials can have confidence and invest with certainty, existing businesses can grow, and new opportunities can be realised for Tasmania - like the HIF eFuel's development proposed at Hampshire, like the hydrogen proponents who have been talking about investing in Tasmania but who cannot do that unless they have power. There is \$10 billion-worth of investment in our state on ice because this Government has so badly managed the Energy portfolio.

This is a key portfolio for our state. What we have seen recently with the reshuffles in this Liberal minority Government is that one of the most senior portfolios for driving economic development and activity in our state has been given to a minister who has never held a portfolio before in their life - a minister who was woeful in his performance yesterday in this place. He was sitting down before fully answering a question, not going anywhere near the details and really making a mess of things. We watched that in horror, as did the proponents of those energy investments. The Government should think very carefully about what work it needs to be doing with those proponents, given how poorly they have been treated by this Government: the frustrations they face as they try to progress their developments here in Tasmania.

It is the hardest place in the country to build a wind farm, which is a terrible indictment on this Government when you consider we have one of the best wind resources in the country, if not the world. The potential for us to grow our economic capacity in this state, grow jobs in this state by offering renewable energy is second to none. We have a proud history in Tasmania of investing in renewable energy - a 100-year legacy with Hydro Tasmania. The Labor Party is incredibly proud of that and we have talked a lot about that. I think, nearly to a person, every Tasmanian is proud of our legacy with Hydro, our investment in renewable energy.

We have a situation at the moment where this state is energy-constrained. Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry CEO Michael Bailey has said that Tasmania has the potential to be a renewable energy powerhouse but transmission line upgrades are vital to turn potential into reality. He has gone on to say in comments in the media that these are the projects that will help power Tasmania into the future and help Tasmania achieve the goals the Government has set for itself of generating 200 per cent of our domestic energy needs from renewable energy.

It is about domestic energy needs. It is not about exporting energy to the mainland but how we grow opportunities in Tasmania? How do we create advantages that only Tasmania can offer, compared to other states, around renewable energy that deal with the environmental, social and governance (ESG) obligations boards and companies have? They need to provide significant advantage here in Tasmania for those investments to be realised, jobs to be created using our renewable energy, rather than shipping it off to the mainland, which is what the Government seems to be obsessed with doing, creating those opportunities elsewhere. The original intent was to have a 200 per cent target for renewable energy generation for domestic energy needs. We know we are energy-constrained in Tasmania. We know we need these wind-farm developments to get off the ground. We know that will only happen if these transmission lines get built.

Every single one of those proponents, those investors, their boards have looked at Tasmania and have seen the plans on the table to construct those transmission lines and they have made investment decisions because of that. What the Government did a week-and-a-half ago was to rip that out from under them. Those investment decisions have suddenly become massive sovereign risk issues for this Government because investors will be looking at Tasmania now and wondering whether it is a safe place to invest their capital, to invest their hard-earned dollars, and sweat, blood and tears or whether the Government is going to walk away from them and rip it out from under them.

That is certainly how it feels for these energy proponents at the moment in Tasmania. They are confused by this Government's approach to energy. They are confused by how they

have been engaged and invited to invest in renewable energy in Tasmania, then the actions of this Government, which do not match the rhetoric. They are very confused about what has happened in the last week-and-a-half on the north-west coast with respect to the transmission developments that had been proposed by this Government. The Government said they would build these transmission lines then, a week-and-a-half ago, put everything on ice and changed their plans.

The TCCI understand how important these developments are. CEO Michael Bailey said:

These projects will also help us unlock a hydrogen industry in the north but if we do not have the transmission we need in place, it is difficult to see any of this happening.

There are also other projects. Mr Bailey spoke about this when he talked to *The Advocate*. He said:

We know we have a number of wind farms and a number of biofuel plans and others that desperately need this connection, and they were told it would be available to them.

That is what I mean about sovereign risk issues. Companies have been invited to come to Tasmania. Investors have been invited to develop projects here in the renewable energy sector and told that the Government would build the transmission line that helps them connect to the grid to make these projects work. Then the Government went and pulled the rug out from underneath them. I imagine that the majority of them are going to walk away once they find out that these projects are facing delays of perhaps a decade before they can connect to the grid. They are going to invest their capital elsewhere.

There is a massive rush across the country to decarbonise. We know from the AEMO (Australian Energy Market Operator) report that was released today that we need to rapidly bring more renewable energy online across the country. If companies have capital to spend and they cannot get anything done in Tasmania, they will take it to other states where governments support economic development in renewable energy, provide clear pathways for investment, set clear targets then deliver on them. That is not what is happening here. We will have a fleeing of capital from Tasmania.

Projects have already left. FFI, Origin, hydrogen projects proposed to be developed in the north of the state, those proponents have withdrawn their interest from Tasmania at this stage for a couple of reasons: they do not have water and they do not have power, two vital ingredients to produce hydrogen. The Government released a prospectus for hydrogen in this state that is not worth the paper it is written on.

That is what has happened here too. We had the Government promote opportunity then withdraw the opportunity, despite the fact that a lot of these projects are quite advanced in their planning. We have said it in this place, we have heard it from proponents, we are talking about \$10 billion worth of investment. As Michael Bailey said, this is likely to leave the state unless we get on quickly and fix this problem.

What does that look like now? We have an Energy minister who has said repeatedly that what needs to be built will be built. What does that mean? How is he going to build it? With

what skills? He has not been developing a workforce for this renewable energy transformation that is occurring in Tasmania, we have not seen that capacity built up. That is the first challenge.

The second challenge is how are you going to finance it? The minister could not answer that today. That is why we are interested to get the information contained in the motion before the Chair.

It is important to understand exactly what is going on here. Why was the project changed so dramatically? Why have the Government not even been able to keep the Hampshire Hills-to-Burnie line included as part of their plans? We know that is fundamentally important to connect these wind farms and the HIF's eFuels facility to the grid and to make it all work. That is not on their plan at the moment; they are only doing the coastal route for the transmission line. Why have they been unable to progress that other element?

We understand that TasNetworks have been told by TASCORP that they cannot borrow the money. We asked the minister that question. He did not deny it. We want to understand what is going on here. Has the Treasurer been blocking investment in the north-west of the state that has put at risk this \$10 billion of private investment and 8000 jobs, 1200 of them permanent jobs? Is it the Treasury department that is the blocker here?

We will soon find out some more information. There is nothing preventing the Treasurer from sharing information relating to those details of this motion when he gets to his feet. He does not have to wait until tomorrow evening to table those pieces of correspondence that may have been sent to the minister for Energy and others relating to the North West Transmission Developments. It is important that this information becomes clear, because the proponents are desperate to understand what is going on here.

I have to commend the Mayor of Burnie, Teeny Brumby, for her strong advocacy on this matter. Long before this became a significant challenge in the last week and a half, Ms Brumby has been on the front foot around the huge opportunity that the HIF eFuels project presents for the north-west and its economy. I know that Ms Brumby has flown to Canberra on a number of occasions now to present the case on behalf of her city to ensure that everyone is well aware of how important this development is and the tight time lines they are working within around the decisions they may need to make for investment in Tasmania.

Ms Brumby has been in to see me in parliament. I am pretty sure she would have also been to see the minister and probably the Treasurer. She has certainly been a very staunch advocate for her community but she has also been very critical of what has happened in recent weeks, and rightly so, because it seems that there has been incredibly poor communication and consultation around the decision that was taken to change what is happening on the north-west coast around the transmission line.

On 7 November the Mayor of Burnie said:

We need timely delivery of the proposed wind farms and more to provide the clean energy needed for our homes and for necessary clean energy developments.

In the mayor's municipality, she is predominantly talking about HIF eFuels, but there are also other wind farm projects linked to the Burnie community. The mayor went on to say:

We must deal with them whilst they are at our table; we are simply too slow.
It feels to me that we are asleep at the wheel while these projects are knocking on our door.

That was what the Mayor of Burnie said on the news on the night of 7 November.

Before this process descended into this debacle where the Government withdrew its support for the second stage of the transmission line, the Mayor of Burnie was already feeling frustrated by the slow progress on supporting the HIF eFuels development and now we have a circumstance where the entire thing has been put under a massive cloud.

We want to understand what the Government knows about this and what is likely to happen. Just saying 'what needs to be built will be built' is a pathetic slogan if you cannot actually explain where the money is coming from. It is giving false hope to the people of the north and the north-west, who are waiting on these projects to proceed so they can take up employment opportunities. It gives false hope to the proponents of those projects, who are making investment decisions as we speak and who are asking the federal government for support to realise those projects in Tasmania, through the process that closed last Friday. They are trying to submit their projects for assessment in an incredibly uncertain environment, because they do not know if they will need to finance 30 kilometres of transmission line privately, or maybe 60 kilometres if you are going to build the Hampshire Hills to Staverton line privately if TasNetworks is unable to secure the finance.

That is why we need to understand what the problem is here. What is the blockage? Is the blocker the Treasurer? Is it TASCORP? Is it the fact that TasNetworks has been burdened with so much debt, largely because the Government has ripped \$400 million in dividends out just in the last five or six years, that they cannot take any more on to build these projects that have enormous public benefit and facilitate enormous amounts of private investment in Tasmania.

The motion calls for any advice or information produced by the Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation regarding the financing of the North West Transmission Developments to be tabled by tomorrow; any information held by TasNetworks regarding the financing of the North West Transmission Developments to be tabled by tomorrow; any correspondence sent or received by the Minister for Energy and Renewables or the Treasurer regarding the financing of the North West Transmission Developments by tomorrow; and any other advice or information produced by the Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation regarding the level of debt held by TasNetworks by tomorrow. It is all information that is in the public interest and we hope that the parliament can join us in asking for the Treasurer to provide this level of detail to the House.

It is important that we understand exactly what is going on here. I think it is also really important for these proponents to have a level of transparency that they are not currently receiving from the Government because they are hearing one thing publicly and a different thing privately. That has certainly been our experience as well.

Let us just be honest about what is going on. Table the information, share the advice that the Government is relying upon to make decisions like this, and explain to people the change in position, because we need energy here in Tasmania. It is not about sending it elsewhere, it is about how we support our own economy and jobs in Tasmania. Support Tasmanians to access Tasmanian power. Support opportunities for Tasmanian families and jobs. We need more energy to do that.

I know that the Deputy Leader of the Labor Party, my colleague Anita Dow, will talk about what this means for her electorate of Braddon. She is passionate about regional economic development and as a former mayor of Burnie understands intimately how critical these types of investments are for her local community and that is why we need to understand what is going on here. We are very strong supporters of these wind projects. We are very strong supporters of the HIF eFuels facility and the hydrogen opportunities Tasmania has available to it, but we need to be able to link them together with transmission lines. It is the piece of the puzzle that the Government is currently blocking. We want to understand what is going on and that is why this motion is before the House.

[3.58 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Treasurer) - Mr Speaker, I thank the House for the opportunity to speak to the motion before us. I have much to say in response and will do my best to do so in a way that adds to the debate. I will be foreshadowing an amendment to the motion and will be speaking in relation to the ways in which the Leader of the Opposition is misunderstanding the situation and has erred in the way she has approached questions in the House and made a range of assumptions that are not correct in relation to how financing of major capital projects would work, including the very exciting opportunity before us in energy and in particular the North West Transmission Developments.

We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to take advantage of our nation's transition to renewable energy and we as a state are taking very significant steps to deliver affordable, reliable and clean energy for decades to come, not just for our state but for the nation through Battery of the Nation. One of our biggest economic opportunities lies in the development of our renewable energy economy that will support new investment in Tasmania and create new industries and build new career paths for future generations of Tasmanians.

Our world-class water and wind resources, natural deepwater ports, and our skilled and knowledgeable renewable energy workforce have positioned Tasmania among the best globally in the race to develop renewable energy. As our state grows, our energy demand is also growing. We will need more energy to continue to meet Tasmania's needs. As I said this morning, that is a very different scenario to the one we confronted as a new government when the economy had shrunk, businesses were struggling and we saw major industrials questioning whether or not they would stay in Tasmania at all.

Tasmania currently generates around 17 per cent of our total energy needs from wind and we expect that wind energy will play an even bigger role going forward. Mr Ray Mostogl, the head of the Tasmanian Minerals and Energy Council had a lot to say about this recently and I will be quoting him in a short while.

Wind resources in the state are of a high quality in the National Electricity Market. I can tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker and Leader of the Opposition, that wind generators want to be able to trade into the National Electricity Market. In fact, the Australian Energy Market

Operator identifies four renewable energy zones in Tasmania, including offshore. Any renewable energy development needs to be subject to really strong assessments across each tier of government. As we have made clear, public consultation needs to be a very important part of that process. Our wind developments will support new jobs and investment. It is not complementary to our Marinus Link ambitions, it is underpinned by it: the point, again, that the Government made this morning to correct Labor's false assertions.

Those developments are underpinned by Marinus Link. Ask any of the proponents their position and that is what they will tell you. To facilitate the electricity infrastructure required to support this transformation, we have a lot of work under way. The Government has developed the renewable energy co-ordination framework. This is about delivering least-cost build out of new renewable energy projects, while also taking into consideration important values such as land use, heritage, environment and tourism when considering the best places to locate.

To be clear, we believe in the state's renewable energy potential and are ensuring that the policies we put in place deliver on our objectives in the most efficient and considered manner possible. There are some, and the Leader of the Opposition is certainly among them, who want to worry the public with the claim that we are in an energy crisis. This is not true. We do not have an energy crisis. It surprises me - although, I should not be surprised - that the Leader of the Opposition continues with this claim. We do not have an energy crisis. We certainly have an energy opportunity with investments and proponents wishing to be in Tasmania and that is for a reason. I will need to refer to some very frank corrective comments from the Tasmanian Minerals, Manufacturing and Energy Council chief executive, who felt the need to step in and correct the record.

I refer, of course, to the story by a very talented journalist, Stephanie Dalton, at *The Examiner*, 20 August 2023, under the headline, 'TMMEC CEO Ray Mostogl hits back at Tasmania's energy crisis claims'. The House will find this of great interest, given the Labor Party continues to bring this material in to the House and in the media, because it suits their agenda as they continue to try to shield the federal government from its responsibility to help Australians with the cost-of-living challenges that they are facing. It is very surprising to see how little attention the state Opposition these days pays toward petrol prices, diesel prices, Commonwealth Rent Assistance, Medicare rebates.

It is amazing how quiet Ms White has become on these issues and has said nothing of interest rates or matters to do with the RBA since the election of the federal Labor government. It is hard not to notice that. It is the case that Ms White is constantly trying to sheet cost-of-living pressures down to one bill - electricity bills. It is interesting, given that we know that the biggest impact on a household budget is because of interest rates and the rent rates that follow closely behind and, of course, groceries and the basket of goods. Have a look at petrol and diesel prices lately. I do not hear the Labor Party calling on the federal Government to intervene there, as they did before, under Scott Morrison.

Oh yes, gone very quiet on these matters. In fact, this is the Opposition that not long ago was calling on the state Government to pass a law to cap the retail price of petrol.

Ms White - Because you said that you would.

Mr FERGUSON - There you go again. Imagine being a service station owner in country Tasmania and Rebecca White is going to legislate how much you are allowed to sell your petrol for. Just work that through for a moment. Talk about a flight of capital. They will shut down overnight coming back to Mr Mostogl with some inconvenient truth for Ms White.

Ms White - You said you were going to do it. Peter Gutwein. Raise it with Peter. Remember him? He sacked you. You were the Health minister. Maybe that was Will Hodgman.

Mr FERGUSON - If you are going to be like this then you are just playing to your form of being very negative and very unkind.

Stephanie Dalton writes:

A Tasmanian energy expert has hit back at claims that the state is in an energy crisis. The Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Labor MP, Dean Winter, have both spoken out about the state's 'energy crisis' in the past fortnight former calling on the Government to deliver Marinus Link as quickly as possible. However, Tasmanian Minerals, Manufacturing and Energy Council (TMMEC) chief executive, Ray Mostogl, said Tasmania's reputation as a renewable energy powerhouse had taken an unjust hit.

'Tasmania is not in an electricity crisis and certainly it is no more challenging than the cost-of-living challenges faced by all', Mr Mostogl said. 'Only a few years ago, opportunities to attract new industrial-scale loads were told there was capacity up to 400 megawatts. Since then two wind farms have come on line, and more solar panels have been installed, totaling up to approximately 430 megawatts of intermittent electricity over the years. Tasmania's load profile has not increased over the last 10 years. Despite that, official communication says Tasmania's generation and demand is delicately balanced. If we are in an energy crisis, how has this happened?'

Mr Mostogl said: Tasmania's electricity generation trend graph demonstrates part of the story. The graph shows the "crisis" is not a crisis but a consequence of where electricity in Tasmania is generated from. It shows a reduction in electricity generated in Tasmania using gas since 2008', Mr Mostogl said. The take-up of solar appears to be driving a wafer-thin marginal reduction in overall electricity needed to be supplied by Hydro Tasmania.

Mr Mostogl said that new wind farms have enabled Tasmania's electricity needs to be met without purchasing or generating non-renewable electricity, such as gas. The state does benefit from this, he said. There is the emissions factor - the amount of CO2 attributed to electricity is the lowest in over a decade and Hydro Tasmania's profits are greater without purchasing gas which will fund its upcoming capital program in addition to its dividend to the state Government to fund essential services.

Mr Mostogl said Tasmania has more options than the rest of Australia and most parts of the world regarding its electricity system. 'Sure, we all believe we are paying too much but let us understand and optimise the fundamentals

first', he said. Tasmania does not need haphazard price offsets and band-aid solutions no matter how well-considered at the time of rapidly reacting.

What a put down for the Labor Party who have been running around like chooks with their heads cut off, decrying this, claiming crisis and you have actually got somebody with genuine expertise in this sector hitting back at those claims which are being made purely for political purposes because the Labor Party is lost on policy and as we know, not just on this but on so many other issues, the Labor Party has been thoroughly called out. Apart from being put in administration, the Labor Party has been thoroughly called out for standing for nothing. We are poorly served when the official Opposition of Tasmania cannot come up with a coherent set of policies to respond to the real challenges that Tasmanians are facing.

I embrace the energy challenge and the energy opportunity. This Government embraces the opportunity and the challenges that go with it and we have acted assertively in a range of ways to support those who have not been able on their own without assistance to manage some of the shocks that have occurred, particularly about this time last year. In the second half of last year we saw the wholesale price of energy spike and I hope we all know why. The war in Ukraine was mentioned this morning. Wholesale gas prices were a big contributor as well and of course the needs of a growing economy more generally.

It is very important that we put all of these matters into context and not lose sight of the fact that the only reason Ms White is able to bring a \$10 billion figure into the House is because they are the investments that our Government under our policies are attracting to this beautiful island. What a difference a government makes. Have a look at SunCable and the \$2 billion capital investment that we have successfully lured here when we were one of as many as 30 competing locations. The day the Premier and I and other colleagues made that announcement on Sunday a week ago there were many other government leaders very disappointed to hear that news because they had missed out. They had not been able to attract the interest and support that we have been able to do.

I give the Premier a lot of credit for this. He and I and the former and current Energy ministers worked hard to attract that investment to our state and I am going to say it for members of the Opposition and I hope you hear me loud and clear. We are very proud of the investment attraction we have been able to achieve and we would also like to share that credit with John Perry and his team at the Office of the Coordinator-General, that same office that our Government established in 2014 and which Ms White was so quick to say she would abolish, but she had to backtrack. I know that just like so many things in the 'Bec-flip' category, they will just change their mind again. You cannot rely on them, you cannot trust them, but we know that that announcement to abolish the office was an insight into the Leader of the Opposition's policy agenda. They do not like to see success, they want to keep Tasmanians poor and they want to hold our state back because that is what suits their policy narrative.

Ms White - That is rubbish.

Mr FERGUSON - It is totally correct and it belongs very well with their performance in government when they ran the state into the ground and we saw people and industries fleeing the state. The worst of all was that appalling agreement the Labor Party made with the environmental movement to shut down a very positive traditional industry, the forestry industry. My word, they hurt a lot of good people and wounded a lot of good regional communities around our state. They have recovered but not everybody did. That really grieves

me and I will never be able to walk away from that sadness. I was sitting on the front row of the opposite side of this House watching that bloodbath under the Labor-Greens government. What they did to this state during those dark years is unforgivable. There was no apology either because the Labor Party vigorously opposed our legislation to tear up that appalling deal and the lives in this state that were disrupted because of that was very sad indeed.

Labor is not committed to economic development; that is their history and in opposition they are no better. We have a power plan while Labor have a power struggle. We want to see more power and generation as well as interconnectedness so that we can see more successful trading across Bass Strait, which is a real opportunity for us. So rather than this language from the Labor Party that would undermine Marinus, we see that Hydro's very successful trading model can be enhanced with stronger storages and greater capacity for pumped hydro, allowing us to buy and sell across Bass Strait, buy at low prices and sell at higher prices. It is all about supplying the energy needs of the country but we win because we win economically. That is the model we are pursuing. It is all subject to final investment decision and committed professional Tasmanians are working on that task right now.

You might have thought from yesterday and this morning that the Labor Party were strongly supportive of the North West Transmission Developments, but how can they be when the fullest project depends on Marinus and they have been so wobbly on Marinus? How do these things sit side by side? The Labor Party is unreliable. They are inconsistent. It depends on what day it is as to whether they support Marinus.

Going back to Stephanie Dalton's column, by the way -

Ms Dow - Do you support it?

Mr FERGUSON - I do. Do you support Marinus, Ms Dow?

Ms Dow - Are you going to address the notice of motion and what is in it?

Mr FERGUSON - You ask me do I support it. I have answered the question by your interjection. Do you support it?

Ms White - Have you listened to anything we've said about this topic?

Mr FERGUSON - By interjection, Ms Dow has asked me a question but is not able to answer the same question I posed to her. This makes the point very neatly. You can ask your questions by interjection but you are not prepared to take a position.

Ms Dow interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - First of all, Ms Dow refused to answer a simple question: do we support Marinus or not? Ms Dow is not sure of her position. Either it is no or they do not know; it depends on the day.

Going back to Stephanie Dalton's column, she made the obvious point in the first paragraph that it was not Dean Winter calling for Marinus Link to be built as soon as possible,

it was the former, referring there to the TCCI. With friends like the Labor Party, Marinus does not need too many enemies.

If you claim that you want to see the North West Transmission Developments built then you need to say that you can support Marinus because the two need each other. Has anybody figured this out in the Labor Party? You look at me quizzically, Ms Dow. I honestly do not know what the Labor Party has to offer on this subject. You cannot even commit to Marinus Link. The words are very hollow indeed and it does make the point that the Labor Party stands for nothing. I am certain that if I asked the Greens their position they would tell me. I am certain that they have a consistent position on it and I suspect it may not agree with my own.

I will take the point from Ms Dow, and I am happy to jump there right now because although she is unable to answer my simple question, I am happy to answer hers. Did I block it? No. This is a puerile attempt by the Labor Party to muddy the waters because they have been exposed this morning by Mr Duigan and the Premier in their answers to their questions.

I need to find the notes I wrote down as I was listening carefully to the Leader of the Opposition's comments earlier today when she was talking about borrowings held by TasNetworks which she correctly referred to as \$2.2 billion. That is for the public to be aware of. There is no secret. It is in the annual report which was released and tabled in this House last month. Ms White in her comments earlier, and in her questions this morning, referred to a borrowing limit of \$2.5 billion. How does Ms White know this? It is because I told her this yesterday but she did not know it yesterday. In her questions she referred to only \$2.2 billion. That number is also in TasNetworks' annual report for all to see.

For Ms White to then refer to the difference between those two numbers as all of the borrowing capacity that they have to build the North West Transmission Developments shows a fundamental misunderstanding of how TasNetworks can be capitalised to build future assets.

Ms White - Explain it to me.

Mr FERGUSON - Ms White, I need to because you clearly do not get it. If you are asserting, as I believe you are, that their 'headroom' - to quote you - is their only capacity then it shows that you misunderstand entirely and completely miss the point. TasNetworks' borrowing limit is not \$2.2 billion, it is \$2.5 billion. That has been approved by me as Treasurer on advice. That is on their current operational needs and current approved capital program. I should not have to tell Ms White this, but the North West Transmission Developments has not yet reached final investment decision (FID). Expanding the capital program for TasNetworks post-FID can be supported with additional borrowings. This is the point that Mr Duigan made yesterday but Ms White was not listening.

Ms White - Because they have been blocked.

Mr FERGUSON - Ms White, your conspiracy is wrong. It is as wrong as your understanding of the economics behind these projects.

Ms White - Why are you not building it then?

Mr FERGUSON - The two boards of TasNetworks and their lender, the Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation, also known as TASCORP, negotiate these matters and work them

through on a proper business-case basis. It surprises me that Ms White has that fundamental misunderstanding. It is regrettable and it is in error. The cost of construction would be part of that FID and business case -

Ms White - Why have you cancelled it?

Mr FERGUSON - 'Why have you cancelled it', Ms White says again, revealing the nakedness of a party with no policies. Mr Deputy Speaker, I will not be able, in the time available, to correct all of Ms White's misunderstandings. The reason, in simplistic terms, that it is not being built is because it is going through its business case and final investment decision has not yet been reached. You do not build something until you pass your FID, Ms White.

Ms White - Really? Is that what you told the stadium people?

Mr FERGUSON - I am not going to be able to continue to fill in all of your gaps in knowledge. The benefits of the construction and the asset are part of that income and expenditure for that new asset over the life of the asset. That would all be considered as part of a future final investment. The revenue model that will underpin the repayment -

Ms White - Why have you invited investment from the private sector?

Mr FERGUSON - Ms White, you are a mess, you have been exposed and I am explaining to the House how wrong you have been. I know you do not like it but you need to hear it because you have put a whole range of material on the table, on the record, and you are wrong. You cannot be trusted with economic policy -

Ms White - You are driving the economy into the ground.

Deputy SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Opposition.

Mr FERGUSON - The Leader of the Opposition always does this. It is her tell. When she is cornered and exposed, she goes to ridicule.

As I was saying, the revenue model that would underpin the servicing of new borrowings to build the new capital base would also be considered in the business case, all of which is of high interest and importance to the CEO and board of TasNetworks, before they would approve a business case, before they would approach their lender, TASCORP, for the finance.

I hope I have done a good job at filling in all the gaps. It is hard to fill in all your gaps, Ms White, because most of what you say exposes gaps but I made a note. First of all, it is not about profits - wrong. It is not about dividends, as was claimed this morning - wrong. It is not about headroom. I have explained that. You are wrong. It is not about blocking: not me as Treasurer, not the Treasury, not the TASCORP, and also not TasNetworks themselves. It is about professional, committed Tasmanians working together on the business case, consulting communities, developing the business case, which includes the cost base for the construction, income and expenditure during the life of the asset, including maintenance, a revenue model which would then go together. These are professional, committed people working together for the benefit of our state. You should commend them.

Now that I have filled in your gaps, Ms White, I hope you will cease with your false accusations against those different organisations and the Minister for Energy and Renewables, who is doing a tremendous job only one month into his new role. You should support him. I beg the Opposition that if you really want to be taken seriously on the North West Transmission Developments, you are going to have to get off the Marinus fence. You are going to have to say that you want to see Marinus built. Maybe then, next time Stephanie Dalton at *The Examiner* writes a story about these matters, they will be able to say that not just the TCCI but also the Labor Party were calling on the development of Marinus Link.

Before I resume my seat, I will do two things.

First, I gave an undertaking in a previous debate to table some papers. Ms White and others will remember there was a motion to which I moved a successful amendment to wording I felt I could honour. I undertook to provide advice in relation to the fire levy, the development, and a range of advice from Treasury. On the same day that motion was carried, I wrote to the acting secretary of the Department of Treasury and Finance, Fiona Calvert. I table that letter. I also table the letter in reply from Mrs Calvert. It contains more than I asked for: it includes an index of advice, financial modelling and risk analysis regarding options for funding Tasmania Fire and Emergency Services. The third item I table is the full advice, without any redactions by me, from the Department of Treasury. I table those three items earlier than required and faithful to my word.

Second, I wish to move an amendment. The amendment is -

That the motion be amended by leaving out all words after the word 'That', and inserting instead:

The House -

- (1) Notes that both Houses have already established the Joint Select Committee on Energy Matters;
- (2) Notes that the Committee has wide-ranging terms of reference that include the North West Transmission Developments and its financial viability; and
- (3) Notes that the Committee is best placed to scrutinise the issues relating to the North West Transmission Developments.

There are copies of my amendment.

I will draw the House's attention to the fact that Mr Tucker has already moved through this House, with the Government's support, the establishment of a joint select committee. That was carried by our House on 28 September. The Legislative Council agreed to the resolution on 17 October, just under a month ago. On that basis, we have four members of each House on that committee. No doubt that committee is up and running. In part (d) of its terms of reference, it clearly lists North West Transmission Developments. That was moved by Mr Tucker and endorsed by this House, I think, without dissent. That committee is now up and running. It has the opportunity, using its wide range in its terms of reference, to look into these matters. I am far more in favour of that.

Were that amendment not to be supported, the Government would not be able to support the original motion. This is about being as reasonable and open as we can be. Even though Mr Duigan appears to have been the original political target of this attempt by the Labor Party in the last two days, I am not prepared to upend and interfere with proper professional people doing their job. I support the existing joint House committee continuing to have the opportunity to inquire into these matters, seek information, seek witnesses and ask questions of people who are responsible for these matters. For those reasons, we do not support the original motion.

I support the amendment and encourage members of this House to see the good sense of finding an accommodation in relation to these matters.

[4.30 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Mr Speaker, I will speak quickly to the motion and address the amendment to the motion. I will leave plenty of time for the Opposition to speak to the proposed amendment to the motion.

The Greens are strong supporters of renewable energy. That goes without saying. Two things must happen. It must be the right proposal in the right place and assessed and consulted through the right process. It also has to be married with other actions to address climate change. It has to be married with actions that actively reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, actively reduce our emissions from industrial activities, and reduce emissions from the transport sector and other domestic outputs.

Federally, there is bipartisan support for renewable energy between the Liberal and Labor parties - and that is very welcome. There is tripartisan support with the Greens. There is bipartisan support between Liberal and Labor for opening new fossil fuel developments for more gas, for more coal mines, for a range of other destructive new fossil fuel activities. Sadly, in this state, there is still bipartisan support for native forest logging, one of our biggest emitting industries that we have.

It is very interesting to hear the Treasurer talk about the Tasmanian forest agreement process, having been involved in that at one level. I remind the Treasurer that that process came on the back of the global financial crisis. That process came on the back of the collapse of markets for Tasmanian timber for woodchips. It was the industry that was wanting to come to the table to negotiate an outcome and so that process rolled though. It was an indictment on the Liberal Party at the time that it chose to play base party politics with the issue, despite the consensus around the table. When it got into government it tore up the agreement with many grandiose promises around rebuilding the industry. Treasurer, despite your contribution now in the House, despite tearing up that agreement, despite throwing out the goodwill and the collaboration that came behind it, you still have not given the industry one single stick of forest back to log. You still have not honoured the promise that you made at the time that you would not subsidise the industry going forward.

It is important to note, given this conversation is about TasNetworks, that the year you were elected to government - the year you made the promise that there would be no more subsidies - you made an equity transfer from TasNetworks to the coffers of Forestry Tasmania to prop up native forest logging. When you look at the billions of dollars of debt that TasNetworks holds today, remember that \$30 million of that is because you propped up native forest logging through Forestry Tasmania from a direct equity transfer.

We support a renewable energy economy but it has to be the right proposal in the right place and the right process. When it comes to process, we are concerned with the wind rush that is going on in regard to energy - the infatuation with our wind resources. We have a government that has instructed the Parks agency - the agency responsible for managing the natural and cultural heritage values of this state and its reserves - to do audits about where those wind developments could be built, to farm off some of that public reserve land to a multinational wind corporation, many owned by interests in China linked to the communist party, and build massive wind developments.

That is an indictment on our approach when it comes to natural assets and cultural value assets and it is one of the key concerns we have when it comes to planning around these developments.

Not every renewable energy proposal is going to be in the right place. I want to talk briefly about one that we recognise is a very good proposal, the Connorville solar farm proposal for 400 hectares of panels. It is going to be generating 300 megawatts of energy, double what Granville Harbor and Cattle Hill put out together. There are opportunities here to do these kinds of renewable energy developments in the right place. It is on cleared land already, does not require clearance of further vegetation and is in proximity to the Palmerston substation and can be connected directly up. We do not need the long transmission lines that are associated with the Marinus Link project and the Robbins Island wind farm.

On Robbins Island, I want to make the point that has been made over and over in this place and we have debated it numerous times, but it is clearly the wrong place for an industrial wind farm development such as this. We had this conversation earlier in the day in many ways and Mr Winter clearly misunderstands the threatened species that are at risk here. There are migratory shore birds that live around the mudflats around Robbins Island and they are one of the key species that scientists are deeply concerned about. That is why you have groups like Birdlife Tasmania opposing the development and why you have environment groups in the courts opposing this development and why you have the EPA itself imposing specific conditions because of the parrot.

The other thing is Aboriginal Heritage. We had a long debate yesterday about the Aboriginal Lands Act and I took some time to unpack the challenges with the Aboriginal Heritage Act, but there is no development that speaks more to the fundamental failures of the Aboriginal heritage protection legislation in Tasmania than the Robbins Island development. This is a cultural landscape of the palawa people and has stories of occupation that go back thousands of generations. Here we have an industrial wind farm that has been approved, gone through the process, and against the Aboriginal Heritage Act it has not even triggered a proper assessment. It had an earlier assessment that showed there are no stone tools or ancestral graves under the very footprint of the development and that is good enough for the Aboriginal Heritage Act. Nothing to see here, nothing to do. No matter that it is a cultural landscape of millennia old. No matter that the Aboriginal community are pushing back and raising concerns about what it means.

That is why we need to have proper planning processes around these developments. We need to have the impacts detailed. We need to have detailed assessments published and we need to have comprehensive community consultation so that we understand the communities' views on the developments.

On the motion itself, we are supportive. The additional transparency on these issues is very welcome and I certainly will not reflect on the vote of the last debate but I make the point that TasNetworks is now in the GBE scrutiny schedule, or is likely to be going forward.

Mr Winter - Already was.

Mr BAYLEY - No it was not, Mr Winter. There is now going to be an opportunity to scrutinise that further. We support the motion because it adds transparency and because there are outstanding incredible levels of debt in TasNetworks. I will read from the Tasmanian Audit Office report released recently in relation to TasNetworks and it talks about our working capital and finance facilities. We have been over some of this a little bit earlier in the debate but I want to read directly from this because it tells us a stark picture of the absolutely astounding levels of debt held by this agency.

At 30 June 2023, TasNetworks working capital, other than short-term debt maturities, was a \$5.54 million deficit. In 2022 it was \$22 million in deficit. Short-term debt maturities of \$260 million - and in 2022 that was \$220.5 million - will be refinanced in line with TasNetworks' Treasury risk management policy and within the TASCORP master loan facility agreement limits and covenants. On 26 July 2023, TASCORP approved an increase in the borrowing facility limit under the master facility loan agreement from \$2.2 billion to \$2.5 billion.

The Treasurer has unpacked some of that for the House in terms of what that means for its capacity to borrow money, but from a Greens perspective we are going to support this motion because we think, given those levels of debt that are held, given the controversy and contention that is held around the projects that are anchored to these transmission lines, and given the nature of the companies involved - massive multinational corporations that are looking to invest in Tasmania - we think there needs to be additional transparency around the relationships and agreements between those companies and the Tasmanian Government. There is nothing in this motion that is of concern; all of the information is only going to add to the picture in relation to these developments and we are certainly supportive.

Just quickly on the Treasurer's amendment, we will not be supporting it because we think the motion as it stands is sound. We note of course the fact that there is the joint committee that has been established and it will consider a whole lot of information, but tabling this information by tomorrow does not preclude the workings of that committee. In fact, it enhances it. It will give members of that committee additional time to digest that information and understand the linkages and levels of debt. It will help that committee do its business and will save it having to order the Government to bring forward that information to the committee.

We have seen, in the past, how hard it is to tyre-lever information out of this Government when the House orders it. We have done it on a range of issues, including Marinus Link, the North West Transmission Developments, Hydro and Battery of the Nation. Unfortunately, there are now proceedings in other committees in relation to that. We think this motion is sound. It asks for logical information that should not be too hard to find. We note that the Treasurer has tabled several documents already that we will also need to have a look at and digest. We will be supporting the motion.

I heard a long conversation just then around a future investment decision around the sort of preparatory work you have to do to get to the point where you can make a future investment

decision, with concerns around debt and so forth. It is worth pointing out the stark contrast between the attitude to this kind of development and the attitude to an AFL stadium on Macquarie Point, a decision that is being made entirely at the behest of the AFL. It has had zero consultation and is completely contrary to the planning process that was already in place, yet seemingly there has already been a financial investment decision for that development, despite the fact that we know \$715 million is a back-of-the-envelope number. We know it is going to cost well over \$1 billion and that, added to these other billions of dollars we are talking about in terms of these renewable energy facilitating developments, is of serious concern.

We need some clarity on the information. We need some clarity on the investment decisions and the information that is being prepared by Government agencies. We need some transparency around the conversations that are going on between this Government and the major international companies and corporations that are looking to set up shop in Tasmania. On that basis, we will not be supporting the Treasurer's motion. We are happy to support the Opposition Leader's motion, as read.

[4.45 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I say from the outset that we will not be supporting the Treasurer's amendment that he has put forward this afternoon. We stand firmly behind the motion that is before the House today and how important it is.

This is not the first time there has been a notice of motion similar to this before this House in this place when it comes to seeking more information from this very non-transparent Government. They are very secretive. You could not have hit that nail on the head any better, Ms White. This Government shrouds itself in secrecy. For a Government that puts out press releases about the dark, and the Attorney-General talked a little bit about the dark, there is one thing that is pretty clear here: that is that this Government continues to keep Tasmanians in the dark. For the Treasurer to come in here and speak be holier-than-thou about how he knows best about all of this information, about why this decision has been taken by TasNetworks, well if he knew all of that information, why did he not inform the Tasmanian public about why this decision was made? Why did he not consult with the Mayor of Burnie who had been very strong in her advocacy about the need for this transmission network development in the north-west?

Why was it that landowners were only provided a letter about such a significant change to a project that this Government has been out spruiking for years, and no explanation for this change? Why would we not come into this place and seek further information, hold you to account and ask questions? The hypocrisy of saying that there needs to be all of this due diligence done around an investment decision. What does he think each of the respective companies who have taken a risk to invest in Tasmania that would be leveraging off this infrastructure development, what do you think they have to do around their investments and what do you think this decision, taken by TasNetworks, does to their investment certainty? It is no wonder business confidence is down in the state of Tasmania.

In another area of hypocrisy, it was not that long ago that there was a motion before this House seeking the Treasury advice that was provided to this Government about the proposal for a stadium at Macquarie Point and through that process we found that there was no Treasury advice provided. At what point in time did the Treasurer decide to listen to the experts and let

them do their job and provide advice and due diligence around this significant investment? It did not apply the same principles to the Stadium. It is extraordinary.

This is an important motion before the House that should be supported today by this Government. If they have nothing to hide then they should support this motion and I remind the Treasurer that it was two members of his backbench who publicly questioned the public investment in Marinus this Government was making and they left your Government, leaving you in minority, because they were concerned about the transparency and the level of debt being racked up by your Government, by you as the Treasurer, and the precarious position that that put Tasmania in.

Let us be honest that is the only reason why further information was provided to the House because we now have those two former backbenchers sitting on the crossbench, and this place has changed because this House is now ordering this Government to provide information that in the past it has hidden from Tasmanians. Those two former backbenchers have concerns about Marinus at such a level that they left your Government, plunging you into minority.

I grew up in Burnie and my family and our livelihood was built around traditional industries.

Mr Ferguson - Do you support Marinus?

Ms DOW - In the north-west we have always had questions about Marinus, which is quite right. We want it to be in the best interests of Tasmanians. Do you?

Mr Ferguson - I have answered your interjection, and you are unable to do it in return. Do you support it?

Ms DOW - I will go on and talk about the benefits to Tasmanians and to the north-west region. My father was employed at the pulp mill - an industry that was established in Tasmania because we had access to a deep port. We had access to a natural resource, to cheap power and to water. Governments in those days undertook R&D to ensure that these industries could occur across their communities, providing jobs and prosperity for Tasmanian families. That is what this is about.

You might think it is all right to make announcements, creating false hope for people about industries that will come to regions that industries have walked away from or have downsized in over many years, which has had detrimental impacts to local economies, to local people, and left many communities living with significant disadvantage.

Mr Ferguson - Did you support Rebecca White's forest deal, Labor-Greens?

Ms DOW - I was not even here then. I am talking now about this transmission line project.

Mr Ferguson - You cannot answer any questions. You are happy to ask them.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr WINTER - Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, are we doing standing orders this afternoon?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Yes.

Mr Ferguson - I was asked by interjection, by your colleague. Double standards.

Ms DOW - I have five minutes and I want to make the most of them. This is important for the north-west region. Once again, we see you going out to make announcements. You, yourself, when Energy minister, talked about fast-tracking investment in renewables and the importance of the renewable energy industry around HIF. Where are you now on HIF?

Mr Ferguson - Do you support Marinus? Yes or no? You are embarrassing us.

Ms DOW - Be silent. Do you support HIF and the jobs it will bring to north-west Tasmania? Whaleback Ridge, Robbins Island. Have you spoken to the Circular Head mayor and the Circular Head community about what uncertainty around that project does for their community, a project they have been planning for years? When will you provide certainty over these projects? This is a key infrastructure project that links to economic development opportunities for my electorate. You will not hear the Premier talk about HIF – and, by the way, it is his electorate. What happened to HIF? Why will you not talk about that important project for our region? It would mean \$1 billion in investment to our region, 200 long-term jobs and 2000 jobs in construction. That is not insignificant. That project is in jeopardy due to your Government's inaction and the 'rescoping', which is what you have called it, of this important infrastructure project.

What about all the farmers and landowners who have had uncertainty hanging over their head now for years about this project?

Mr Winter - First to find out.

Ms DOW - That is exactly right, Mr Winter. They were the first people to find out about this. Do not come here lecturing us about information that you think we should have known. Why not tell people about why these changes have taken place? You have left communities in the dark, you have jeopardised millions of dollars in investment, and you have jeopardised jobs in a region that has already been through a number of economic transitions and downscalings of industry over decades. Why give them false hope that this Government is going to make their lives better, is going to offer their kids a job, give them a reason to stay in Tasmania? You turn your backs on them. You have no explanation for it and you come in here and lecture us.

Mr Ferguson - You can give but you cannot take. You ask the question, but you cannot answer it.

Ms DOW - You can give but you cannot take.

Mr Ferguson - I answered your question.

Ms DOW - I answered yours.

Mr Ferguson - I gave you a straight answer.

Ms DOW - And I answered yours, Treasurer. Now you answer our questions, and you answer the questions of the north-west community, the people of the west coast about the Whaleback Ridge project. When is that going to happen? All of those jobs, all of that investment. Robbins Island. When will that happen? You have gone very quiet on that.

Mr Ferguson - But you cannot take position.

Ms DOW - We support it.

Mr Ferguson - You support Marinus?

Ms DOW - We support the jobs at Whaleback Ridge, absolutely.

Mr Ferguson - Okay, you had my hopes up there for a second.

Ms DOW - Marinus has always been about the best interest of Tasmanians.

Mr Ferguson - You had my hopes up. I thought you were going to answer your own question.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Ms DOW - The only hopes that have been raised in this are the hopes of a regional community, a community that this Government has turned its back on. You do not hear the Premier standing up for jobs in his own electorate - 200 jobs at Mallee Resources, the Avery nickel mine. This Government did nothing to save those jobs. This is a government that came to power in 2014 with a mantra of jobs and growth. What happened to that? You have walked away from it. You have turned your back on those regional communities.

Mr Ferguson - We created 54 000 jobs. You lost 10 000 jobs.

Ms DOW - What have you done with Mallee Resources and those 200 jobs, Treasurer? They wanted payroll tax relief. You promised them that back in 2015 and it has been crickets.

Mr Ferguson - You are like a shifting shadow.

Ms DOW - You are a shifty shadow.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr Ferguson - You will not answer a simple question and, whenever you are challenged, you jump to another subject. We have grown 54 000 -

Ms DOW - You do not like me talking about the 200 jobs on the west coast. Your Government did nothing to stick up for those workers and their families, and the uncertainty they had.

In conclusion, this is an important motion and it is not the first motion of its kind that has come before this House. There is a change in the air in this Chamber and the time of this

Government being able to hide information is long gone. We will not support the Treasurer's attempt to amend the motion.

What we will support is regional jobs, regional families, prospective investors, people who have invested a huge amount of money on their individual projects that this Government made promises to them about being able to pursue in Tasmania. Tasmanians do not want a government that blocks development. Regional Tasmanians want jobs in their local community, they want opportunities for their kids, a reason for their kids to stay in Tasmania. They want to get access to TAFE so their kids can get a trade and work in their local community. This Government has not done the workforce planning. They have not provided the foundations for education and training opportunities in regional communities. They talk a lot about it but they have not done it, just like they talk a lot about Tasmania's renewable energy future and about their commitment to the renewable energy industries across our state. The fact is these industries are not progressing under this Government.

We need more on-island generation and we have a huge economic opportunity if we could just have a government that had a coordinated approach to this and did not keep changing the goalposts or drawing lines in the sand. When you drew that line in the sand, you tried to signal certainty around this project, about these developments on-island, about the north-west transmission lines project but you have created complete uncertainty. It is an absolute mess.

And now you have a new minister who is like a fish out of water, a deer in the headlights, who has no idea about the enormous responsibility of the Energy portfolio. You have just dumped him in it because you have nothing left on your backbench. You are in minority, your Government is a mess, you are more focused on yourselves and maintaining government, your own survival, than you are on the survival of Tasmanian families, their livelihoods and investment in regional communities to create jobs.

Mr Winter - Out of touch.

Ms DOW - You are completely out of touch, that is right, Mr Winter. You are completely out of touch with what Tasmanians need and want from their government. It is sad that after 10 years, you really have nothing to show for it.

Mr Ferguson - Oh, really? We created 54 000 jobs. You lost 10 000.

Ms DOW - Nothing to show for it. All of these wind farm developments have progressed nowhere under your Government. Educational outcomes are the worst in the country. They have declined. Health outcomes are the worst in the country. These are the foundations of our economy and our society, Treasurer, and your Government is not getting the basics right.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - The time for debate has expired. The question is that the amendment to the motion be agreed to.

The House divided -

AYES 10

Mrs Alexander
Mr Barnett

NOES 10

Mr Bayley
Dr Broad (Teller)

Mr Behrakis (Teller)
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Mr Jaensch
Ms Ogilvie
Mr Shelton
Mr Street
Mr Young

Ms Dow
Ms Finlay
Ms Haddad
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms White
Mr Winter
Dr Woodruff

PAIRS

Mr Rockliff

Ms Butler

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - The votes being equal, in accordance with Standing Order 167, I cast my vote with the Ayes.

Amendment agreed.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

POLICE OFFENCES AMENDMENT (BEGGING REPEAL) BILL 2023 (No. 40)

Second Reading

[5.08.p.m]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - I will require a vote, thank you Mr Deputy Speaker.

The cost-of-living crisis has been extremely serious in Tasmania for many years now, but it is deepening every day and the increased interest rate has pushed people on mortgages to have even more unbearable pressure on their capacity to pay bills. We are seeing food relief organisations pushed beyond limits they did not think they were able to stretch past in order to meet the community's needs. Whole new demographics are now needing to access support, people who have never had to ask for help in the past.

There has been a 45 per cent increase in homelessness in Tasmania in the last five years, and we are hearing stories of mothers and children escaping family violence, living in the back of a car for indefinite periods of time. With more and more Tasmanians being pushed into extreme poverty, they are being forced to resort to begging just so they can afford to pay for a meal. It is a terrible situation, but it is made far worse by the fact that under the current laws people in such hardship can be sent to jail or cop a hefty fine if they beg for money to put food on the table or cover their bills.

Shamefully, begging remains an offence in five Australian jurisdictions: Queensland, Victoria, the Northern Territory, South Australia and unfortunately Tasmania. It is an antiquated offence that has no place in a contemporary, informed and just society. The introduction of begging crimes has traditionally been justified as a mechanism to prevent more serious crime. Historically, begging has been suggested to be associated with laziness

and moral shortcomings which would inevitably lead to criminal behaviour, or so the thinking was at the time.

This legal provision is rife with the judgment of a classist society. It clearly is no longer relevant in our society and it is clearly no longer a prevalent view in our society that begging leads to other criminal behaviours. Further arguments such as the 'broken window theory' have also been put forward. The theory suggests that begging contributes to a place's disorderly appearance. This signals, some people say, to potential offenders that law enforcement has weak control and, therefore, would lead to crimes. That theory has also been widely debunked.

Historically, it has been suggested that begging is a public nuisance. That is an unfortunate, selfish and in our view elitist attitude. It also, most importantly, holds no empathy for people who are so destitute that they feel they have no choice but to ask strangers for money. I have yet to meet a person begging who seems to feel comfortable with having to take that course. It is worth noting that the provision this begging offence falls under is titled Drunkenness, Vagrancy, Indecency and other Public Annoyances in the Police Offences Act.

In the last couple of decades, offences relating to vagrancy, public drunkenness, prostitution and games of hazard have been struck from the act. Disadvantaged people are decidedly more vulnerable to being unduly caught up in the legal system. They are more prone to profiling, which is the police tracking and recording of a person's appearance and making assumptions about future behaviour on the basis of past appearance or behaviour. That is more likely to occur in situations that passively expose a person to criminal activities such as sleeping rough in public places. People in that situation are less equipped to provide a legal defence.

Being jailed for minor offences such as begging increases the risk of reoffending in a more serious manner. The inclusion of this offence in statute is a relic of an unjust society. There is no public safety, no moral or practical justification for begging to remain an offence. As the law currently stands, someone who is found guilty of begging faces a fine of up to \$975 or six months in prison. The lack of logic there is quite breathtaking. If a person is so destitute that they are asking strangers for money, how are they going to find \$975? Are we not saying then, to that person, 'if you cannot find the money, you can spend some time in Risdon Prison?' That is no response to poverty.

The Police Offences Amendment (Begging Repeal) Bill 2023 will amend the Police Offences Act 1935 to ensure that begging is no longer an offence in Tasmania. This bill is straightforward and simply removes subsections (1) and (1aa) in section A from the Police Offences Act 1935. Sections (1) and (1aa) set out the specifics of the offence and penalty respectively. In 2017, the Homeless Persons Legal Clinic Law Right published a paper on the crime of begging in Australia, which found that the criminalisation of begging has a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable people in society. There is a strong correlation, they found, between the practice of begging and several complex and interrelated individual factors. People who commit the crime of begging do so out of desperation and because their basic needs are not being met. The failure of government services to meet people's basic needs contributes to them being forced to take the approach of putting their hand out and asking for help. Those failures include inadequately funding welfare services, healthcare, housing and social security.

Fraudulent or aggressive begging is rare and can be more appropriately prosecuted in Tasmania under our existing criminal offences and individuals charged in that way are often

poorly equipped to defend themselves. That is the evidence of legal experts and we should heed it, take it seriously and deal with this anachronistic law. Of these points that were put forward by Law Right, the failure of government services to provide for the financially and socially disadvantaged should resonate strongly with us in Tasmania in the current situation. There are currently 4598 applicants on the housing register and the rolling average to house priority applicants has now reached 80 weeks. That is moving up to two years. We can all agree that housing is a foundation of contemporary society and critical for mental wellbeing. It is critical for acquiring or maintaining work and also for being able to earn a living wage. Right now, we have a situation where the government has categorically failed to ensure there is enough residential affordable housing both public and private that is available to house the people of Tasmania.

I want to read into Hansard now a letter that was sent to all members of the parliament and it is a very important list of signatories. They were Anglicare Tasmania, the Australia Lawyers Alliance, Community Legal Centres Tasmania, JusTas, St Vincent de Paul Society Tasmania, Shelter Tasmania, Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, TasCOSS and the Prisoner Legal Service. They start by saying in the 2019 debate of the bill that we have before us, the history is that this bill has been introduced and passed before. The then minister for police, fire, and emergency management Mark Shelton acknowledged that:

Begging often stems from homelessness, chronic poverty and disadvantage and is usually a last resort to meet immediate needs and therefore criminal law is not the appropriate response.

As well in that debate, the then human services minister, Roger Jaensch, noted:

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.

The organisations continue:

Criminalising begging is criminalising poverty. By abolishing the criminalisation of begging, we pave the way for a more compassionate societal approach, safeguarding the rights of individuals to seek assistance without fear of legal repercussion. The Police Offences Amendment (Begging Repeal) Bill 2023 to be debated will provide members of the House of Assembly with an opportunity to recognize that people begging need help and that poverty cannot be addressed through a criminal justice response. The Police Offences Act 1935 currently Section 8 of this Act makes it an offence to beg relevantly providing:

(8) Begging imposition etc.

(1) A person shall not -

(a) in a public place beg or expose wounds or deformities, or place himself or herself or otherwise act so as to induce or attempt to induce, the giving of money or other financial advantage, or instigate or incite, another person to do any of those things.

The penalty for begging is a fine up to \$875 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months.

I continue with the letter from those organisations and they say:

The case for abolition: criminal sanctions for begging including fines and imprisonment fails to address the underlying cause of a behaviour and in many cases simply exacerbates pressures such as financial stress as a result of responses such as the imposition of punitive fines. Research from Justice Connect and similar organisations highlights the grim reality faced by those compelled to beg.

Their findings encapsulating the blight of our societies most disenfranchised paint a stark portrait - 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. More recently, a review by Queensland Police found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are disproportionately represented with 64 per cent of people charged with begging in 2021 identifying as being indigenous.

Finally, they say a 2019 study of 101 persons who were in receipt of food from charities living in Perth, Western Australia, found that while charitable services were the main source of food in the previous week, a significant proportion also begged for money for food, 36 per cent, or begged for food, 32 per cent. Interestingly, only 4 in 10 of those people, 38 per cent of them, reported being homeless, highlighting that begging is most often borne of necessity rather than homelessness. They say the research reinforces the conclusion that begging is usually an action of last resort, meaning that people beg out of necessity rather than resorting to more serious criminal offences such as stealing, drug dealing or prostitution.

The sector organisations go on to say:

An argument often raised with the criminalisation of begging is the need for public safety, namely, that some persons that beg engage in stand over tactics or threatening speech or behaviour. However, the research finds that the incidence of this aggressive begging is rare. It should also be noted that there are other offences currently provided for in the act that could address violent or abusive conduct and that provide Tasmania Police with the power to request that persons move on.

Section 15B of the act provides that persons can be moved on if the police believe, on reasonable grounds, that a person:

- (a) has committed or is likely 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.

Repealing the offence of begging will ensure that the Tasmanian Parliament meets a commitment it first made in 2019 as well as bring Tasmania into line with Western Australia, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, where begging is not an offence.

They continue:

It is also worth noting that other Australian jurisdictions are moving in this direction with a 2022 parliamentary review in Queensland of public intoxication, begging and public urination offences, recommending that all those offences be decriminalised, subject to appropriate community-based health and social welfare responses being in place.

In Victoria, a 2020 review of the criminal justice system recommended a review of all offences linked to homelessness, including begging.

Victoria has also recently abolished the offence of public intoxication in recognition of the disproportionate impact this offence has had on Aboriginal people and following the recommendations from the coronial inquest into the death of Ms Tanya Day.

In summary, the organisations say:

With the majority of Australian jurisdictions having already passed laws that begging should not be an offence or having recommended decriminalisation, there is a clear national trend toward embracing policies that confront socioeconomic challenges with evidence-based solutions and compassion. We urge you to support the bill and repeal the offence of begging.

A reminder House that the signatories of that letter were Anglicare Tasmania, Australian Lawyers Alliance, Community Legal Centres Tasmania, Just Tas, Prisoners Legal Service, St Vincent de Paul Society Tasmania, Shelter Tasmania, Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre and TasCoss.

Today, as we did in 2018, the Greens and the community and justice sectors ask the parliament to send a message that we do not victim-blame, we do not consider begging an immoral or criminal activity and we care about people living in extremely difficult circumstances. Today we ask that a message be sent that we will tackle poverty instead of attacking people who are impoverished. The Government has had ample opportunity to act on this matter.

When the Greens brought on this bill for debate in 2018, then-minister for Police, Mr Ferguson, rejected our bill but committed on the Floor to bringing on a bill himself at a later date.

A year later, the government tabled the Police Offences Amendment (Repeal of Begging Bill 2019). That was a similar bill, but it also contained an additional clause that provided for new grounds under section 15B for which people can be dispersed:

... by, or in the course of, or in connection with begging ...

Those additional circumstances included subsections:

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

That bill passed the House of Assembly but the clause that the government added was quite rightly removed by the Legislative Council. At that point the government then refused to bring the bill back on for debate in this House. It was a bill that subsequently lapsed when the parliament was prorogued ahead of the 2021 state election.

We are here today in light of the cost-of-living crisis to finish the business of the House, and the clear intention of the House. The Greens' position, on the advice we have received from numerous legal and policing experts and also which I have read to the House as outlined by the justice and communities sectors, is that the proposed new provisions the Government added to the previous bill, and the minister for Police has foreshadowed an amendment he will be proposing for this bill today, are unwarranted.

The Police Offences Act 1935 has an extensive array of general police powers. The current section 15B(1)(a) allows for dispersal where a person has quote 'committed or is likely to commit an offence'. As well, paragraph (c) of 15B(1) provides for dispersal if a person is 'endangering, or likely to endanger the safety of any other person' and (d) provides where a person 'has committed, or is likely to commit a breach of the peace'.

The current 15B(1) also provides for dispersal where a person is 'obstructing or is likely to obstruct the movement of pedestrians or vehicles'. Our view is that the Government's amendment, which seems substantially similar to the one that was introduced in their bill in 2019 and that was subsequently amended to be removed in the Legislative Council, is not necessary, was not necessary and is an unnecessary confusion of what is a simple matter.

I want to leave time for other members to make a contribution. We have been pushing for this change for so long because the Greens believe that if someone is in a situation where they are so desperate that they need to beg, they clearly need help and support, but not the punitive hand of this outdated and harsh law.

There is obviously a noticeable increase in the number of Tasmanians who are struggling with cost of living. With people who are begging, the importance of removing begging as a crime is greater than ever.

We welcome the support of the community and justice sectors. It underscores the widespread view in the Tasmanian community that this should no longer be a crime. It is a move towards compassion, which is spreading across the nation in this area and is welcome.

We commend the bill to the House and look forward to the comments of members.

[5.30 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Mr Speaker, I rise to speak on the Tasmanian Greens' Police Offences Amendment (Begging Repeal) Bill 2023. I thank Dr Woodruff, member for Franklin, for bringing this bill to the House for consideration. I believe all of us in this place agree that begging should not be a criminal offence. Over the years, this House has agreed to repeal the offence of begging, most notably in November 2019, when the Government put forward the Police Offences Amendment (Repeal of Begging) Bill 2019. I acknowledge, like Dr Woodruff, that this was in response to the Tasmanian Greens tabling a bill of similar intent the year prior.

The Tasmanian Government recognises and appreciates that begging is often a manifestation of homelessness, chronic poverty and disadvantage. Begging can be a last-resort activity to supplement income for people in a time of need. People in these circumstances need strong wrap-around social supports. Having a criminal law approach can be highly discriminatory and not the appropriate way to deal with a complex issue. I note that the West Australian, New South Wales and ACT jurisdictions no longer have the offence for begging. Other jurisdictions have made amendments to their legislation, including Victoria.

Our Government is committed to supporting vulnerable Tasmanians in their time of need, including to provide cost-of-living relief. The past two years have seen inflation driven by national and global factors, as well as interest rate rises. These have caused real challenges for Tasmanians. We are delivering almost \$400 million in concessions to help over the next four years, which is an increase of more than 28 per cent compared to the 2022-23 budget. This means that concession customers will, for example, receive \$880 in power bill relief. That is 42 per cent of the typical concession customer's bill. Eligible small businesses, including community sector organisations, will also receive a total rebate of \$650 this year.

Under our Premier's strong and compassionate leadership, this Government has increased funding to Neighbourhood Houses, provided \$2 million over two years to food relief, and helped Loaves and Fishes, in my electorate, and Foodbank with funding for new trucks. We have included a veteran wellbeing voucher, made a Rural PLUS freight, expanded the Private Rental Incentive Program to deliver more affordable rentals, helped school students with their digital inclusion, expanded the NILS (no-interest loans) scheme to cover rental bonds and initial rents, and lifted the NILS cap to expand access to household essentials. We have removed the co-payment for patient travel through the PTAS (Patient Travel Assistance) scheme, expanded the School Lunch pilot, and increased accommodation and travel allowances for apprentices and trainees, of which I am very proud.

This Government does not want any Tasmanian to be in a position where they feel they need to beg. If a Tasmanian feels they need to request support from the community, it is important that we reduce the stigmatisation of begging because it is not a criminal issue.

Equally, it is important to be able to address problematic behaviour, such as intimidation and harassment, or where a beggar may prevent members of the community from accessing a small business or important amenities. The public contacts Tasmania Police to seek their assistance in these instances.

Both Houses have considered this matter before, in 2019 and 2020. The former leader of the Greens brought a bill to the House in 2018. At that time, my predecessor as the minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, Michael Ferguson, undertook to review

situations involving begging in Tasmania. This occurred and Tasmania Police advised that the offence of begging was not regularly used to charge offenders. Only 12 charges had been laid during the review period of 1 June 2016 to 30 December 2018. Of the 12 charges, none was in relation to passive begging. All instances involved active begging, that is, approaching members of the public or other aggravating circumstances that necessitated the offender's arrest. The 12 charges involved only four offenders. All offences occurred in Hobart or North Hobart.

Since 2018, Tasmanian Police have not laid any charges for the offence of begging. Despite not laying charges, Tasmania Police advise that officers continue to regularly use the existence of the offence as grounds to move people on under section 15B of the act where the begging behaviour is problematic. That includes if the begging is intimidating or harassing, or is in a location that adversely affects business or the amenity of the public.

Analysis of Tasmania Police's dispatch system shows that Tasmania Police received 67 complaints from the public in relation to begging during the review period of 1 June 2016 to 30 December 2018. More recently, in the 2022-23 financial year, police advised that there were at least 64 dispatch incidents to respond to community concerns regarding begging. This is a minimum number, recognising that begging can be complex and may be filed under other matters, such as a disturbance. It also does not include the instances where police respond to an incident without logging a job record with radio dispatch services. For example, police may be flagged down by a member of the public reporting concerns while on patrol, or be on a foot patrol where they interact with persons begging. There is not necessarily a record of these matters within the radio dispatch system as the matter is resolved smoothly. Therefore, police anticipate that this number is higher.

The data demonstrates that police need a capability to deal with problematic instances of begging, particularly in relation to begging that includes harassment and intimidation. Supporting this, Robert Mallett, CEO of the Tasmanian Small Business Council, has written today to all members of parliament to advise that the presence of beggars can impact on local small businesses and trade, and have a negative impact on the general public's feeling of safety. Mr Mallett advises that the business community relies on Tasmania Police to sensitively assist by asking the beggar to move on so that custom is not prevented in stores.

While we are supportive of repealing the offence of begging, there is clearly a community expectation that Tasmania Police will be able to respond to complaints and effectively resolve the rare situations where begging results in the intimidation or harassment of individuals, or prevent people from patronising local businesses and using facilities.

If the offence provision is repealed, a broader power is required to deal with begging that is problematic for other reasons, such as complaints from shopowners that patrons are being deterred from entering their premises, which can impact on local businesses and trade; clusters of people begging, such as occurs in the Melbourne central business district; or begging that impacts general feelings of public safety. That is why our Government in 2019, under the then-minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, Mark Shelton, tabled the Police Offences (Repeal of Begging) Bill that removed the offence of begging by removing section 8(1) and 1AA and introduced additional move-on provisions within section 15B.

The bill passed the House of Assembly, including with the support of the Labor Party. However, the bill was amended by the Labor members in the other place and the additional move-on provisions were removed. The bill was prorogued with the 2021 election.

The bill tabled by the Tasmanian Greens on 2 November 2023 does not include the section 15B move-on provisions that were included by this Government, which were included on the operational advice of Tasmania Police and as a result of legal advice. While we will support the repeal of the offence of begging, we will be seeking an amendment to include additional move-on provisions in section 15B. That will be a threshold issue for us. The provision will insert an additional subsection to section 15B(1), subsection (ca):

has in the course of, or in connection with, the person begging in a public place:

- (i) prevented or deterred the conduct of a business that is in or in the vicinity of the place, or
- (ii) prevented persons from entering a business or from using a public facility that is in, or in the vicinity of a place, or
- (iii) intimidated or harassed a person.

We will also include a section to define a public facility as including but not being limited to:

a toilet or shower facility, parenting room, barbecue facility, playground equipment, structure that is intended to be used for a shelter, and water fountain.

I note the member for Franklin's comments in her correspondence dated 25 October 2023 that these additional move-on provisions are not necessary because they are comprehensively covered off in the existing provisions of section 15B.

Tasmanian Police's strong advice, on the basis of legal advice, is that this is not the case and that is why it is a threshold issue in this matter. Tasmania Police strive to take a measured approach to law enforcement that is cognisant of social, economic and environmental considerations. This approach is evidenced by a lack of charges for begging since 2018. Instead of charging, the police preference is to use a community based and compassionate approach. Police will only exercise punitive measures or directions to disperse when it is absolutely necessary in the circumstances.

However, despite Tasmania having no instances of people being charged for begging since 2018, the city of Hobart has reported an increase in the presence of begging. Community expectations are that a member of the public should be unimpeded when conducting lawful business; that they should be able to freely wander the CBD without harassment or threat; and that within the normal expectations of life, that they should be free of nuisances. When these expectations are not met, it is the role of police to maintain this order.

Currently, police only have an authority to direct that a person move on if they are committing, or are likely to commit, an offence - that is, obstructing movement, endangering someone's safety or breaching the peace.

Let me say that again - currently police only have an authority to direct that a person move on if they are committing, or likely to commit, an offence. Tasmania Police's concerns are that if the offence of begging is removed, the dispersal of persons provisions at section 15B of the Police Offences Act 1935 are not currently broad enough to cover behaviour where a person is intimidating or harassing a person or preventing or hindering another person from conducting business or preventing another person from using a nearby public facility. Our community has a strong expectation that they be able to do all of these things, in the course of normal daily life in a public place.

Police advise that there will be some circumstances where there is no move on power because the behaviour falls short of meeting the criteria contained in section 15B. For example, a person begging sitting outside the entrance to a business or public facility may not in itself cause an obstruction to the movement of pedestrians. However, the position and or the location of the person begging may nonetheless prevent or deter a person from entering the business or a public facility. This may also prevent or deter the conduct of business. This is a potentially ambiguous situation where clarity and the scope of police powers would be beneficial for enforcement.

It is also evident that, in considering such an example, the existing provisions contained within section 15B of the act do not provide adequate or sufficient breadth of power for police to lawfully intervene. Without specific powers covering intimidation, harassment, impeding business or the use of a public facility, police will not be able to meet community expectations in directing that a person displaying these behaviours should move on. This is likely contrary to the expectations of the community, including those who operate businesses and have concerns about people begging in the vicinity of their premises.

Further, if a police officer is limited in their ability to respond to a person begging, it could lead to a delayed response and a situation that we do not want to see - which is the escalation of an incident. In extreme circumstances, this could involve a business owner confrontationally taking matters into their own hands, or vigilantism, something I am sure we can agree we do not want to see.

Without clear move on powers, there is a risk to the public perception that police are not effectively policing the community, particularly around CBDs. That is contrary to police efforts to increase visibility in these areas - for example, through Taskforce Saturate, which is where police saturate an area in response to concerns from members of the public. We have seen in recent months this has had a strong effect in terms of deterring offending in the Hobart CBD, for example.

If there is no clarity as to whether a police officer can exercise a move on authority then there is a risk that police may unlawfully exercise such an authority, particularly where behaviour is not clearly within the scope of section 15B. It is the position of Tasmania Police that if the begging provisions are to be repealed, as is currently drafted by the Tasmanian Greens bill, move on provisions must be included. The addition of these powers is not with the view to single out a person begging; it is to ensure that business activities are not obstructed and customers are not deterred from attending a store because they feel harassed, threatened or

annoyed. In conclusion, Madam Deputy Speaker, I reiterate that this Government's position is to support the repeal of begging.

I reiterate, the strong position of Tasmania Police is that the offence should not be removed unless the move on provisions are included.

I reiterate that this has been supported by the Tasmanian Small Business Council, with Mr Mallett calling on members in both Houses to support Tasmanian businesses and deliver on the request of Tasmania Police to include move on provisions so that they can perform their duties with clarity and confidence, and meet the expectations of our community.

Tasmania Police must be enabled to address problematic behaviour if it adversely affects business or the amenity of the public, or if it involves intimidation or harassment - which should not never be tolerated in our society. People in our community who beg should not be held criminally responsible for doing so. Likewise, 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 business premises because of the antisocial behaviour of others. The scope of any police powers must be robust and future-proofed to help keep the peace in Tasmania.

We will be voting against the second reading, but are hopeful that in discussion in Committee that those move on provisions will be contained and that this House would then be able to repeal the offence of begging while supporting the Tasmanian public and Tasmania Police to keep public order.

[5.48pm]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Whilst the minister has said that we will be moving into Committee, I am not sure that the time allows us to do that today.

Mr Ellis - On the next.

Ms O'BYRNE - On the next what?

Mr Ellis - We do a second -

Ms O'BYRNE - No, that is not how it works if she has to have a vote today. You guys resolve this because there is a misunderstanding of how parliament works.

Dr Woodruff - This is the first time that we heard there was an amendment.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - The requirement for the vote is only after the second reading.

Dr Woodruff - Yes; we do not have to go into Committee.

Ms O'BYRNE - I will move on with my commentary while you work it out.

First, I will touch on the minister's statement about community expectation that they are not going to be hampered as they go around their day-to-day business by other people who are behaving inappropriately, or are making them feel uncomfortable because they are begging. I

believe there is another community expectation in our society, and that is that we support the most vulnerable people in our community so that they do not have to beg, so that they are not in this most desperate of circumstance.

I thank Dr Woodruff for bringing on the bill. It is important, and we have debated this previously. I also thank the minister for the information he has provided. He has provided the briefing notes that he was working from and also correspondence from the Deputy Commissioner, which I will touch on before I finish.

Before I go to that and the substantial nature of the bill, I will say that begging is considered to be a feature of the cost of living. We use this phrase 'cost of living' as if it is just a thing - it is a 'cost of living', it is difficult.

It means there are people who cannot afford to live. We have talked a lot in this place about the use of language. We use 'cost of living' and it rolls off the tongue like it does not really matter - there is a cost-of-living crisis, people are having trouble with the cost of living.

We need to be saying there are people in our community, in our cities, in our suburbs, in our regional towns in Tasmania, who cannot afford to live. That is a fundamentally different approach to it. Maybe if that was the lens that we looked through then we would not be saying these things, in order to deal with people begging and making some people feel uncomfortable about that. We need to have more capacity for punitive or move-on provisions. Maybe if we were thinking about the fact that they cannot afford to live we would look at the type of environment that we are providing, the supports that we give.

I am not quite sure how we are going for this other matter being resolved but I want to talk about the fact that when this was dealt with previously, both the police minister at the time and the human services minister at the time were clear that begging should not be a criminal offence. Criminalising begging is criminalising poverty and, as we know, by the abolishing criminalisation of begging, we pave the way for a more compassionate, societal approach. This is the work from the Community Legal Centre that talked about this, so that people can seek assistance and support.

It also deals with the doctrine of expected consequences in political environments and that is, that certain things have outcomes. If one of the outcomes of not being able to move people on is that perhaps we do better at supporting people, that is a better outcome. That doctrine delivers us a better pathway forward.

The minister went through the analysis of the Tasmania Police despatch systems. There were 67 complaints from the public in relation to begging between June 2016 and 30 December 2018. He did say that Tasmania Police were compiling current data at the moment and I do not know if the figures that he gave were in respect to the current data because it seemed to be primarily an anecdotal thing.

The minister is adamant that 15B would require to have an amendment which is not yet moved and we may be moving into committee if they resolve the fact that we have not moved it and will run out of time. The existing move on provisions contained in section 15B of the act 'may enable a police officer to lawfully direct a beggar to disperse from a public place'. It would not be the case in the circumstances. That is a reasonably narrow thing because the minister is concerned about beggars sitting outside the entrance to a business or a public

facility, which may not in itself cause an obstruction to the movement of pedestrians but their location may prevent or deter a person from entering the business or public facility. Section 15 does not give adequate or sufficient breadth of powers for that.

However, section 15B does give substantial powers. It allows for the dispersal of persons from a public place if they have committed, or are likely to commit an offence, or obstructing or likely to obstruct the movement of pedestrians or vehicles, is endangering or likely to endanger the safety of other persons, or has committed or is likely to commit a breach of the peace. They do have to direct with that.

There are other offences under the Police Offences Act, other than section 15 that Tasmania Police can rely on if persons are engaging in profane, indecent or obscene, offensive or racist language or using threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour.

Section 12 deals with prohibitive language and behaviour which says that people should not curse or swear, sing any profane or obscene song, use any profane, indecent or obscene, offensive or blasphemous language, use any threatening, abusive, insulting words, or behaviour calculated to provoke a breach of the peace whereby a breach of the peace may be occasioned.

It then goes through to section 13 because police can also move people on because they are disturbing the public peace, engaging in disorderly conduct or committing a nuisance. 'Public annoyance' covers behaviour in a violent, riotous, offensive or indecent manner, disturb the public peace, engage in disorderly conduct, jostle, insult or annoy any person, commit any nuisance or throw off, let off or set fire to any firework.

Finally, it is worth noting that Tasmania Police has interpreted section 15B of the Police Offences Act to mean that if someone is behaving in a threatening or disorderly manner they can be asked to move on. That is in the Tasmania Police Manual, at 2.22.3 - Dispersal of persons from public places order:

Police officers who intend to rely upon the provisions of section 15B ...

There are a number of clauses and at (3):

Section 15B of the Police Offences Act 1935 provides police officers with the power to disperse individuals or groups who are behaving in a threatening or disorderly manner. This type of behaviour can escalate to violence or intimidation requiring strong police intervention.

Section 15B also talks about how they deal with groups of people and this is in the police manual so the police interpretation of the legislation already provides these powers.

The Government's proposed amendment is an unnecessary duplication of existing laws. It is already there. It is in the Police Offences Act. It is interpreted in the police manual. Potentially, it is more risky and, speaking with the Police Association, it might create confusion in section 15B where there does not need to be.

The most important thing we should do today is to get rid of the offence of begging and use the current powers. There are some options through that if this is an issue for the minister. If we get to a point where there are so many beggars that we cannot manage them through the

legislation then the Government can do one of two things. The Government could seek to work on the reason these people are there, could seek to do those things in the community to make sure that our most vulnerable people are supported and protected and able to function in a way which means they do not have to beg. The other thing is if there is clearly a sudden outbreak of people needing to be moved on then the Government can come back to the House with a piece of legislation that amends the Police Offences Act to do that but to do it on an evidence-based motion and not as the result of any other conversation.

Can I get an idea of whether we are moving into Committee? Are we voting today?

Dr Woodruff - We will not have time to go into Committee.

Ms O'BYRNE - I will finish off with one thing. I thank the minister for the final correspondence that he sent me but it made me feel sick because it is clear that the Government is progressing their amendment on the basis that they expect more people to not be able to afford to live. The letter says that with a potential further increase in begging in central business districts as cost-of-living pressures rise, that is why we need to do this. Frankly, that is the pressure that is on government and the reason that we need to take action.

Our job is to make people's lives better, to support the most vulnerable in our community, not find other ways under the Police Offences Act which already arguably has significant powers to punish them further.

[5.56 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Madam Deputy Speaker, in the few minutes that we have left, I will use my time to appeal to the minister and to the Government. We have a Premier who took on this job promising a government with heart, promising a premiership with heart. There is no more heart that can be shown than expressing and providing compassion for those in such need that they have to put up their hand and asked for help. I am a new member and in the time I have been here, we Greens have moved numerous pieces of legislation to seek to ease the burden on people. We have moved free Metro. We have moved for rent control. We have moved for renters' rights and we have argued consistently for compassion and for assistance when it comes to people in need.

I cannot believe the perversity of criminalising begging. It is utterly perverse to think that we still have laws on the books that criminalise begging and I highlight the irony of fining someone for begging. If someone is begging they do not have the money to pay a fine and if they do not have the money to pay a fine it seems the alternative is to go to prison. Minister, you have had since 2019 to move your own piece of legislation to remove this statute from the books and you have failed consistently to do it.

I echo what I heard the member for Bass say. I ask for your leniency in this case to withdraw your proposed amendment to allow a vote on this bill as it stands. If the advice is so strong and the system does not work that you need an amendment you can always come back in the next sitting of this parliament to move a subsequent amendment to deal with the issues you are concerned about. You have quoted one signatory with a range of vested interests, the Small Business Council, admittedly an important voice in this matter. However, Dr Woodruff read out a whole raft of signatories from the community sector imploring us as lawmakers, imploring this House, to remove the crime of begging.

I ask you, minister, to consider right now. We do not have much time. We do not have time to go into committee but there are people on the streets committing this crime as we speak and they will continue to do so until we were to reconvene and consider your amendment properly.

I urge you and ask you to withdraw your proposed amendment, allow this bill to pass, remove the crime of begging and you are completely within your rights in the future as a minister in this place to address any concerns that manifest. I am confident that they will not manifest but we in this place urge you to offer compassion on behalf of your Premier, who said he wanted to govern with heart. Withdraw your motion, allow this bill to go through, support it, show some consensus within this House for removing this crime and -

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - The member's time has expired.

To clarify for the House, the advice I have received in calling for a vote on a bill during Private Members' Business this will be interpreted as a vote on a second reading. I will now call for a vote which will be interpreted as a vote on a second reading.

The question is that the bill be read a second time.

Bill read the second time.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - As the time has now expired we will move on to Orders of the Day.

MOTION

Government Businesses Scrutiny Committee - Establishment

Resumed from above (page 69).

[6.02 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark - Minister for Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries) – Mr Speaker, I move -

That the amendment be amended by leaving out the table for Friday, 24 November and inserting instead:

Friday, 24 November 2023	0900 to 1100, TT-Line Company Pty Ltd, (2 hours) 11.15 to 13.15, Public Trustee, (2 Hours) 14.15 to 17.15, Sustainable Timber Tasmania, (3 hours)
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Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Leader of the House) – Mr Speaker, this is only a small amendment. It changes the order in which those GBEs are to appear on Friday. Unfortunately, the matter pertains to an administrative issue in the other place with regard to the published

schedule that they had online that was incorrect and did not reflect the motion that was moved in the other place. To de-conflict the times it has been changed back to the original form. I am advised the other place will be updating their public schedule accordingly.

[6.03 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I also had read the public website from the other place which incorrectly stated that STT was to start at 2.30 p.m. to 5 p.m. and I was wondering how the Leader of Government Business was going to be in two places at once. It turned out that the original motion he emailed a few days ago has turned out to be what has been in the amendment now. So we are back to what was in the letter that was sent to members and what I now understand it to be is: TT-Line, Public Trustee and Sustainable Timber Tasmania on Friday, 24 November, which is fair and reasonable.

I am pleased that there is going to be this additional scrutiny but I want to again put on record the respect that we have for the other place and for the scrutiny that they do. It was erroneously commented earlier today that STT, TasNetworks and Hydro were not going to be subject to GBEs until the Greens intervened. Actually, they were, as they do every year: these alternate. Just because the Greens are not sitting at the table, does not mean that things are not getting scrutinised.

Dr Woodruff - Since when did you become a member of the Legislative Council, Mr Winter?

Mr WINTER - In fact, often when I have seen the other place, it operates very well, Mr Speaker. In fact, oftentimes the way they approach things is much better than the way we do. They do not need to deal with things in the same way as we do, but it is not to say they are not being scrutinised.

I accept the comments from the Leader of Government Business about looking to review what we do here through a referral to the Standing Orders Committee. But, as the Leader of the Opposition said earlier today, that will likely move slowly and there are no guarantees that it will come back, just as two weeks ago, there were no guarantees that the Government would bring this motion back on that day, and they did not. There are no guarantees that a referral to Standing Orders or to a joint committee, as may happen down the track, will lead to reform. We had an opportunity next week to scrutinise four entities which will not be scrutinised now and I think that is a terrible shame, particularly given the issues that are within those four entities that we had asked to be able to scrutinise, and I am staggered that we are not. Clearly, the support, if not for the Greens, was there, but we will not be scrutinising them.

I look forward to this being properly dealt with through the House Committee and we will be pushing for that to be moved quite quickly. We hope to be able to do that. Of course, it needs the Government to be interested in that as well.

The amendment is in order. It reflects what the Leader of Government Business wrote to us about earlier this week. For that reason, we will support the amendment.

Dr WOODRUFF - Can I clarify, are we on the substantive motion or are we still on the amendment?

Mr SPEAKER - On the amendment to the amendment. The amended motion.

Dr WOODRUFF - I do not understand why this has changed again.

Mr Ellis - The upper House - their published time schedule was incorrect.

Dr WOODRUFF - I thought that is why we got the amendment to the motion. I thought that is why that happened.

Mr Ellis - We changed, based on their public schedule but ours was actually correct initially -

Dr WOODRUFF - The first motion was correct, someone just - okay. Obviously, we will support that. We are a bit sorry to see that Sustainable Timber Tasmania will be at the end of the day again. We were looking forward to having them in the morning, but three hours is three hours. We look forward to that opportunity.

Amendment to the amendment agreed to.

Amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is important to make the point to Mr Winter, because he does not seem to understand that we are members of the House of Assembly. By his own argument, where he says that the Legislative Council is going to be scrutinising the extra Government Business Enterprises that the Greens negotiated to have in the set that would be available to members of the Lower House, by his own argument, we could just only do half of the Budget Estimates Committee process.

We could just allow the Legislative Council to do half the work for us all the time on all the matters. I am not really concerned with what the other House does. That is their work and responsibility. I know members of the Legislative Council were confused, I would say frustrated, at the process because they had very poor communications with the Government.

I heard from Independent members of the upper House there was no communication from the Government. There was no information available to them. They were hearing about the arrangements we are organising in our House. I am not sure how, but they were hearing about these changes going ahead. They were not hearing about it in their place. That is not our responsibility. That is the responsibility of the Leader of government business and the Government who has a Leader of government business in the Legislative Council to do that work.

Something has gone wrong with Government communication. I am not at all surprised about that. It has been our consistent experience. I am sorry for those members: they have been poorly communicated with, but it is not the responsibility of the Greens to negotiate these arrangements with the Legislative Council as a whole. We implore the Government to do a better job of undertaking that work. Clearly, Independent members in the upper House are reasonably frustrated if they do not understand our changes they think may affect them.

From our point of view, we are doing the work of members of this House of Assembly. That is where we have been elected to and why it is fantastic to now have the opportunity to scrutinise TasNetworks. I guess Labor will not have any questions for TasNetworks, because they let their members in the upper House do all the talking. That is fine. The Greens are

happy to have all the time in the lower House scrutinising TasNetworks. In fact, if the Labor Party does not turn up to ask questions in this House because they have their members in the upper House doing their job for them, okay, that is fine.

Actually, why do you not vacate the two and a half days, just do not bother talking about TasPorts, Hydro, TasNetworks, STT, the Public Trustee, TT Line, Port Arthur Historic Site Management Committee and Tas Irrigation. The Greens will do that work for the Labor Party in this place in the GBEs. That is cool with us, so thank you very much for organising that. I look forward to that extra time. We are on the substantive motion. I want to include we have long felt Dorothy Dix questions with having a member of Government on the committee just does not stack up with Tasmanians who want accountability. The purpose of these committees is to scrutinise the Government.

I made the point earlier, when you were talking about the commission of inquiry, we collectively, members of the Labor, Government, Independents and Greens have clearly understood and no one has proposed, including the Government and the Labor party that Government members should be given an opportunity to ask questions during the commission of inquiry scrutiny committee process. It is very clear that victims/survivors would see that for what it would be, an opportunity to politicise the process of the commission of inquiry scrutiny.

It is obvious that nobody wants to be involved with that, which is why it is obvious it has been called out for what it is, a political process. Having Government members asking questions during a scrutiny process is a political process. It does two things. It buys the minister and the Government time by reducing the amount of questions that can be asked by other members on the committee; and it provides an opportunity for the Government to basically spruik its wares, try and present itself in a favourable light on any issue, especially if it is feeling heat from the committee in terms of its performance.

We have always maintained that can be done by a media release. Anyway, if the minister wants to make a statement and wants to make an announcement to Tasmanians through the scrutiny committee process, that can be done by an opening statement. That is the place where that can be done. It can be done at any time on any question.

It could be, I am glad you asked me that question about where the container deposit is up to, Dr Woodruff, because I am about to tell you that the tender is here and it is actually set up. That is what Mr Jaensch should be saying, but we know he will not. Of course, he cannot say that, because it is not here. It has not happened. It is another broken promise from the Liberals. The container deposit scheme was meant to be here and it is not. We do not even need to go into Committee to find that out. We know it. He has not delivered. He promised big and nothing is happening. It is dead in the water.

Just like there is no action happening on Ashley. That is an opportunity anyway for the minister to talk about what he is up to at any point. We do not need Dorothy Dixers.

I have proposed an amendment. Every member has the amendment.

Mr Speaker, I move the following amendment -

In Proceedings of a Government Business Scrutiny Committee, paragraph (7)

Leave out 'one independent and one Government'

Insert instead, 'and one independent'.

I know the Labor Party is often a bit squiggly about supporting this, in fact, it has not done that in the past. I think that is a mistake. If you actually have made it -

Mr Winter - You have made a couple of mistakes today.

Dr WOODRUFF - You have made a lot of comments, Mr Winter, about scrutiny, haven't you?

Mr Winter - Very serious ones. Very serious mistakes.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. Through the Chair, please.

Dr WOODRUFF - I think Mr Winter -

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Dr WOODRUFF - Mr Speaker, while I am talking about the member for Franklin, Mr Winter, I think he has made some very clear statements today about scrutiny and about why it is important to have proper scrutiny and proper processes. What we have done today is have a full set of GBEs that will be investigated by members here. We have a commitment by the House and the Government has agreed to continue to do a review of the processes for GBEs, for Budget Estimates, for statutory authorities so we can get better processes, we collectively agree will provide good scrutiny.

The last piece of the puzzle is getting rid of these Dorothy Dix backbench Government questions. That is about proper scrutiny. Every time they ask a question, it is one less question that can be asked by the Opposition, the Greens and Independent members. We hope that everyone, including the Labor Party, support this because it is about greater accountability. I commend our amendment, Mr Speaker.

Before I finish, I thank members for having conversations about these matters. It has been an intense month. We have all had many conversations about the committee of inquiry week and about the GBE week. I believe we are all glad to draw a line under that. We have much work ahead of us and we will do it in good faith.

[6.18 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Leader of the House) - Mr Speaker, I can flag we will not be supporting the Greens' amendment in this case. The principle in general particularly for GBEs and Budget Estimates that members of the committee be able to ask a question, we think, remains a sound one. Certainly, when you look at the distribution of questions as even outlined by the motion, there is a heavy weighting towards those members who are not part of the Government and with only one question for the Government. All of us in this place who have experienced Estimates and scrutiny know as well the practice is often even more questions than are listed under these motions for Opposition and crossbench MPs. We think that is sound.

One of the things I will flag for the House is we did mention a referral to the Standing Orders Committee. This is a matter we can well and truly discuss then as well and as part, of course, our working arrangements select committee we think is worth pursuing too. We need to make sure we are continuing to be contemporary, but we think the principle that a member of the committee should be able to ask questions in the committee is a sound one.

[6.20 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, on Dr Woodruff's contribution, for anybody who has just turned on to this debate that has been happening not just today but for the last couple of weeks, we have a situation where there was an Independent missing and there were the numbers here for the House to scrutinise not just what Dr Woodruff decided on the fly she wanted to scrutinise, which was additional GBEs - TasNetworks, Hydro and STT - but also for additional entities, Homes Tasmania, Stadiums Tasmania, Macquarie Point and TasTAFE.

If not for the Greens, we would be doing that next week. We could have had any of them we wanted, except for the Greens dishing up a deal. When the Leader of the Greens says thanks for the many conversations -

Dr Woodruff - That is what you say. It is not actually the case.

Mr WINTER - It is the case.

Dr Woodruff - No, it is not.

Mr WINTER - Why is it not?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr WINTER - In the spirit of transparency, Dr Woodruff, I invite you to explain why that is not the case. It is the case. We could have had it. In fact, we were on the way to having that before the Government adjourned the debate, which you supported. Then we have come back, you stitched up a deal and you said, 'Thanks to everyone for the many conversations' they had about this. I do not think anyone has had as many conversations as you have, Dr Woodruff, and most of them have been with the Government over the preceding week-and-a-bit where you stitched up a deal to protect them from scrutiny of Homes Tasmania and TasTAFE.

Dr Woodruff - Stitching up stuff? If it was not for you, we would not have a stadium now.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr WINTER - That is what you did. You thanked them for the many conversations. Mr Ellis, you know what happened. You do not want to say on the record what happened but only you will know exactly what happened in order for them to get to prevent Homes Tasmania and TasTAFE from coming up for scrutiny next week.

Dr Woodruff - It was never going to be a full set of GBEs, Mr Winter.

Mr WINTER - That is on you, Dr Woodruff. There is no debate about what happened. That is what happened. The Leader of the Greens again talked about the members from the

other place and said that they were confused. Also talked about what she said was poor communication between the Government and the other place. I met this morning with members of the other place who were quite concerned about this. I know Mr Ellis met with some members of the other place. I do not know if Dr Woodruff has found time yet to meet with them. They certainly requested it. Dr Woodruff does not appear to be responding to that. There were serious concerns from the other place about this. They are entitled to be concerned because they felt that they were being disrespected in the way that this was being dealt with. This is your motion, Dr Woodruff. These changes are the changes you have insisted upon, the deal you have stitched up. It is not only on the Government to communicate -

Dr Woodruff - A stitched-up transparency and accountability. I love that. I stitched up an extra two-and-a-half days of scrutiny.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. The member for Franklin has the call. No one else should be -

Mr WINTER - When the Leader of the Greens was asked by members of the other place to discuss it, I do not know if she has met with them yet.

Dr Woodruff - I did.

Mr WINTER - I certainly did and I understand their concerns, and respect them. I have said on the record that I have observed the Legislative Council do its work in government business scrutiny and they do a great job. By the way, we supported getting the additional scrutiny. As I said, we will always support more scrutiny, Dr Woodruff, we will always -

Dr Woodruff - You did not negotiate it. You did not make that happen.

Mr WINTER - Here we go. We did not negotiate it. Guess who did negotiate it? The Leader of the Greens.

Dr Woodruff - You just sit there and throw rocks.

Mr WINTER - The Leader of the Greens has just belled the cat. She negotiated it, she negotiated away this place's ability to scrutinise Homes Tasmania and TasTAFE next week. That is what the Leader of the Greens did.

Dr Woodruff - No, I organised to get the GBEs. That is what we did.

Mr WINTER - She has organised it now, Mr Speaker.

Dr Woodruff - It has nothing to do with statutory authorities. It has everything to do with GBEs.

Mr WINTER - With the Government, with the Liberals, the Greens have organised to make sure that Homes Tasmania and TasTAFE could not be scrutinised next week.

Dr Woodruff - That is what negotiating across the parliament is about.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Greens.

Mr WINTER - What an incredible effort from the Leader of the Greens to ensure that Homes Tasmania, during a housing crisis, will not be scrutinised. Even though it was corporatised by this Government, they will make sure it will not be scrutinised. The annual report will never be scrutinised by this place or the other place because of the Leader of the Greens.

Dr Woodruff - How could you work with the crossbench if you were in government? You would not have a hope.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr WINTER - Dr Woodruff, you talk about transparency and yet you admit that you stitched up a deal. You negotiated -

Dr Woodruff - I had a conversation.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. Just a moment. This debate between the two chairs is getting a bit monotonous. I can see some eyes glazing around the Chamber. Leader of the Greens, please stop interjecting and allow the member for Franklin to continue his contribution.

Dr WOODRUFF - On a point of order, I would be happy to do that if the other member for Franklin addresses you, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER - I will ask the member for Franklin to address all his comments through the Chair.

Mr WINTER - Of course I will, Mr Speaker. I believe I was.

The Leader of the Greens cannot have it both ways; she cannot talk about transparency and then talk about the deal she stitched up with the Liberals. They are not the same thing. She says it is not her responsibility to communicate with the other place. If it is your deal, you should be communicating with the other place. If it is her deal, Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Greens should be communicating with them. She clearly has not and they feel disrespected because she had not communicated with them.

We support it. We said that right from the start. When Dr Woodruff stood up two weeks ago and said, 'I might like to scrutinise TasNetworks and Hydro Tasmania', we said, 'Good, move the amendment'. We will take every single opportunity we can get in opposition to scrutinise the Government. You offer me an extra minute of scrutiny and I will take it. Any extra entity, any opportunity to sit across the table from a minister or a chairman of a GBE, I will take every single opportunity. Every Opposition member and every crossbencher should want to do that because that is our job.

Today the Greens have squibbed it. They decided that they did not want to scrutinise Homes Tasmania. They said it was the wrong type of entity. They did not want to scrutinise TasTAFE. It was the wrong type of business. They said they did not want to scrutinise Macquarie Point Development Corporation or Stadiums Tasmania. Wrong type of entity, they said. We get to decide in this place what we scrutinise and what we do not, and we actually had the numbers to do it. The Leader of Greens decided she did not want to.

The amendment moved by the Leader of the Greens goes back to a play they have done many times before. As the Leader of the Greens said, the amendment seeks to curtail members of this place from asking questions at a committee. We know from early this year that Mr Tucker and Mrs Alexander were deeply unhappy within the Government. Had there been an Estimates or a GBE period, they could have asked questions and they would have been entitled to. What the Leader of the Greens is suggesting is that members of the Government should not be allowed to ask questions.

There is a responsibility for Government members to ask legitimate questions. Some of the Dorothy Dixers I have heard have been appalling. Last year we heard, I cannot remember which backbencher it was so I will not name names, asking about snails during the Hydro Tasmania GBE hearings. Quite extraordinary. Mr. Behrakis is in the Chamber: I hope he will read the questions before he starts asking about snails and other things. There is a level of accountability for backbenchers. If you are going to start asking Dorothy Dixers, make sure you read the question, make sure it is relevant, or you will look like somebody not quite across things, as that member did last year.

While we do not like having ridiculous Dorothy Dixers, we understand the right of everyone who is elected to this place to ask questions on behalf of their constituents and their communities. They should be able to do that. Whether it is a Liberal government or a Labor government, backbenchers have a role and they may have legitimate questions. We do not know what questions they are going to ask. Mr Behrakis might have a question about Aurora he wants to ask on behalf of a constituent. It would be reasonable for him to do that. It might not be a political one but it might be a legitimate question and he should be entitled to do that. But the Leader of the Greens does not want to allow that to happen so we will not be supporting the Leader of the Greens in this amendment today.

I am deeply disappointed in the behaviour of the Greens today. The way they have treated this House and the other place has been a disgrace, the disrespect calling members from the other place confused. They were clearly not confused. If she had spoken to them she would have known they were not confused. They knew exactly what was going on and they felt offended.

They had every right to feel that way. Again, on the record, they do a great job at GBEs. Just because we have supported this does not mean we disrespect what they do. I will be watching their efforts closely to hold this Government to account. In the other place, through TasNetworks, through STT, through Hydro Tasmania, we will be watching what they do and making sure that we can follow up down the track.

Mr SPEAKER - The question is that the amendment to the amended motion be agreed to.

The House divided -

AYES 3

Mr Bayley (Teller)
Ms Johnston
Dr Woodruff

NOES 18

Mrs Alexander
Mr Barnett
Mr Behrakis (Teller)
Dr Broad
Ms Butler

Ms Dow
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Ms Finlay
Ms Haddad
Mr Jaensch
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms Ogilvie
Mr Street
Mr Winter
Mr Wood
Mr Young

Amendment negatived.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

ANSWER TO QUESTION

Coroner's Recommendations for Paramedics

[6.36 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Health) - Mr Speaker, on indulgence, I will update the House in an answer earlier today from Dr Woodruff regarding our support for paramedics. The Government acknowledges the coroner's report into Mr Crump's death released in July 2023. Ambulance Tasmania carefully reviewed the report's recommendations and have taken action to implement a range of improvements to our services. In many cases continuing processes are already under way.

I am advised that a small number of the coroner's recommendations, including mandatory psychological assessment, have significant legal, employment and logistical complexities and options for their implementation are still under consideration. Importantly, since 2016 Ambulance Tasmania has placed significant focus on the introduction of a number of mental health and wellbeing supports for staff including awareness and educational programs for supervisors.

Ambulance Tasmania employees and volunteers have access to a range of mental health and wellbeing supports, which include the Ambulance Tasmania peer support officers and referrals to psychologists as required.

MOTION

Government Businesses Scrutiny Committees - Legislative Council Ministers' Attendance

[6.37 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Leader of the House) (by leave) - Mr Speaker, I move, that -

The House of Assembly requests that

The Legislative Council give leave to the honourable Minister for Energy and Renewables and the honourable Minister for Primary Industries and Water to appear before and give evidence to the House of Assembly Government Businesses Scrutiny Committee.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Expungement of Name

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Leader of the House) (by leave) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the motion concerning the expungement of *Hansard* and broadcast being moved forthwith.

Motion agreed to.

Mr ELLIS - Mr Speaker I move-

That the House orders -

- (a) That the last name of the person referred to as Alysha, mentioned during the debate on the Motions for establishment of the Commission of Inquiry Scrutiny Committee and Order of Business 7 December, on the morning of Wednesday 15 November 2023, be expunged from the *Hansard* and the video recording for that same day before publication; and
- (b) The Clerk of the House to conduct the process referred to in paragraph (a).

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Dismal Swamp Regional Reserve - Draft Proclamation: Nature Conservation Act 2002

[6.38 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Environment and Climate Change) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House -

- (1) Approves the draft Proclamation under section 11(2) of the Nature Conservation Act 2002 tabled in the House on 1 November 2023 to reserve Future Potential Production Forest land that is Crown land.
- (2) Declares that area of Crown land to be reserved land in the class of regional reserve and named Dismal Swamp Regional Reserve.

The purpose of this motion is to have approved a draft proclamation under the Nature Conservation Act 2002 to reserve future potential production forest land that is Crown land as regional reserve to be incorporated into the Dismal Swamp Regional Reserve. The future potential production forest land is approximately 92 hectares and contains the foot print of the existing infrastructure associated with the previous Dismal Swamp experience including the access from the main road of the site, the building and slide infrastructure and supporting services to the site.

As well as the various walking and bike tracks that surround the area, it will be reserved as regional reserve to become an addition to the Dismal Swamp Regional Reserve. The current Dismal Swamp Regional Reserve is approximately 310 hectares. The inclusion of the proposed site will create a reserve of approximately 402 hectares.

The Tasmanian government and tourism industry identified the state's far north-west as a region in need of tourism stimulation and reinvestment. The Project Far North West Report was a special request for funding from the Australian government, which proposed the redevelopment and extension of the state-owned Dismal Swamp site to create the Tarkine Adventure Hub, and a feasibility study into the development of the world's first wave-breaker cave. The Project Far North West Report elicited a 2022 Australian government election commitment of \$12.5 million to the proposed projects.

Following the funding commitment, the Far North West Tourism Development and Activation Project Plan was developed. This is being managed by the Department of Premier and Cabinet. The reservation of this future potential production forest land is a necessary step to meeting the commitments of the Far North West Tourism Development and Activation Project Plan. This project plan has earmarked approximately \$11.5 million of Commonwealth funding to develop a Tarkine Adventure Hub within a single protected area tenure, comprised of the existing Dismal Swamp Regional Reserve and the parcel of land in the draft proclamation. This reservation is essential to providing a site that will be available for lease to a suitable private investor.

A single protected area tenure encompassing all existing tourism and recreation assets of the Dismal Swamp site provides commercial certainty through the Crown's capacity, under this tenure, to lease such a site. A long-term lease will be critical to attracting commercial interests. Currently, as future potential production forest land, there is no ability to provide that certainty through a lease.

The intention is to redevelop the site for approximately 100 proposed private accommodation sites, from camping and caravan sites with toilet and kitchen facilities, through to glamping and forest pod accommodation options. Existing infrastructure will be upgraded as part of the Far North West Tourism Development and Activation Project Plan, including refurbishment of existing infrastructure and providing water, sewerage, electricity and vehicle

access. This is part of the project plan and will use a significant portion of the Commonwealth funds.

The development of the Tarkine Adventure Hub within an extended Dismal Swamp Regional Reserve has been projected to bring an additional 10 000 visitors to the far north-west, with an additional \$9 million in annual visitor expenditure across Tasmania. A net benefit for the far north-west has been projected of a return of \$2.18 for every dollar spent.

During private investor construction, local business stands to benefit up to \$62.95 million with 109 FTE jobs during the construction phase. When complete, the experience hub will support 81 FTE jobs and a gross regional product of \$12.15 million. This is a significant project for the far north-west of Tasmania. It aligns with broader tourism initiatives to boost visitor numbers to that region.

The proposal is positioned to capitalise on the exploding caravan and camping sector. The Dismal Swamp project is also aligned with the Tourism Tasmania 2030 Visitor Strategy, including the potential development of infrastructure to support the anticipated increase in the motor home and touring market when the new *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels commence operation.

This project can revitalise the dormant state-owned Dismal Swamp site, through a combination of government funding and private investment. It is a site which, despite best endeavours over many years, clearly needs such an innovative approach in order to realise its potential, rather than continue to be a liability for this state and, in particular, the Parks and Wildlife Service which manages the site.

Reservation of this land is central to the Far North West Tourism Development and Activation Project Plan. Importantly, should the proposal proceed, all relevant local, state, and Commonwealth government approval processes will need to be addressed, which will also provide for an opportunity for public input into the public proposal. Reservation of the future potential production forest land is an important step forward to securing a unique opportunity for investment in the region.

The motion should be supported, so that the tenure change can occur and the investor certainty be provided to allow for the realisation of the Tarkine Adventure Hub Proposal.

I commend the motion.

Ms DOW (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I rise to say that we will be supporting this motion before the House today. I will comment on this particular project and its importance to the Circular Head community.

In his initial contribution, the minister outlined that the project is in line with the original concept that was put forward by the local tourism group through this process. It was actually submitted as part of this process; it has not changed or been reduced at all. It is exactly the same concept. Is that right?

Mr Jaensch - This motion is to change the reservation status to enable that concept to proceed. I do not have detail on the current status of the detail of the Adventure Hub proposal beyond what was in my introductory remarks.

Ms DOW - That may be something to update us on, because we would like that certainty, as would the tourism operators and those who were involved in putting forward this proposal and concept to begin with.

I understand that the state Government dragged its heels in getting this application to where it needed to be, and it was during the final hours that this went through. It reminds me a little of the Cradle Mountain cableway project and the delays there that the state Government let transpire, which jeopardised that project and the investment in the north-west. I would not want to see that in this similar project, because I know that the likes of Clint Walker from the local tourism association, and others, have been backing this project from day one.

Mr Jaensch - I understand we are working to their time frame.

Ms DOW - That is good.

I will read into the *Hansard* an excerpt from an article published in April this year on the ABC website, titled 'Abandoned Dismal Swamp site to be overhauled, promising tourism boosts for Tasmania's far north-west'. It is by Monte Bovill, who many of us here will know and who was a great local journalist in the north-west region. It begins by saying:

Behind a locked gate on the edge of a rainforest, you'll find the Dismal Swamp.

The key points in his article are:

Tasmania's far north-west hasn't experienced the same growth in visitor numbers as the rest of the state.

That is very important. In essence, that is how this project came about.

Millions of dollars have been committed to revitalise the abandoned Dismal Swamp site.

There was uncertainty around this for many years, where the state government really did stall on its future plans for that site. I followed up with a number of constituents from the local community, who raised concerns about the future of Dismal Swamp and its operations, predominantly about the potential of the site, and what it could bring through further investment and economic activity in the region. The third part of that is:

The construction of the world's first wave-breaker cave is also on the table.

It's a place that's well and truly living up to its name: a 110-metre slide, which once attracted tourists to the site, is slowly falling into the sinkhole below...

Many of us here will remember the infamous slide and may have ridden down it at some stage and enjoyed a few injuries along the way, as many did. It did bring people from across the state and the country to experience that.

When it opened in 2004, there were hopes it would be the heart of tourism in Tasmania's far north-west, but its operation was troubled and it has been left abandoned since 2019.

'We haven't really had any other significant investment in tourism infrastructure or tourism product,' Circular Head Tourism Association president, Clint Walker said. 'What we really need is a significant new attraction in Circular Head, something that is going to draw visitors up to this part of the state.'

Only around 10 per cent of visitors to Tasmania make it to the north-western corner and the region has been identified as missing out on the benefits that other parts of the state have experienced during its tourism boom.

'We've been banging on for years, trying to urge the Government to come and work with us, so that we can try to improve our offerings and to grow our industry," Mr Walker said. 'We have tried our best to grow visitation and we just haven't been able to do it. We've been saying to those down Hobart way: 'It's our turn. What can we do?'

It wasn't Hobart that answered those calls, but Canberra. The federal government has committed \$12.5 million to encourage more visitors to the far north-west.

Most of the money will be used to completely revitalise the Dismal Swamp site and make it ready for a private investor. The troubled slide will go, making way for a new Adventure Hub, featuring accommodation, an obstacle course, educational cinema, eateries and Aboriginal interpretation tours. There are also plans to have an off-road training academy, to encourage tourists to use the area's four-wheel drive tracks respectfully and safely.

'The idea is to take make that site a hub where people will come and stay and explore the whole of the far north-west,' Mr Walker said.

And would that not be a great outcome for the far north-west?

On a more-ambitious scale, a small amount of the funding will be used to further examine an idea to construct the world's first wave-breaker cave, taking advantage of the area's rugged coastline.

I read that into the *Hansard*, because when I asked that question about the original concept of ensuring that each of those things are achieved through this proposal, and the changes that this notice of motion before the House today does, in fact, enable.

'If you could imagine a glass tunnel or maybe a room with a big glass ball that is just in the water, the waves will be coming in and breaking over the top of it', Mr Walker said. 'On a wild day that would be pretty exhilarating.'

It is unclear when the funding will flow but a spokesperson for the Tasmanian Department of State Growth said the State Government understands that the

region needs certainty around this project and is working as quickly as possible with the Australian Government. Mr Walker said the sooner the funding was available the better. 'If this falls over for some reason or another I don't see how anything much is going to change in the near future to what we have had for the last 10 years', he said. 'We need this investment and if we don't do something different we are just going to keep getting the same results, so it's crucial.'

That is where I will leave that. It highlights the importance of the investment that will be enabled in part by this motion today but in full by this project that was backed by the Federal Government and Labor's candidate, Chris Lynch, during the last federal election. As I said, there has been lots of uncertainty over this site for a number of years but the community and constituents, stakeholders have certainly made representations to me. It is great to see something finally happening on this site that will bring much-needed economic benefits to that region, and we have no problem in supporting this today.

[6.52 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Mr Speaker, I rise to give some comments on this motion. One thing has to be said is that there has been a massive change in the politics of the Liberal Party since 2014 and this particular motion is clear evidence that what they were campaigning on, what the Liberal Government were campaigning on between 2010 and 2014 was a complete lie. They could not deliver what they said they were going to deliver and they have not changed a thing.

What they came to Government saying was 'no more lockups'. That was the mantra, no more lockups and they said they would also tear up the Tasmanian Forest Agreement. That is what they were committed to but what did they actually do? There is not one more stick of timber available in the state in 2023 than there was in 2014. The only thing that changed was the name of some contentious areas of forest and what did this Government do - it changed the name from Future Reserves to Future Potential Production Forests, the so-called wood bank. We have seen much evidence of Mr Barnett as the resources minister talking about 'no more lockups'. Not a single tree would be put into reserves under his watch.

Now what we see is completely the opposite. We see this now the second tranche of reserves created from the so-called wood bank. There has been another withdrawal from the wood bank but we are not saying it is a bad thing. We have to call that hypocrisy of the Liberal politics over this entire period. How bad is it that?

Mr Jaensch - You cannot have it both ways. Which bit of this do you want me to clip and send to Smithton?

Dr BROAD - Maybe you should consider that. Maybe you should go to Smithton and explain to them why you did not tell them that you were doing this.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Dr BROAD - This is how the Liberal politics changed from being the 'best friend of the Tasmanian timber industry' to doing absolutely nothing to secure their resource into the future.

We know the debate is going on now about what will happen after 2027 when the contracts are up. What happens to the wood supply after then? It is contentious now and what we have is the Government crab-walking away from their previous commitments. We know STT is not delivering the timber they said.

This Government is letting the industry down. But you know what, here we have the Government with their 'no more lockups' mantra, no more lockups, and now we see this motion before us - and we do not have a problem with it but there is hypocrisy in action here because nobody told the industry. I told the industry that this was happening. Felix Ellis, the minister for Resources, did not actually explain to the industry that some of the Future Potential Production Forest, the so-called wood bank, was going to be put into reserve, which they absolutely 100 per cent committed would never happen. This is the second time it has happened and I know that more forests are going into reserve as well. Why did they not tell the industry?

Mr Jaensch - Where?

Dr BROAD - Well, around the lakes in the World Heritage Area, the bits that are still being surveyed.

Mr Jaensch - The World Heritage Area, yes, the World Heritage Area.

Dr BROAD - That was wood bank and you promised, absolutely promised, there would be no more lockups. You were wrong then, you were telling porkies then -

Mr Jaensch - You gave it away mate.

Dr BROAD - because you knew this process was going to take place. It was called Future Reserves and your Government, Mr Jaensch, changed the name, that is all you did, you changed the name to Future Potential Production Forest and pretended that all that land was available for logging. Well, it is not, it is not. Now we are seeing the truth come out-

Mr Jaensch - You two signed the deal. You gave it away.

Dr BROAD - You are still honouring the deal, Mr Jaensch.

Mr Jaensch - You wrecked the industry.

Dr BROAD - What we see is 'no more lockups' has just been well and truly torn up and thrown into the bin of history, but that was the hard politics that the Government played on this issue. They made promises that they are not keeping. They are crab-walking away, so much so that they are not even informing the industry when they decide to put another 92.29 hectares into reserve which they promised they would not do.

Now, why is that important? That is important because the Government has to own up to what they promised they were never going to deliver. I was the one who had to go and talk to the industry about this and they do not have a problem with this area being reserved, but why is it that the Resources minister did not even bother to pick up the phone. Were they just hoping to slip it past and that nobody would notice? The area of Circular Head is important for the timber industry. We have Britton Brothers, a major employer in the north-west, which relies

on timber from these very forests: Blackwood especially is harvested from these swamp areas. It is important but the industry does not have a problem as far as my consultations have found about the change in reserve status from this so-called wood bank to now become a regional reserve.

There is another issue to put into play here too. What we are going to see hopefully is a reinvigoration of a tourism business and a tourism adventure in this area. It was Tasmanian Labor who, together with Forestry Tasmania at the time, put together the Dismal Swamp and unfortunately it has fallen into disrepair. We would love to see that re-energised, but we also have to remember that this is also right next to the permanent timber production zone. If you look on the map you can see immediately adjacent there are areas of permanent timber production zone. What we do not want to see is what we have seen out at Derby and what we have seen at Maydena where there is land made available for fabulous tourism adventures, only to see the Greens especially and the environmental movement, when the time comes to harvest timber from the permanent timber production zone immediately adjacent to those tourism adventures, they do not want it touched.

All of a sudden, they do not want the footprint touched near the tourism adventure. This is the permanent timber production zone and there is not a lot of it in the state that can actually be harvested at any one time. It is programmed in, it is harvested in sequence, and what we do not want to see is when you do a deal with an environmental movement, or you do a deal, you permit something to happen and then sometime down the track there is a huge argument about 'well you cannot touch a single tree because tourists may see a logging coup and that would ruin the tourism experience in Tasmania'. We cannot really have that happen because the permanent timber production zone is exactly what it says, a permanent timber production zone.

We have to really call out the hardcore politics of the Liberal Party when they campaigned for years on 'no more lockups' and tearing up the Tasmanian Forest Agreement. The Tasmanian Forest Agreement is in effect, completely still in place. The only thing they did was change the name from Future Reserves to Future Potential Production Forest. Now what we see is tranches of that future potential production forest - it is a mouthful, I do not know who came up with that idea - we see tranches of that land put into reserves. They need to be honest about the politics that they played. We see them even today, in more contemporary examples, doing the same thing about another contentious issue in that region which was the West Coast tracks.

Do you remember the big campaign and the big rallies in Smithton, and the Liberal Government standing up and saying - 'We are going to open all the tracks up again'? It is the same politics that they have played with the forest industry.

What have they done? Not a single metre of track that they said they were going to open has been opened. And now, with maybe an election in the offing, we see the Government scrambling around trying to make some sort of announcement to pretend that the tracks, or parts of the tracks, or something else is going to be opened in the vicinity of the tracks. What they promised, they could not deliver - for the same reasons that those tracks were halted in the first place. It was because of federal legislation. They were not being honest about that.

It was: 'Oh, don't worry about that. We are going to open the tracks again'.

What did they do - nothing, and now they are scrambling around trying to pretend.

Another one - the minister described the tourism opportunity there as the Tarkine Adventure Hub. That is a great name - Tarkine Adventure Hub. Do you remember, Mr Speaker, the word 'Tarkine'? Do you remember the Liberal Party absolutely butchering Bryan Green, the minister who took the advice of the Nomenclature Board to name the area the Tarkine?

Do you remember the politics the Liberals played with that simple name change? This minister just drops without any comment or anything - 'It will be the Tarkine Adventure Hub'.

The minister was not in parliament at that time but there are members of his party who played dirty, hard politics on this one. Simply the name of the Tarkine was enough to fire up the blood of many a campaign from the Liberal Party - many a rally, many an email from Adam Brooks, many a *Facebook* post - and now what do we see? We see that what happened back then - the naming of the Tarkine - is now reflected in things like the Tarkine Adventure Hub. Indeed, the Circular Head Progress Association changed their name to the Tarkine Host Progress Group. The Liberals played really hard politics on this stuff and I would like to spend the time to call them out for it.

There is a massive opportunity for a tourism adventure hub in that area, and the region needs it. We need to get people coming off the *Spirits* - especially the new *Spirits* when they arrive - we want them to turn and head west. We want them to go to places like Smithton. We want them to go to places like a potential Tarkine Adventure Hub. We want them to spend money; we want them to stay overnight in that region. That is why we support this move. The timber industry does not have a problem with it but the Government should have told them - just out of respect.

I cannot let this slide without calling out some of the brutal politics that the Liberal Party played on this issue. They have moved on, of course. They are not being particularly honest about that moving on.

While I am at it, I will mention that, during Estimates, I asked minister Ellis about future-reserving of future potential production forests. He said: 'Absolutely, it was not going to happen'. Then he got a tap on the shoulder from one of his advisers who had to advise him that 'Well, actually that was in train; that there were going to be extra areas of land in the forest practices plan (FPP) put into reserve' - because he did not know. He thought that the no-more-lock-ups policy was still in place. It was up to an adviser to get him to correct the record because he got that one wrong. They were in train. The Government was in train to create more reserves, to lock up more land, to make another withdrawal from the wood bank.

This Government is not really big on consultation. The least they could have done is what I did, which was to ring up the industry and say - 'what do you think about this?' They do not have a problem with it but you would think the minister of the Crown responsible would have mentioned it to an industry that is such a significant employer in that region. I am not sure why that did not happen but it should have.

[7.05 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Mr Speaker, I thank the member for bringing on this motion. I will start my contribution by expressing frustration and an observation of how purely cynical this motion and this proclamation is.

Most people in the community - in fact, even this Government - point to our reserve agenda, point to the over 50 per cent of Tasmania that is protected in a reserve. Mind you, that figure includes all the Future Potential Production Forest (FPPF), because they are a part of the Tasmanian reserve estate. When the Government points to those reserves, most people think they are protected for their natural and cultural heritage values; that the primary motivation is for protecting those values. There are other motivations and other benefits of protecting those areas including tourism, recreation, and a whole raft of other issues. However, the primary motivation, the primary purpose, of protecting those areas is to protect pristine areas, to protect our incredible species, to protect the landscapes that are valued in Tasmania for our brand.

This motion lays bare the agenda of this Liberal Government. It is wholly motivated by privatisation of public land for a tourism operator to develop. Not once in the minister's speech did he mention the natural and cultural values of this area. Not once did he mention that it is protected because it includes amazing forest, it includes habitat for species like the Tasmanian Devil, the Spotted Tail Quoll, the Eastern Barred Bandicoot and the like. Not once were those values mentioned.

It is all about privatising this area, offering a private lease to a private investor to develop a whole range of tourism assets. That is an utter shame in this place: the only motivation in this instance is to privatise it for a private investor to develop. It is not the only shame in relation to this motion and this proclamation. I make the observation - and it is very easy to see when you log onto the Land Information System Tasmania (LIST) to check out the reserve layer. This block of land, this parcel, this polygon, it is not the only piece of FPPF land that is attached to the Dismal Swamp Regional Reserve. In fact, there is another one to the north-west and another one to the south-west but, of course, this proclamation does not include those areas, and there is no capacity, as we understand it, for us to try and amend the proclamation to include them in it. Again, it reinforces the point that this is only about privatising that one piece of land because of the tourism assets that are in it and the tourism potential for a private investor there.

We have heard from Dr Broad about the FPPF forests more broadly. I remind the House and take the opportunity to state that there are 356 000 hectares of other future potential production forests scattered all around regional Tasmania, that could and should be protected under Tasmania's Nature Conservation Act: extraordinary areas, stretching from Bruny Island in the south, Pilot Hill in the far south, all the way up the Eastern Tiers and the Tasman Peninsula, across the north-east Highlands, through central Tasmania and, of course, the takayna/Tarkine, as well. Those 356 000 hectares host a range of amazing natural and cultural heritage values: some of the tallest trees on earth; some of the most unique species that you can find anywhere on the planet; Aboriginal heritage that is millennia old and other areas.

It is a crying shame that when we are taking the opportunity to debate this one tiny 98-hectare parcel of land that we are not showing the level of ambition that we should when it comes to our natural and cultural assets and we are not proclaiming reserves across all of those 356 000 hectares.

The reality is that each of those hectares presents an opportunity, from a tourism perspective. The Greens do support tourism, we do support tourism in our natural areas. We have long argued that tourism presents an alternative economic model to the extractive industries - and we maintain that. Let me be perfectly clear: our support for tourism does not equate to the Government's expression of interest process. Our support for tourism does not

mean chopping people into remote areas and putting them up in Saffire standard luxury huts. It does not include desecrating and off-siding the Aboriginal community because you are building huts on an Aboriginal cultural landscape like on the south coast track.

The 356 000 hectares of future potential production forest land presents an enormous opportunity from a tourism perspective and it offers the opportunity to truly spread the wealth of the tourism dollar around regional Tasmania. When you fly people into remote huts in the south-west wilderness, the tourism dollar does not go far. Sure, there are some guides employed. Sure, there are a few bottles of wine that are drunk from a Tasmanian winery. Most of that money is banked by the tourism operator, and most of those tourism operators are now interstate companies.

The 356 000 hectares of future potential production forest are places that already have roads in them. They have bridges in them. They have tracks. They have campsites. They are distributed around regional Tasmania. If we took the opportunity to develop public infrastructure in those areas, give people a reason to go to those places for the day, give them activities to do there - they would then go and do that. They would have a fabulous experience and then they would go and stay locally. They would stay in the local pub. They would eat at the restaurant. They would drink at the café.

Let me point to an example. Dr Broad mentioned Derby. Derby is exactly that example. Many of those tracks, Dr Broad, are built in future potential production forest land and they were built there explicitly because they were reserved land. They are public assets. People go there for a day. They now stay in the local pub. They now eat at the local restaurants and they drink in the local cafes. Day activities are the way to go. It gives people the opportunity to stay in local accommodation.

This is a massive missed opportunity in terms of not only tourism for the north-west but tourism right across regional Tasmania by protecting these areas. Like the Deputy Leader of the Labor Party, I also want to read from the ABC story that first showcased this Dismal Swamp proposal. I will read from Clint Walker, the Circular Head Tourism Association President:

What we really need is a significant new attraction. Something that is going to draw visitors up to this part of the state. Only around 10 per cent of visitors to Tasmania make it to the north-western corner and the region has been identified as missing out on the benefits that other parts of the state have experienced during its tourism boom.

I wonder why that is, Madam Deputy Speaker. We do not have a national park in the north-west that is dragging people up there. People have long argued for a Tarkine National Park and World Heritage Area, an icon that gives people a reason to turn right at Devonport when they get off the boat, Dr Broad, and gives them a reason to go there but they are not going there.

They are going to Freycinet National Park. They are going to the Cradle Mountain National Park. They are going to the Lake St Clair National Park. They are not going to go there. Why would you go and see a regional reserve or a conservation area when there are iconic national parks on offer elsewhere in the state? That is why the north-west is missing out - they do not have that icon.

Mr Walker went on to say:

We've been banging on for years, trying to urge the Government to come up and work with us so that we can try and improve our offerings and to grow our industry. We have tried our best to grow visitation and we just haven't been able to do it. We've been saying to those down Hobart way, it's our turn. What can we do?

What we can do is declare a Tarkine National Park and world heritage area and give people a genuine reason to go to the north-west. Give them another brand attractor to go to that area.

All the surveys of people who come to Tasmania consistently point to the fact that wilderness, wild places, our natural assets and our national parks are the main motivating factor. As we debate a proclamation, what a missed opportunity not to actually include more areas in this proclamation, not to actually upgrade their reserve status from regional reserve or conservation area and actually put it into a national park status. It is worth reminding the House of where the Dismal Swamp proposal came from.

Let us be real about Dismal Swamp. It was built at a time where Forestry Tasmania was desperately trying to greenwash its credentials: desperately trying to point to the tourism benefits of forests and the coexistence of logging and forestry all at the same time. What a dismal failure it was. It really did not go very well.

Forestry Tasmania had three goes at this; they did the Tahune Airwalk, they did the Dismal Swamp and they did the Eagles Eyrie at Maydena above The Styx and you could argue that it is really only the airwalk that has worked.

Mr Jaensch - Hollybank.

Mr BAYLEY - Hollybank, correct me, that is correct. So, two out of four-

Mr Ferguson - All of them going pretty well.

Mr BAYLEY - They have day activities in there that are dragging people in. It is not for Forestry Tasmania's business. That is why we need a Tarkine national park and why the tourism sector and the Government are still already trying to spin it that way. Look at this document reimagining our regions. Tasmania's far north-west - and I will read you the first paragraph from this document in its second chapter:

The far north west region of Tasmania encompasses two local councils: Waratah-Wynyard and Circular Head. The far north west spans an area of 8 5 thousand kilometers, just over 12 per cent of Tasmania's total land area.

This includes several reserves including Rocky Cape National Park, Savage River National Park, Arthur Pieman Conservation and more. The takayna/Tarkine temperate rainforest area occupies 447 000 hectares bounded by the Arthur River, the Murchison River, The Pieman River and the Southern Ocean.

They want a Tarkine national park. They want to pretend it is protected. The tourism sector is desperate to have this area recognised as something that it is not; it spins it as if it is protected and puts it in the same basket as the reserves. This is our opportunity. A proclamation like this is our opportunity to give the north-west the icon it truly deserves and needs if it is ever going to compete with Freycinet and Cradle Mountain. We need additional attractions. Freycinet, Cradle Mountain and other places are collapsing under the weight of the people who are using them. They are collapsing under the weight of numbers of people who are loving these places to death. We need additional icons with day activities in them to drag people away from some of those overused areas and to ensure the good Parks and Wildlife staff managing those areas can do it in a way that is ultimately sustainable.

I want to mention the proposed development on this site. It appears massive: a hundred plus motor homes and other issues. I want to make the point: here is another big development in a reserve area that is likely to be assessed ahead of long promised reforms to the processes against which these developments are assessed.

The reserve activity assessment (RAA). I know minister you are no longer the minister for Parks, but you promised a reform to this area. You promised to make it a statutory process. You promised to include third party appeal rights. Yet, it keeps getting pushed out and out. I will ask you to address in summing up. Will you commit to making sure that the reforms to the reserve activity assessment are in place before this tourism development is assessed? Will you make that commitment it is not just assessed against the RAA as it stands at the moment, but the new RAA that has improved mechanisms for accountability and improved rights for third parties to appeal any outcome.

Similarly, the Aboriginal Heritage Act. We have spoken about that several times across the last couple of days here, but you, yourself, came into this place two-and-a-half years ago and said it does not work, does not provide effective mechanisms for protection.

Will you make a commitment no development, such as these private developments, will progress until those reforms have been passed? It is clear we need to do it. It is clear in the legislation that you are obliged to protect the natural and cultural values first. The National Parks and Reserve Management Act management objectives in schedule one is clear when it comes to regional reserves. It certainly encourages tourism. Point (j) is to encourage tourism. We accept that. To encourage tourism, recreational use and enjoyment consistent with the conservation of the regional reserve's natural and cultural values. That is abundantly clear. The natural and cultural values come first. There is an obligation to protect those values and if you can protect those values and deliver some kind of tourism recreation or other enjoyment, it needs to do so consistent with protecting those areas, consistent with the conservation of those values.

It is clear in the act. It is very sad over recent years. The Lake Malbena development is no bigger case in point, where those natural and cultural values have certainly been sidelined, suppressed, and the interests of tourism have been held supreme over the protection of natural and cultural heritage values.

In saying that, any improvement to the conservation status of Future Potential Production Forest land is welcome. This is utterly underwhelming in terms of its scale and ambition. It is utterly cynical in terms of the state of motivations for using this as a vehicle to allow a private commercial lease. It is disappointing that the Government seems anchored to this nonsensical

position of FPPF land to languish as some unallocated Crown land tenure. It is managed by Parks and Wildlife Service, they are not funded to manage it properly, and there is no tenure for people who want to propose day trips. There is no tenure for the Government to be investing in the kind of day activities we need in these areas. It is welcome that you take the step to protect this area. Sadly, you are doing it for all the wrong reasons.

It has to be said, the Greens in this place consistently argue the case to protect these areas more fully. There is a unique opportunity when it comes to the FPPF to deliver conservation and tourism opportunities hand in hand. Deliver those day activities in those areas so that people have a reason to spend more time in these forests, more days in those forests and spend their nights in the local community: in Swansea, on Bruny Island and in other local communities that need the assistance.

We will support the motion. We are never going to block improved reserve unless we have a good reason, such as the kooparoona niara Aboriginal owned national park proposal where we did oppose the declaration of that reserve because it was clearly a massive missed opportunity. Not only a missed opportunity, but a massive snub to the Aboriginal community. In this case, 98 hectares getting formally reserved under the Nature Conservation Act, is a cynical motivation, it utterly lacks ambition, but we are going to support it tonight.

[7.25 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Environment and Climate Change) - Mr Speaker, I thank those members who have made contributions, which I understand are broadly supportive of the motion, which is welcome. I will make my way through some responses to matters that they have raised in passing, for balance in completeness.

Ms Dow asked some questions about the current detail of the proposed use enabled by this reservation process and I can confirm a couple of things that can give her some context. The project group that is driving this overall initiative regarding the development includes the same players who were involved in the initial concept consultation and the development of the proposals that were put forward through consultation in the region and also ultimately to the Australian government in seeking funding. These include West Far North West Tourism and members of the Circular Head Tourism Association, involvement from the Circular Head Council and others. The same people are involved who carried the concept from the beginning. That is very welcome. They know their region and the players in it very well. This motion, as I have said and others have acknowledged, is about enabling that project to proceed to the next stage.

The next stage involves an expressions of interest process where a commercial investor partner will be sought who can bring that concept to life. In answer to Ms Dow's question about the detail of the concept, we anticipate there will be a framework concept that is put out there, then there will be, hopefully, investor partners expressing interest. Then there will be a process of assessment of whether their proposals and willingness to invest to see how well that matches the overall concept for the Tarkine Adventure Hub. The detail will be thrashed out through that process to deliver something within the scope of the funding that was provided for and that the original project brief sought to achieve for the area. The finer details of that would be a process of negotiation between the owners of the project and those proposing to come and co-invest to make it happen. That provides some guidance for Ms Dow on the current detail of the proposal.

Dr Broad had a wide-ranging discussion on the matter in which he repeatedly said that he was happy about the proposal and angry about it at the same time. I think a couple of things bear putting on the record in that it was originally Forestry Tasmania (FT) under a Labor government at the time that took this area out of production and into tourism as part of the investment in tourism in production forests that Mr Bayley has referred to. I was amongst other people who were there on the day that-

Dr Broad - That bit, you are saying that Labor took that out -

Mr JAENSCH - Sorry? That is where the Dismal Swamp infrastructure was originally established, as I am advised. This was an area that was a forest that was then used for the development of the tourism experience which was exciting at the time but ultimately did not fire and is now in disrepair.

The process of reservation that is being sought through this motion is not a lock-up, Dr Broad. It is about enabling a commercial investment and activity to resume on that parcel of land, which was the original intent of FT at the time and the Labor government at the time. The mechanism they used to achieve that, plus the changes that has happened as a result of the Tasmanian Forest Agreement, worked against that outcome, particularly in being able to provide terms for a lease that could give a third party confidence to invest long term. That is the reason.

The Future Potential Production Forest land class does not allow the options for leasing or transfer that can provide commercial certainty to a third-party investor and that is a principal reason for the creation of the reservation so that it can be offered and enable the project to attract someone who is prepared to put their own money into a development here, not just to run something that was built with Government money. That is, as I understand it, the fundamental proposition that is being enabled by this process of reservation.

This is not a lockup by any stretch, if you choose that language. It is very much about giving this parcel of land another opportunity to reach its potential as a tourism development in a forest area and that has not changed for about 20 years. Dr Broad's faux rage is a little amusing and I suppose at the end of the day we have had contributions that have been laced with a bit of venom from both Dr Broad and Mr Bayley but no-one will forget it was their two parties and perhaps even they themselves who signed the Tasmanian Forest Agreement in the first place, closed down the industry, closed the tracks as well, and no one is ever going to forget that. It is history now and we are dealing with what we have inherited from that period and those decisions and we will make good for those, for the community and the economy of the region wherever we can and try and clean up some of that mess.

Mr Bayley while on his feet referred to the values of the reserve and the things that the regional reserve status affords. He also referred to regional reserve status under the National Parks and Reserve Management Act 2002, the reference there to regional reserves 'may be managed with multiple objectives in mind including, to encourage tourism, recreational use and enjoyment that is consistent with the conservation of the regional reserve's natural and cultural values'. Part of the intent here is that the opportunity exists to take people into an area of forest and natural beauty, and natural values, to give them the opportunity to spend time there enjoying their recreation in the region and use this as a base. That is a good combination of cultural, natural and recreational values being met there together and tourism spend in the region.

This particular parcel of land and you referred to various, is being transferred, I understand. I am advised because it is the parcel of land on which the existing Dismal Swamp Experience footprint and its assets and infrastructure already exist. It was again somewhat ironic that Mr Bayley argued strongly for the value and transformative effect of tourism development for land at Derby being a good thing but not anywhere else, that there were grave reservations about the Government's intention.

Mr Bayley - Public infrastructure, publicly owned, day activities, not competing with existing accommodation providers. There is a whole big range of differences, minister.

Mr JAENSCH - There are also wealthy people with expensive bikes who enjoy drinking wine in Derby as well.

Mr Bayley - And they do it in the pub. They do not do it in private accommodation on public land.

Mr JAENSCH - They do not do it in private? They do it in public. Okay.

Mr Bayley - They do it on private land, not on public land. Private developments on public land.

Mr JAENSCH - The scale and nature of development was another matter that Mr Bayley raised and in reference to that I will return to part of my opening statement. There was a confirmation there that should the proposal proceed all relevant local, state and commonwealth government approval processes will need to be addressed which will also provide opportunity for public input into the final proposal.

Mr Bayley - The question was whether you would update the RAA process as promised prior to making this assessment?

Mr JAENSCH - The review and improvement of the RAA process, the reform process there, is one that I was committed to as minister and our Government remains committed to. I am no longer the minister and I cannot provide you with my personal assurances of the timing of the outcome of that. You may enquire as to that from the new Parks minister but it is probably fair to say that any project preceding any activity on this site will be assessed under the regulatory framework in place at that time. That is the way you do it and that is how it works.

Mr Bayley - That is a statement of the obvious, is it not? That was not the question. The question is whether you bring it forward -

Mr JAENSCH - I thought it was important to put that on the record: that it is what would happen. We will not be holding up projects waiting for a reform process. There are people who are entitled to have their proposals dealt with under the frameworks in place at the time.

They were the majority of the substantive points raised in the debate. I thank all contributors and parties for their support for the proposition itself, for the proclamation and the reservation process and I look forward to seeing it proceed and for there to be exciting proposals that deliver the sought-after investment and visitation and enjoyment of our far north-west

region. I commend all the people who have been part of it, Clint Walker and John Dabner and others, the Circular Head Council, the Circular Head Tourism Association, West by Northwest Tourism and others who have contributed over the years and I thank the federal government for the preparedness to invest in this project.

I am glad that we will be able to deliver this proclamation and this reservation of this land to enable the process in accordance with the project timeline, not holding anything up and enabling it to head to the next stages.

Motion agreed to.

WATER MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS (DELEGATION AND INDUSTRIAL WATER SUPPLY) BILL 2023 (No. 33)

In Committee - Consideration of Legislative Council Amendments

[7.37 p.m.]

Dr BROAD - Madam Deputy Speaker, I bring your attention to the state of the House.

Quorum formed.

Mr BARNETT - Mr Chair, there are just a few clauses, mostly technical, that have been agreed to in the upper House. I will summarise on behalf of the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, Jo Palmer, and indicate the Government's support for these amendments.

The Water Miscellaneous Amendments (Delegation and Industrial Water Supply) Bill 2023 introduces important legislation, and it is important that it is properly balanced and delivers the outcomes it is intended to deliver.

The bill contains provisions which would put in place a balanced and workable model to facilitate greater community involvement in managing and operating publicly owned irrigation infrastructure, as well as providing the opportunity for Tasmanian Irrigation to supply water for hydrogen production.

The bill provides for the opportunity for irrigator community groups to apply for and be granted delegations or functions which would otherwise be delivered by the responsible water entity for an irrigation district. It is important that the appropriate checks and balances are in place to ensure that processes and decisions are fair and equitable, and that the full range of interests involved are considered and protected where necessary.

The bill has been comprehensively examined in this place and passed without amendment. Subsequently, the bill was also very carefully examined in the other place and was passed with a couple of small amendments.

The first one was inserting a missing comma. Very thorough, those in the Legislative Council. The others add clarity to the review and appeal provisions.

The Government listened carefully to concerns and points raised in recent discussions that identified a possibility to add greater clarity and certainty around who has what rights

around reviews and appeals in relation to amendments to the Water Management Act, as set out in the bill. The amendments to the bill ensure it is crystal-clear on the decisions in relation to approving or refusing an application for delegation of functions.

The right to request a review of the decision applies to the applicant and to the irrigators within the relevant irrigation district. Subsequently, the right to appeal applies to the applicant and to district irrigators. These rights also apply to decisions about terms and conditions which might be related to the decision to approve or refuse an application for delegation.

Similarly, for decisions made by the irrigation entity to vary a term or condition of a delegation, or revoke it, review and appeal rights are available to the irrigation delegate that is managing or operating the district and to irrigators within the district.

For decisions made by the minister to revoke the delegation, the amendments make it absolutely clear that the irrigation delegate - the body managing or operating an irrigation district under delegation, has the right to appeal the decision.

These small amendments strengthen the bill and are entirely consistent with the policy intent that has informed the development of the bill. Specifically:

- in clause 17 of the bill, a comma is inserted after the word 'relate' in the new section 226D, subsection 3, to improve the readability of that subsection.
- in clause 18 of the bill, on page 36, paragraph (b), subsection (r) is replaced with a subsection which makes it crystal-clear that in relation to a decision by the irrigation entity to either approve or refuse to approve an application for delegation, the eligible body applying for the delegation and any irrigation district participant in the relevant district have a right to request a review of the decision.
- on the same page, subsection (s) is amended to clarify that both an irrigation delegate and an irrigation district participant in the relevant district have a right to request a review of a decision by an irrigation entity, to vary a term or condition of a delegation or to revoke a delegation.
- following subsection (s), subsection (t) is inserted to make it clear that a decision by the minister to revoke a delegation is appealable by the relevant irrigation delegate.
- clause 19 is amended to make it clear that in the context of making or refusing to make a delegation, a decision to impose a term or condition on the delegation is also a reviewable decision.

I commend those amendments to the committee.

Mr CHAIR - Minister, you have to move the amendment.

Mr BARNETT - So moved.

Mr BAYLEY - Mr Chair, I thank the upper House for their diligence. The Greens are fully supportive of commas in the right place. We are happy to support that amendment. We

also strongly support appeal rights to ensure there is the capacity for applicants or participants to appeal a decision if they are dissatisfied, so we support these amendments.

Ms FINLAY - Mr Chair, I thank Mr Barnett for bringing this down on behalf of the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, who is not in this place. I am not sure that thanks go particularly to the upper House. It was the Government themselves that brought on these amendments because they recognised discrepancies in what they were intending. As we worked through a lot of those amendments the last time in the lower House, it was brought to our attention that these appeal and review rights needed to be strengthened. The work we did down here recognised that needed to occur. The Government brought these on. They have been approved and come down here, and we are supportive of the amendments.

Mr BARNETT - In conclusion, I thank the members for their contribution, both the Greens and the Labor Party. Thank you so much for that. I know the minister would, likewise, want me to pass that on.

I also want to pass on my thanks, because I did not do it the other night, to the officers from the department who are here and who were here the other night when we went through the substantive bill. I pass on my personal thanks to those department representatives. They are here often after-hours, late at night, like ourselves, but they often go beyond the call. My thanks to the minister's office for your support as well.

Amendments agreed to.

Resolution reported.

Resolution agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

[7.48 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Leader of the House) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

On the Road Again

Rotary Club of Ulverstone West - ArtEx

[7.48 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on adjournment tonight to talk about the fantastic artistic talent in my electorate of Braddon in two types of arts.

First, I will reflect on a show that has, unfortunately, finished. The Cradle Coast Theatre presented their original show, *On the Road Again*. It was written, directed and largely sung by Sid Sidebottom, who people would know is a performer of many years, not only performing but directing and now writing musicals. This was a rollicking good time. My wife and I had a fantastic evening when we went to see *On the Road Again* at the Paraple Arts Centre in Devonport.

It was a performance that took us through the history of country music in the US. It had performances of such famous songs as *Islands in the Stream* by Dolly Parton and Kenny Rogers. Obviously, it had *On the Road Again* by Willie Nelson, it had Johnny Cash, it had The Highwaymen. *On the Road Again* was fantastic. Songs by Willie Nelson, Dolly Parton, Elvis Presley, and Johnny Cash were among the fantastic performances. It was very original.

It was all held together by Mike Brook, who performed as Rusty. He had the role of DJ and linked the history of the songs together. Sid Sidebottom sang with Annette Dawes, Laura Auton, Sherry Rand, Zac Weeks and Andrew Grey. There was a fabulous band that played too. The quality of the music and singing was the best you could see anywhere, especially the women. Laura Auton, Sherry Rand and Annette Dawes were sensational. There was a little bit of comedy. I look forward to the next show put on by the Cradle Coast Theatre Company. If you see the Cradle Coast Theatre Company putting on a production, I recommend you go every time.

On a different scale, ArtEx is on now and ends on 19 November. It is at the Leven Theatre in Ulverstone, put on by the Rotary Club of Ulverstone West. I went to the opening last Friday and the quality of the art is amazing. ArtEx has been going for almost 30 years and provides an opportunity for local artists to hang their paintings and potentially sell them. Prizes are available. The prizes are well supported by businesses, community and members of parliament across the political spectrum. The artists get really good recognition. Their paintings are hung and look fantastic.

The opening was very well attended. I highly commend the quality of the art. Even if you are not interested in art, go and have a look because you will be stunned by the quality of the paintings. They have pastels, oils on canvas, watercolours, just about everything. They have landscapes and pictures of animals, including a very attractive one of a highland cow. They have a beautiful prize-winning one that was paint on glass with birds and flowers. There is one of a red retriever that is amazing.

The prize winners should be very proud. It is a fantastic event. The Rotary Club of Ulverstone West should be very proud for providing the opportunity to artists. The Central Coast Council procures one of the paintings every year and hangs it in the council chambers. I think they are running out of room so the paintings get rotated. It is a good opportunity for artists. If anybody wants to pick up a paint brush and have a crack, you could get your art hung at ArtEx next year. Go have a look. It is open until 19 November. The arts community in the north-west and in Braddon is alive and well.

Brighton Show

Draft Ferry Strategy - Effect on Brighton

[7.53 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to talk about the Brighton Show. On Sunday 12 November, the Brighton Show was held with an attendance of more than 30 000 people. The Brighton Show Society is to be commended and recognised. The well-oiled machine works for months in advance. It is completely run by volunteers. They are there from sun-up to sundown. They put everything together, pack everything up and consistently deliver one of the best shows in Tasmania year after year. The volunteers who assisted in making the Brighton Show wonderful this year:

Geoff Jackson, president of the Brighton Show Society, Rosie Purdon, Kaylene Lee, Michael Purdon, Helenann Jackson, Venetia Metzenthin, Louisa Bennett, Maureen Reece, Sharnie Purdon, Isla Double, Justin Double, Emily Brown, Liam Young, Heath Williams, Melia Purdon, Belinda Clark, Nathan Clark, Sharnie Clark, Steve Baldock, Haydon Purdon, Sally Smith, Jodie Rybanek, Mathew Andrew, Trent Wilton, Danielle Chandler, Ruby Clark, Kerry Clements, Ricky Pritchard, Cassandra Shearer, Allen Wells, Louise Bennitt. There was also the Brighton SES, the Bridgewater Fire Brigade, Brighton Fire Brigade, the local gardening club, the CWA, the New Norfolk Rotary and Lions Club and the Brighton Rotary and Lions.

It is a magical event. It has such a wonderful community feel. It has sideshow alley, rides for kids, helicopter rides and ponies. It is a fantastic celebration for the community of Brighton.

Regarding Brighton, the Government tried to pretend an issue this week was not a problem. It was. The release of the draft ferry strategy for the River Derwent completely missed Brighton. They had been consulting actively with the minister for infrastructure and with the department about having a ferry that starts and stops in Bridgewater and Old Beach. This week we had the minister release his draft ferry strategy for the River Derwent. His obsession with inner city Hobart and the big four completely missed Brighton.

Brighton has more than 20 000 people who live there. It is the fastest-growing municipality in the state. Brighton also has plans for a new ferry terminal to sit under the new Bridgewater bridge. It is part of a greater plan. Can you imagine what a game-changer a ferry terminal would be to the people of Bridgewater, Old Beach, Gagebrook, Herdsmans Cove, Tea Tree and Brighton? It would be an absolute game-changer - economical, quick. The buses are not dependable and the new bus exchange will be stopping and starting in Claremont. That is hardly an express bus service straight to the city for people who might want to engage in employment opportunities.

I know the Brighton mayor, Leigh Gray, has expressed disappointment and frustration with the release of the draft River Derwent Ferry Service Master Plan. He states that it ignores the needs of communities outside the inner metropolitan area of Hobart. The issue of isolation, he states, lack of public transport options and transport poverty, is far greater for those communities than it is for the communities to be served by the new ferry service sites identified in the plan. It is absolutely remiss and so disrespectful to release a master plan after the Government and State Growth were well aware that Brighton was very interested in having a ferry service. It could be a game-changer for a very disadvantaged community - a community that you are more than happy to go out and put hundreds of new dwellings in, but not provide the services to back up those new dwellings.

You are more than happy to put a lot of social housing out there and not provide the appropriate connections for those people to access jobs and proper transportation. We have been doing it for decades. Here you go again. I will keep going. I want the support of other Lyons members and other people around the House when it comes to that draft ferry strategy. It is a huge wasted opportunity. It is not going to go away. If the minister thinks it is all smooth sailing from here -excuse the pun - it certainly is not. Brighton is not going to sit back and take this disrespect on the nose.

Greens Response to Labor Comments

[8.01 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to reflect on some of Labor's comments in the House and through their media releases today. Mr Winter had a lot to say about the Greens, and how clutching and confused he sounded. The Opposition Leader did not like Mr Bayley referring to Labor's track record in this place. Labor voted with the Liberals against the Greens' long-overdue reforms on renters' rights and free public transport recently. They are still claiming to care about the cost of living.

They backed the Liberals on political donations reform. They claim to have integrity, even though their Leader in the Legislative Council gave this explanation for their position: 'We have not said we will not support any amendments. We have said we will support amendments that the Government supports.' It is clear exactly who they are standing with. Labor is also now in lockstep with the Liberals on mandatory minimum sentences against the pleas of victims/survivors and those in the family violence prevention sector, such as former Australian of the Year Grace Tame and the Women's Legal Service and Laurel House.

Ms Haddad, the shadow attorney-general, seemed proud of it. She delivered a whole speech on how bad the Government's bill was, and then in the last two minutes she said Labor would be supporting them. Ms Haddad said this decision was made to protect victims/survivors. The real-world consequence of voting this bill through will be terrible impacts on victims/survivors, who will be retraumatised in the courts. That is what the experts and advocates have confirmed today.

When we talk about folding on a principled stance, it is hard to look past Labor's position on the pokies. They ran a whole election campaign on doing the right thing, only to go silent and backflip at the end. Then they signed a secret MOU with the pokies lobby. Why would the Opposition Leader not want us to remind the House about that today?

There is last fortnight's betrayal: the stadium. We should not forget that Labor promised Tasmanians that they would stop the stadium. They have handed out stickers to stop the stadium. They have asked question after question about the Liberals' stadium folly. They have knocked on doors and collected signatures to stop the stadium. What did they do? They stood next to the Liberals who they have been berating for months and they supported the stadium through the parliament.

They had the chance presented to them to do exactly what they told Tasmanians they said they would do, which is to stop the stadium, and they backed it. Labor's own petition to stop the stadium says:

The petition of the undersigned citizens of Tasmania draws to the attention of the House:

- (1) we don't support a new \$750 million stadium in Hobart,
- (2) overwhelming community concern that the Government has its priorities wrong,

- (3) we already have two perfectly good AFL stadiums, and a new stadium was never included in the AFL taskforce business case for a Tassie team,
- (4) people are living in tents, cars and couch surfing, waiting years to find a home,
- (5) people cannot get the health care they need while more people are struggling to make ends meet, and
- (6) our health, education and essential public sector workers need an overdue pay rise.

Your petitioners request the House to call upon the Government to immediately stop its plans to build a stadium on Macquarie Point and commit to priorities that will make the lives of all Tasmanians better.

What would have done that? Not supporting it in parliament, not voting it through in the lower House, not voting it through again in the Legislative Council, not voting it through in the first opportunity. That is pretty immediate. I had a look at the Labor Party's 'stop the stadium petition site' and it is still up and running. Here it is, in case people do not believe me. There it is, still going, harvesting votes, saying that they are going to stop the stadium immediately. I wonder how long it will be up for. They have no shame. I pointed this out before. They do not seem to mind this. I wonder if the Opposition Leader will write to all those people who signed their petition and explain that they have done the exact opposite. Somehow, I do not think so.

Just like they peeled the 'Pokies to 2043? Not for me.' stickers off the back of their Labor cars, the 'no stadium' bumper stickers are already disappearing. This is in addition to the Labor Party's unity ticket with the Liberals on the draconian, anti-protest laws that they waved through parliament, and environmental destruction. They have been cheerleading destructive industries relentlessly, while threatened species are pushed to extinction: the Maugean skate, swift parrot, masked owl, Tasmanian devil and wedge tailed eagle, just to name a few.

We are not surprised that Mr Winter, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Labor colleagues are feeling sensitive today. They have been exploding all day with faux outrage and sanctimony. As my friend and former colleague in this place said to me today, 'They are deflecting and projecting because their sellout status is complete'. That is the Labor so-called opposition in Tasmania. To us, they look eerily similar to the Liberal Government.

Tasmanian Craft Fair
Steam Up at Steam World
Westbury Bicentenary Festival - Remembrance Day

[8.07 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Attorney-General) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I am pleased and proud tonight to pay tribute to three special events in the Meander Valley that were held two weekends ago.

First, the Tasmanian Craft Fair at Deloraine was a cultural extravaganza. The 43rd year for the craft fair, I am advised, had an estimated 15 000 attendees over those several days. It injected \$3 million-plus into the local community. It captivates enthusiasts, those with a bit of passion and curious souls to enjoy the craft fair at multiple sites. It boasts an impressive array of handmade treasures, crafted by skilled artisans from Tasmania and beyond - intricately carved woodwork, exquisite ceramics, vibrant textiles. It showcases the mastery of the artists, who bring their unique perspectives to the forefront. It certainly sets this fair apart from so many others across the nation.

Congratulations and well done. I enjoyed a few hours on the gate with other volunteers and it was great to catch up with many of the locals. A specific appreciation goes to Michael Plunkett, director of the Tasmanian Craft Fair, Merrilyn Young, secretary, and Tim Biggs, treasurer, and the committee and the many dozens of volunteers. The volunteers, in terms of parking and caring and supporting the visitors, were fantastic. You just could not have gotten a better day for it as well. The weather was fantastic. I had the pleasure of being there with my wife, Kate, son-in-law PJ and three of my beautiful grandchildren, Abel, Skye, and Elliot. It was enjoyed by all.

On the same day, together with my five-and-a-half-year-old grandson and my wife, Kate, we visited Steam World. It was a great day out. This is in Westbury and it was called the Tasmanian Steam Up at Pearn's Steam World. It stands as a testament to the allure of the steam power and its significance in shaping the industrial landscape over many years. I enjoyed inspecting some on the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s steam engine tractors. There were many vintage machines to inspect. There were bulldog tractors and, for other tractor enthusiasts, it was great to catch up with councillor John Temple and so many others. A special thank you to Steam World president Brenton Heazlewood and secretary Robert Hill. There were plenty of Pearns there helping, and other volunteers. It was great to see so many locals. I rode on the steam train with my grandson, Abel. My knees were up near my ears. A couple of laps of Pearn's Steam World was fantastic. It was enjoyed by all and congratulations on that fantastic event. Go and visit Steam World if you get the chance.

Finally, I pay a tribute to the Westbury Show on Remembrance Day, the 11th of the 11th, and Kevin Lattin and all the team and volunteers who help make it happen. It has been going since 1864, the third oldest show in Tasmania, and is well worth visiting and participating in.

I could not get there this year because I had Remembrance Day in Perth, Western Australia, after a health ministers' conference there. I enjoyed that at Kings Park in Perth. Thank you to Western Australian Veterans Affairs minister, Paul Papalia, for hosting me and being able lay a wreath for and on behalf of the people of Tasmania.

In, conclusion, all the best this weekend, 18 and 19 November, for the Westbury Bicentenary Festival. It is being held at the Westbury village green and Westbury Town Hall, a grand celebration marking two centuries of the town's existence, with a vibrant tapestry of history, culture and community spirit. I know that because I was born and raised at Hagley, just down the road from Westbury. I played football and cricket against Westbury Primary when I was playing for Hagley Primary School. I have many friends and family members in and around Westbury.

Two hundred years is fantastic. Congratulations and well done to all the volunteers. I hope it is a wonderful weekend. I am sure it will be. There will be plenty of captivating

historical exhibits, engaging history tours, market stalls, old-fashioned games, maypole dancing - that is something that they are famous for in Westbury on the village green. Mr Deputy Speaker, you would and enjoy it if you had your kids out there.

You have crazy bikes, a photographic and memorabilia exhibition and much more. It is going to be a very lively atmosphere this weekend. There will be plenty of things to see and do with families, so get along and enjoy it at the Westbury community hall and village green from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m.

Two hundred years of the Westbury community - how fantastic. The history and heritage of this great state of Tasmania, much of it there in the Meander Valley. I have my office just up the road in Deloraine. The Meander Valley has so much to see and do, especially this weekend to celebrate 200 years. Congratulations, well done and a big thank you to all those volunteering to make it a success. My office is delighted to be part of that support to help make it a wonderful weekend.

Lake Malbena Tourism Proposal

[8.13 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on adjournment to talk about the Halls Island chopper-access luxury huts. The helicopter-access tourism proposal to Halls Island on Lake Malbena first emerged in 2016 as one of the first proposals under this Government's 'Unlock the Parks' policy expression of interest process, encouraging proponents to defy management plans over protected areas for their tourism fantasies. Ironically this proposal served to lock up previously freely accessible public land.

Even though we have seen two premiers and countless ministers move on since then, the Lake Malbena proposal still hangs over us. It has been rejected by the Central Highlands Council, the Aboriginal Heritage Council, the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council and the full bench of the Tasmanian Supreme Court. But still the proponent persists, withdrawing the proposal from state processes and submitting it for federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) assessment.

At this point, over 5000 community members and groups have made submissions against this project while the proponent submitted supporting documentation based on his own studies - studies that are unpublished and not peer-reviewed, yet still the Liberals back him.

The federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water is currently assessing this project and considering all of the submissions. They have been so overwhelmed by the amount of submissions, and the quality of them, that they have had to postpone a decision on three occasions.

Lake Malbena sits in sublime country, visited since before time was recorded by the palawa people. It is important hunting and habitation country. It is also World Heritage-listed land, listed for its outstanding universal values. It sits alongside privately owned land, trawtha makuminya. This area is also loved deeply by the bushwalking and back-country fishing communities for its peace, solitude and as a world-class trout fishery.

Yesterday, the federal Environment department was again forced to delay making a decision on the proposed helicopter tourism development at Lake Malbena. The information provided by the proponent has been exposed as profoundly inadequate. Now the federal government is having to do the work the Tasmanian Government has failed to do.

The department has requested a thorough cultural heritage assessment report which describes the Aboriginal heritage values of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) that could be impacted by the project. This is hugely significant. The Tasmanian Greens have long called on the Tasmanian Government to complete this assessment over the entirety of the World Heritage Area. This has been a condition required by UNESCO before any development should be considered in the TWWHA. The Government has continually refused to acknowledge this and now the feds have called them out.

This impacts the Liberals' 'Unlock the Parks' policy and the EOI process designed to facilitate development over protected areas. Any and every EOI proposal for the World Heritage Area will need to satisfy this component under EPBC. The state Government has failed miserably to address this issue.

In the Lake Malbena case, the reserve activity assessment, signed off by Parks, showed a woefully inadequate level of consultation with the Aboriginal and broader community. A desktop assessment was produced that failed comprehensively to recognise the values so clearly identified by UNESCO and all those who understand the significance of that country.

Crucially, the Malbena proponent will finally be required to enter a genuine consultation with the Aboriginal community and the owners of trawtha makuminya, a community who has consistently opposed this development and made submissions in opposition due to the impacts on their country and cultural practices. The proponent previously failed to consult with the Aboriginal community and has consistently ignored their expressed concerns. It is time he showed some respect and walked away for good.

Additionally, the department has asked for the proponent to consider the retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value for the World Heritage Area, recently adopted by the World Heritage Committee. This is the definitive statement on why the World Heritage Area is so significant. The Halls Island proposal has already demonstrated it will compromise those values, with extensive impacts on wilderness values and threatened species.

Halls Island is also home to a historic bush hut built in 1952 as a shelter for highland explorers by Reg Hall, a legend of the Tasmanian high country, oft referred to as the father of the Walls of Jerusalem. This hut was signed over to the Wild Drake director by Reg's daughter in 2016 under the condition that he would act as a faithful custodian to her father's legacy, would faithfully maintain it, never build new structures on the island and not use helicopters to access the island.

The Hall family has been betrayed from day one of Wild Drake taking possession of that lease. To date, there has been no apparent maintenance and the old hut is suffering from the effects of multiple winters without any curation. It is a unique heritage-listed structure in danger of collapse. Access to Halls Island has been declined to several people who wished to do maintenance on the hut, people who wished to ensure its survival. For these and many other reasons, it is time to tear up Wild Drake's lease so that those who care can save a special part of Tasmanian folklore and end this farcical situation.

Most importantly, the Tasmanian Government must immediately scrap the EOI process and show some understanding and respect for the Aboriginal community, for Aboriginal country, Aboriginal people and UNESCO by completing a comprehensive cultural heritage assessment over our unique, irreplaceable World Heritage Area.

The Tasmanian Government must also move as soon as possible to update the reserve activity assessment process to ensure that it has appeal mechanisms for third parties and is a statutory process.

Halls Island has been a scar on the landscape, not only of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area but on the way the Tasmanian Government applies itself to the protection of heritage, honours Australia's obligations under the World Heritage Convention and respects the wishes of the Tasmanian community.

It is an indictment on the Tasmanian Government's approach that the federal government is having to step in and ensure that the proper process and adequate assessment is carried out. We look forward to the minister's decision in due course.

Ambulance Ramping - Commentary

Health - Labor's Regional Policy

[8.20 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak on the adjournment about something which has concerned me and has been brought to my attention by constituents.

While I am not the chair of the Ambulance Ramping Parliamentary Inquiry Committee, I will put a few remarks on the public record tonight. It has been a very traumatic experience for some people presenting to our parliamentary committee given their personal circumstances of having lost loved ones while ramped and waiting for emergency care at our major hospitals.

Last week, the Premier posted on his social media the following statement: 'Tassie is one of the only states where you do not have to pay for an ambulance and we are going to keep it that way.'

It is incredibly insensitive for that post to be put on social media and it has caused significant distress to some of those who presented to the committee. I want to put on the record my disdain for that post. It came from information which was discussed during the hearings process. We should always have the utmost respect for people who have been affected by ambulance ramping or anyone who has the courage to present to a parliamentary committee at a devastating time in their life following the loss of a loved one.

The Premier should not have done that. It was insensitive and did not reflect the work of that committee or the sensitivities we wanted to see as committee members around evidence that was provided during those hearings. On behalf of those people who have contacted me, I put on the record my disdain for that and it should not have happened.

In relation to remarks made by the Health minister, Labor's regional health policy offers something new to the west coast. It offers permanent nurse practitioner roles based in that

community, providing care from the district hospital. It also provides 24-hour paramedic coverage with additional permanent paramedics in that community. It makes the Queenstown ambulance station a double-branch station. It is not one now. It looks at employing rural generalists and more allied health professionals.

It is incorrect to say that Labor's policy does not offer anything to the north-west coast and the west coast.

I call on the minister to correct the record.

The House adjourned at 8.23 p.m.

Appendix 1

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Question No. 94 of 2023

House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Hon Michelle O'Byrne MP

ANSWERED BY: Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency
Management, Hon Felix Ellis MP

QUESTIONS:

In relation to mandatory family violence training for all police officers being introduced to help address misidentification:

- (1) Has this mandatory family violence training commenced?
- (2) What does the training entail, including but not limited to;
 - a. contact hours for individual officers;
 - b. self-guided work;
 - c. field training and mentorship; and
 - d. ongoing training refresher training?
- (3) Besides misidentification, what other specific areas/topics are included in the training?
- (4) Who is delivering the training and how were they selected?
- (5) Did the Government consult with anyone in establishing the content and delivery of the training, and if so, who did it consult with?
- (6) By what date does the Government intend that all police officers will have completed the training?
- (7) What is the budgeted funding, by year, including the outyears, specifically for this training? (27 September 2023)

ANSWER:

- (1) Yes, Tasmania Police has commenced its mandatory family violence refresher training to be completed by every police officer, including the Commissioner of Police. The training includes a component on misidentification.
- (2) The training is being delivered in three phases.

Phases One and Two were delivered between 1 January 2023 and 30 June 2023 and were designed as a refresher for all members.

The modules within each phase refer members to the *Family Violence Act 2004* and the Tasmania Police Family Violence Manual. These interactive modules are delivered online and are approximately 30 minutes each in length.

Phase Three is still being developed and is anticipated to commence in 2024. It is anticipated that it will involve both an online and a face-to-face training component.

As well as these formal methods of training, police officers are continually undergoing on-the-job coaching in relation to family violence response.

For example, in March 2023, additional training on coercive control was delivered by Dr Toma Pitman to police officers and prosecutors working in the field of family and sexual violence. Dr Pitman has a Bachelor of Education, Bachelor of Social Work (Hons), PhD "The Legacy of Domestic Violence". Dr Pitman is a published academic and has worked in Tasmania in family violence counselling, group work and community education.

Representatives of the Education and Training Command of Tasmania Police were also present. This will inform the ongoing development and delivery of family violence training to police at all levels. Resources were provided by Dr Pitman for use in further training and Tasmania Police has continued access to Dr Pitman's expertise and literature.

- (3) Phase One contains information in respect to the legislation and is theory based. It includes the following topics:
 - Module one - definition of Family Violence.
 - Module two - Police Powers of Search, Entry and Arrest.
 - Module three - Police Powers of Arrest and Detention.
 - Scenario One – Application of the information contained in the first three modules.
 - Scenario Two – Application of the other information contained in the first three modules.
 - Knowledge check.

Phase Two is scenario based and examines the application of the Tasmania Police Family Violence Manual and legislation. At the end of each scenario, questions are asked to test the knowledge of the person. It includes:

- Scenario 1 – Significant Relationship Data.

- Scenario 2 – Family Argument.
- Scenario 3 – Accurate Recording on FVMS.
- Scenario 4 – Electronic Monitoring Bracelet (EMD) Breaches.
- Scenario 5 – Family Court (FC) Orders.
- Scenario 6 – Disability.
- Scenario 7 – Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and LGBTQIA+.

Phase Three will involve both an online and a face-to-face training component and will focus on emotional and financial abuse, person in most need of protection (also known as misidentification), along with best practice for a trauma informed response for victim-survivors and affected children. It is anticipated that all online training will be completed prior to the face-to-face training.

- (4) Training for Phases One and Two has been delivered online. Training for Phase Three is still under development and the delivery methodology and presenter(s) has not been confirmed.
- (5) The State Service workforce includes employees with considerable knowledge in the family violence sector. Tasmania Police consulted with experts across the following sectors:
 - Family Violence Counselling and Support Services - Department of Health
 - Child Safety Services - Department for Education, Children and Young People
 - Defendant Health Liaison Services - Department of Health
 - Integrated Offender Management - Department of Justice.

Members responsible for development of training have also spoken to organisations and experts in the field from the non-government sector such as Dr Torna Pitman.

- (6) Of the 1,476 police officers required to undertake the first two phases of training, 1,346 have completed the training. The 130 officers who have not completed the training include members who are on long-term leave (e.g. workers compensation/sick/parental leave).

It is anticipated that Phase Three will commence in 2024. The timing of the completion of this training will be assessed as the module and content delivery is being developed.

- (7) Tasmania Police has funded the mandatory training through existing budgets. Phase Three is still being developed and any additional funding required is still to be determined.

☒ APPROVED ☐ NOT APPROVED



Hon Felix Ellis MP
Police, Fire and Emergency Management

Date: 10/11/2023