

**PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**  
**DEBATES OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**DAILY HANSARD**

**Wednesday 5 September 2025**

**Preliminary Transcript**

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Wednesday 5 November 2025

The Speaker, **Mrs Petrusma**, took the Chair at 10.00 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People, and read Prayers.

## QUESTIONS

### Health Sector - Job Cuts and Wage Negotiations

**Mr WILLIE question to MINISTER for HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mrs ARCHER**

The Treasurer, Mr Abetz, has indicated that if workers don't accept the government's bad-faith ultimatum, he will cut more jobs in the public sector. You were unable to rule out health job cuts this week. You could only muster that tired Liberal line that 'frontline services won't be impacted', yet your government famously can't even define what a frontline worker is. Can you guarantee that health workers, including nurses, allied health professionals and hospital support staff won't be sacked if they don't accept the government's bad-faith ultimatum? Will you rule out job cuts in health?

## ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. I'd first like to say that I think you have mischaracterised what the Treasurer said. Each and every day the Tasmanian government is investing record funding of nearly \$10 million into our health system, more than a third of the state budget. The 2025-26 Budget tabled midyear demonstrated our strong focus on building a better Tasmanian health system now and into the future, including \$70.2 million over the next four years -

**Mr Willie** - Instead of reading off a script, answer the question.

**Mrs ARCHER** - to implement the four-year elective surgery plan which was launched in June and following the first four-year plan, which has a record number of elective surgeries delivered.

**Mr Winter** - You're not answering the question.

**The SPEAKER** - Honourable Leader of the Opposition, the minister still has two minutes and 19 seconds to go. I ask that she be heard, please. Please show respect for each other in this Chamber.

**Mrs ARCHER** - To go to your specific question about jobs, we are also investing in more doctors, nurses and paramedics. I went out just this week to welcome eight new paramedics joining us in Tasmania. We're continuing to rebuild Tasmania's major hospitals and health facilities to ensure that staff and patients have access to world-class facilities and technologies, including a boosted workforce. We will continue to invest in the health workforce that Tasmanians need and continue to work together to build a better healthcare system for all Tasmanians.

**Supplementary Question**

**Mr WILLIE** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Mr WILLIE** - I wasn't expecting the minister to give up that easily. I was going to take a point of order, but it will be a supplementary now.

**Ms Finlay** - She could have answered the question.

**Mr WILLIE** - Well, she could have answered the question, which was -

**The SPEAKER** - Order. Interjections will cease. Through the Chair, please.

**Mr WILLIE** - Will health workers be sacked if they don't comply with the government's bad-faith ultimatum, as per the Treasurer's comments? He said if they breached it you were going to sack people.

**The SPEAKER** - Honourable minister, to the supplementary.

**Mrs ARCHER** - Thank you for the question. As I said at the beginning of my answer, I think you've mischaracterised what the Treasurer said in his answer. We are continuing to invest in health -

**Mr Willie** - You can't say that and then not explain it.

**The SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mrs ARCHER** - Because it's not what he said.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Honourable members of the Opposition, allow the minister to respond, please.

**Mrs ARCHER** - I've just said we will continue to invest in Tasmania's health workforce. We will continue to grow our health workforce and not cut our health workforce.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order. Before I give the call to the honourable Leader of the Opposition, I remind members that if they ask a question, they need to allow the minister to answer without interjection. If the member is not satisfied with the answer, they can ask a supplementary question or use other forms of this House to pursue this.

Today, I will issue warnings to members who continually interject and interrupt proceedings. I do not wish to suspend any member from this House, but where a member is persistently disruptive to the whole Chamber, I will need to start issuing warnings and suspend

them. I also want to remind the members of the Motion for Respect report which highlighted the importance of this Chamber being a safe place for all members.

**Education Sector - Job Cuts and Wage Negotiations**

**Mr WILLIE question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, Ms PALMER**

[10.06 a.m.]

You failed to answer this question yesterday. The Treasurer, Mr Abetz, has said there will be job cuts in the public sector if workers don't accept your bad-faith ultimatum. Is it the government's position that teachers and education staff will face job losses should they not accept the bad-faith ultimatum? Can you rule out cuts in the education system?

**ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the Opposition Leader for the question. We certainly highly value the skills and passion of our education workforce. In fact, just this morning I've been out having breakfast with primary school children from Lindisfarne Primary School, sitting together having some toast and fruit as part of our significant investment into the Breakfast Club program in partnership with Variety. I'm really grateful to the school staff and the volunteers who help across Tasmania to deliver the breakfast program to our amazing students.

I think we've been very clear in saying that the core business of educating our children is not going to be affected. Principals continue to operate on a business-as-usual basis, filling their allocated positions. We need teachers to be teaching and we need support staff to be supporting those teachers to teach and we know that they are really essential positions.

In fact, we continue to grow the aspects of our workforce that are just so important, including funding 20 new scholarships for the next generation of speech and language pathologists and psychologists to go into our Tasmanian schools. This funding is actually in addition to the nine scholarships already made available for speech pathology in 2024. I'm absolutely delighted to say that 10 speech and language -

**Mr WILLIE** - Point of order, the minister is not addressing the question. It's very specific about the Treasurer's comments that if the public sector workforce don't comply with the bad-faith ultimatum, the Treasurer will sack more workers.

**Mr Abetz** - I never said that.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order. As members know, under Standing Order 44 we show a degree of latitude, which means that we show the minister the same latitude under Standing Order 45. I draw the minister back to the question.

**Ms PALMER** - As I was explaining to the House, we have had record investment across education and certainly record investment across our workforce as we are now. I was delighted to meet some of the new language and pathology scholarship holders. We've had 10 of those

that have started now, six commencing work in our schools and four commencing in term 1. We continue to invest in the roles that we know are really important.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order. Allow the minister to respond, please.

**Ms PALMER** - I can certainly say how delighted I am today to know that the negotiations will be continuing with the AEU and the lead negotiator. In fact, they have a meeting this afternoon. I'm really looking forward to the outcomes of those meetings.

### Supplementary Question

**The SPEAKER** - Do you have a supplementary or not?

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes. The Education minister's going nowhere near it. The Treasurer has indicated that if workers don't accept the bad faith ultimatum, there will be further job losses. Can she rule that out?

**The SPEAKER** - Minister for Education, it does relate to the original question.

**Ms PALMER** - What I find so disappointing sometimes in this place is that you know you are twisting the Treasurer's words. The problem is when we step out of this place, the words that are said here actually impact people's lives, and you frighten people -

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order. The minister has the call.

**Ms PALMER** - I have answered your question. You have twisted the Treasurer's words, and that's on you, Mr Willie. What I am telling you is how we are investing in our schools.

**Ms FINLAY** - Point of order, honourable Speaker, Standing Order 45, relevance. The Leader has had to ask a supplementary question to get the answer: yes or no, will there be cuts in education?

**The SPEAKER** - The minister still has 20 seconds to provide a response. Minister, please continue your response.

**Ms PALMER** - As I was saying, you've twisted the words of the Treasurer and that's on you, Mr Willie. What I am saying is that we are investing -

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order.

**Ms PALMER** - We are investing in the lives of our young people and we are investing in the lives of our workforce.

**The SPEAKER** - The minister's time has expired.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - The only ones who should be talking are Ms Rosol or myself.

### **State Budget - Impact on Food Security**

**Ms ROSOL question to MINISTER for COMMUNITY and MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS, Ms OGILVIE**

[10.11 a.m.]

Foodbank's annual Hunger Report is out today and the situation in Tasmania is dire, with a reported 81,000 Tasmanians experiencing food insecurity in June and July of this year. Shockingly, almost a quarter of Tasmanians are skipping meals or going entire days without eating. While the government prioritises a stadium, tens of thousands of people are literally going hungry. It is shameful, as is the fact that the organisations you expect to support people in need have not received the funding to do so. What is particularly disturbing is that things are set to get worse for struggling Tasmanians and more difficult for the organisations who support them as we head into your era of stadium austerity. Why is it so hard for you to see that the needs of hungry Tasmanians are more important than building a stadium we don't need?

### **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for that question, which, despite the context it was put in, is a serious question about food security. We recognise the deep challenges faced by many Tasmanians due to the rising cost of living and our government committed to increased support for the food relief sector through our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future.

Our government's goal is an integrated food relief sector that supports Tasmanians in need of access to sufficient, safe, nutritious, quality food and to services that support long-term food resilience. I was pleased to recently announce 24 community organisations were successful in our \$2.5 million Food Relief Capital Investment Grants program to upgrade capital investment projects to maximise cold storage, logistics and commercial kitchen facilities to support food relief. The release of the new food resilience strategy is a key deliverable of our government's first 100-day plan and builds on the previous strategy in ensuring our continued support of food relief, while assisting to build food-resilient communities. I am excited to be launching the new strategy in coming weeks and I look forward to discussing that with you.

The Food Relief to Food Resilience Action Plan 2023-25 has delivered increased funding for major food-relief providers, and grant funding for community food-relief providers and nutritional programs for Neighbourhood Houses. There is improved food-relief information available through FindHelpTAS.

I have been out and about meeting with some of these providers, particularly in the university, Loaves & Fishes, and others, and hearing about the great work that they're doing, particularly across logistics in Tasmania. It's clear to me that we can do more work in this area. The strategy we have developed will maximise the opportunities of getting surplus food to the people who need it. I am aware that it's a complex area, it's growing - pun not intended -

organically, so that good people in their local areas are doing great things. It's how we connect to that better, that is going to matter.

Through our 2030 plan, the government has confirmed our continued commitment to shift the focus from emergency food relief, to building long-term food resilience in Tasmania. This includes \$14.6 million over two years to School Food Matters, to double the healthy school lunch program from 30 to 60 schools by 2026; \$1 million to food-relief providers to maintain increased funding levels for 25, including \$500,000 for the Tasmanian Community Food Relief Grants Program and \$15 million for capital upgrades.

**The SPEAKER** - The minister's time has expired.

### Supplementary Question

**Ms ROSOL** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Ms ROSOL** - The minister failed to mention the organisations that aren't receiving funding. We have heard from Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania that the funding they need for the Community Connectors program hasn't come through to them. There are dots to be connected here. Services already don't have enough money. The stadium is going to result in services receiving less money. More Tasmanians are going to go hungry. The question for the minister is, when will she put the people of Tasmania before the stadium?

**The SPEAKER** - Your original question was very broad, which is why the minister did have latitude in answering it. If you want an answer to a specific question, sometimes you do need to go down a little bit narrower in the question, instead of giving such a large preamble. I'll see if the minister has anything more to add to her question.

**Ms Ogilvie** - Ask another question.

**Dr Woodruff** - Nothing to say to Neighbourhood Houses about the funding they still don't have for Community Connectors?

**The SPEAKER** - The minister did outline a lot in her response.

**Dr Woodruff** - Four months and no money for Community Connectors? Four months.

**The SPEAKER** - Order. The only one that should be speaking at the moment is me. I remind the House, I will start issuing warnings today. I appreciate we have a lot of weeks to get through, but we're not going to be on a slippery slope of declining into chaos. I'm going to put an end to that.



## Homes Tasmania - Huntingfield Development

### Mr O'BYRNE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.17 a.m.]

In 2018, the government declared a housing crisis and held a summit to find solutions. In the eight years since that summit, the problem has only gotten worse. Shockingly, there are now 5336 applications on the public housing waitlist. Creating Homes Tasmania in 2022 was the government's supposed silver bullet. Homes Tasmania's main job was to increase housing supply by overseeing a significant building program, but this has not eventuated.

Homes has mismanaged its flagship Huntingfield housing development so badly, that not one home has been built or block sold in seven years. We are onto the fourth Housing minister since Homes Tasmania's inception, and despite my high regard for him, even he hasn't enough polish for this one. Isn't it time for you to admit that the Homes Tasmania model hasn't worked and bring it back under direct government control?

### ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question and I certainly understand the sentiment behind it because we do need more homes. I agree with that and I thank the member for commending our minister for Housing, who is doing a very good job, as did his predecessors. This is a challenge we face nationwide, which is why the federal government has intervened and created partnerships with Tasmania, and all the other states and territories across Australia.

We had an independent review into Homes Tasmania, the Crawford report, and the Tasmanian government's response was tabled both in parliament and published online prior to the election. I understand where you're coming from. The report made it clear that some elements of the original model for Homes Tasmania have not delivered on stakeholder expectations, and that needs action. We are committed to that action and I know our minister is as well. We are ensuring the Department of State Growth works with Homes Tasmania and other relevant departments to address and implement the 20 recommendations made in the review and the rollout of these recommendations is underway.

I cast my memory back to the debate in this House and I acknowledge that you didn't support the model of Homes Tasmania at that particular time. It was needed intervention, in my view, in terms of reform in that area, as is planning reform, as is greater investment into public housing, affordable housing as well, as is incentives that we can alleviate the pressure when it comes to our First Home Builders Grant - of some \$30,000 which we announced in the recent election as well - as is our stamp duty relief as well which many, many Tasmanians have had the benefit from, which has been very encouraging.

There is no one solution. There are solutions right across the board that is needed, from incentives, from planning reform, which is clear, and indeed the reform to Homes Tasmania as well. I am less than satisfied with Homes Tasmania's performance, which is why we did the review. That's why the recommendations are there. I'm committed to seeing the reform through to ensure that Homes Tasmania delivers for the Tasmanian people.

## Supplementary Question

**Mr O'BYRNE** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - Thank you for that answer, Premier. However, in 2018 you announced fast-track legislation to fast-track Crown land to be used for urgent needed housing. It's seven years later, and at Huntingfield not one block has been sold, not one house has been built. How can -

**Mr Barnett** - Rezoning

**Mr O'BYRNE** - The planning approval was done in 2022.

**A member** - The intention was to increase housing.

**The SPEAKER** - Order. Through the Chair please.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - How can you defend Homes Tasmania's performance in regards to a range of matters, in particular Huntingfield, and who is going to hold them to account?

**The SPEAKER** - The last part of that question is relevant to the original question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - There are a number of factors when it comes to the delay. I won't go into all of those, but the presence of established threatened species habitat, both federal and state; proximity to reserved land also containing threatened species; and the high level of interest by the local Huntingfield and broader Kingborough communities. Detailed design documents for stage one were lodged with the council back in December 2022, approved in November 2023, and the start works notice was not issued until April last year, in actual fact. The sequential nature of resolving some of the issues has prevented concurrent work in a number of these instances. For example, the referral process for stages two and three under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* has identified matters such as stormwater management, which resulted in the redesign of already approved stages.

**The SPEAKER** - The honourable Premier's time has expired.

## Housing Strategy

**Ms JOHNSTON question to MINISTER for HOUSING and PLANNING, Mr VINCENT**

[10.23 a.m.]

New Anglicare data reveals an 88 per cent increase in the number of people sleeping rough, a 54 per cent increase in the number of people living in inadequate or substandard dwellings, and an increase of 60 per cent in the number of children in families seeking housing support. Demand for social housing will keep outstripping supply. 14,000 Tasmanians will be on the social housing waiting list by 2032.

Your housing strategy is an unmitigated failure. At least you admitted on local radio yesterday that the numbers are not good. But you said you believe we can deliver more homes. How will you deliver more social and affordable homes beyond the numbers planned in your failed housing strategy which is already clearly inadequate?

### ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. As with the previous couple of questions for the Premier, there is a lot of passion around at the moment with housing and I share that common goal of passion for fixing this situation. One of the questions was who's going to fix it and at the moment that is fairly on my shoulders and I will be making every effort to fix it.

I have touched on the fact that there is planning reform needed in some of these areas, and that is because such a high percentage of the people on that waiting list are not waiting for three-bedroom homes like most of us grew up expecting and trying to get - or four-bedroom homes, in some cases. It is more about one- and two-bedroom homes. In my short time, it's obvious that there are quite a few small planning issues we can change to make that easier to put a larger number of mod homes onto blocks of land, to increase the capacity for people who don't want to have their quarter- or half-acre block where they have to mow and do all of those things.

We are also very conscious of the urban spread and the issues that is also creating on poor use of land, if you want to put it that way, and that we have to move to higher density. We're doing some work with the State Planning Office to identify quite a few of those items to which we need to make either act changes or regulation changes.

In relation to Huntingfield: there's 463 blocks there that, quite rightly, have not moved or sold yet, but I have been in very heavy contact with the chair, board and CEO of Homes Tasmania, with several meetings over the last few weeks, to ensure the processes there are sped up, or it comes straight back to me if they do strike a problem so that I can make the calls if I have to [inaudible 10.26.17 a.m.].striking blockers.

My belief is that what I'm doing at the moment and between now and Christmas will see - and this is a psychological barrier, if you want to say - 2026 being a productive year in this area.

I've also been reading a lot of input from around Australia regarding the increase of the price of houses and how that's forcing more investors into the market than actual home-builders. There's been about a six per cent change in that over the last 12 or 18 months. There's also been a six to seven per cent increase in the price of building your own home, which is going to keep making this situation more and more difficult for all of us in government right around Australia.

I have come to terms with a lot of the subject. I don't want to gloss over it by arguing about the numbers or whether they're good or bad. We know they are serious; we know they're getting more and more desperate as people will find the pressures of living. As I said, the situation sits firmly with me. I'm gathering that information, understanding the issue, starting to work through some of those fixes, and will keep going.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF

**The SPEAKER** - The honourable minister's time has expired.

### Supplementary Question

**Ms JOHNSTON** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Ms JOHNSTON** - The minister responded by outlining a range of planning issues, but he failed to answer the key question, which was: would he deliver more social and affordable homes beyond the numbers already planned within his failed housing strategy, which is clearly inadequate? Will there be more social and affordable housing? That was the question.

**The SPEAKER** - That was in the original question, minister.

**Mr VINCENT** - The short answer to that is: we will be trying to do everything to increase those numbers. The main part of what I've been doing with the housing portfolio is not so much on the construction side; it is more about the affordable and social housing at all levels, from youth all the way through to crisis housing. That is where the real effort is needed, because those people do not have the options. I will be making every possible attempt to increase those numbers as quickly as I can.

### Public Sector Negotiations

**Mr WILLIE question to TREASURER, Mr ABETZ**

[10.28 a.m.]

Treasurer, you have indicated that if workers don't accept your bad faith ultimatum, you will cut more jobs. On 8 October, you were quoted as saying:

If there is going to be a higher wage increase demanded, and if that were to be accepted, there would be consequences for the size of the workforce.

That's more jobs on top of the 2500 workers you've already committed to sacking. Will you state clearly for the House today: will you cut more Tasmanian jobs if workers don't accept your bad faith ultimatum?

### ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, as is the wont of Mr Willie, the Leader of the Opposition, he always has to distort to try to be able to make his political point.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr ABETZ** - The simple fact is that the current claims being made are unsustainable. Not even the Labor Party, I would think, would urge that Tasmanian people to accept as realistic the sort of demands that are being made at the moment. On the other side, we as

a government have put forward a three per cent pay offer for 12 months so that we can then negotiate a longer-term approach to the enterprise agreements. I think there are about 16 or 17 of them - a huge number of them. Why was this required from government? Unfortunately, the negotiations were stalled for about two months because of an election that the Labor Party foisted upon the people of Tasmania.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr ABETZ** - Mr Winter can laugh -

**The SPEAKER** - Sorry, Treasurer. Members to my left, I appreciate your interest in this matter but I ask that you allow the Treasurer to be heard in respectful silence, please.

**Mr ABETZ** - Thank you, Speaker. Mr Winter can laugh, but the people of Tasmania spoke with a 3 per cent reduction in the vote for the Labor Party.

**Mr WILLIE** - Point of order, honourable Speaker, Standing Order 45, relevance. The question is specifically about the Treasurer's own words that there would be consequences for the workforce if they don't comply with his bad-faith ultimatum.

**The SPEAKER** - I draw the Treasurer back to the original question.

**Mr ABETZ** - Of course, Speaker, we as a government completely and utterly reject the wording of the premise that it was 'bad faith'. Did I say it was a bad-faith offer we were making? Of course I didn't. That's the sort of falsehood you, Mr Willie, continue to peddle amongst the community to try to make your point, which is so exceptionally weak. You may be beholden to certain bodies that are trained to demand from the Tasmanian taxpayer, and let's be exceptionally clear here, it's not government money we're talking about, it is the money of the Tasmanian people and therefore we have to get the balance right.

Do the people of Tasmania think our public servants deserve a wage increase? Of course they do, as does the government. The only issue is the extent of that increase. What is affordable in all the circumstances? We as a government have put forward 3 per cent as a reasonable offer.

**The SPEAKER** - The honourable minister's time has expired.

### Supplementary Question

**Mr WILLIE** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Mr WILLIE** - The Treasurer himself has said there will be consequences for the workforce. Can he confirm to the House that he will sack more public sector workers if they don't comply with his bad-faith ultimatum?

**The SPEAKER** - That does go to the heart of the original question.

**Mr ABETZ** - Speaker, I've already answered the question. I have not sacked a public servant. He asked the question, would I sack more public servants'? That's the sort of mischief that is loaded into the question, trying to assert things which the honourable Leader of the Opposition, in his heart of hearts, must know is false, and yet he wants to continue with this narrative. I have not sacked a single public servant, yet he asks, 'Would you sack more public servants?' suggesting that that has occurred.

**Mr Willie** - Consequences for the workforce.

**The SPEAKER** - Order. Honourable Leader of the Opposition, this is your first warning.

**Mr Mitchell** - We will see in a few weeks.

**The SPEAKER** - Honourable member for Lyons, this is your first warning.

**Mr ABETZ** - This is where Labor is betwixt and between. They sent us to an election on the basis of the need of budget repair. Has Labor given us one opportunity or suggestion that they would reduce the size of the budget in area whatsoever?

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order. The honourable minister's time has expired.

### Public Housing Shortage

**Mr BAYLEY question to MINISTER for HOUSING and PLANNING, Mr WINCENT**

[10.33 a.m.]

The Liberal government has spent a decade failing to build enough public housing, refusing to strengthen renters' rights or to rein in Airbnb. The consequences of that neglect are hitting harder than ever. In a new report, Anglicare says there's been a shocking 88 per cent increase in the number of people sleeping rough - 88 per cent. There's been a 54 per cent rise in people living in unsuitable dwellings and, most distressing, the number of children in families seeking support has grown by 60 per cent. These figures are truly heartbreaking. So many Tasmanians, including thousands of children, are unable to find a home.

Whatever sentiments you might express, this government is endorsing this hardship through your lack of meaningful action. When will you stop pretending to act on the housing crisis and start doing what it takes to make a real difference? Why won't you set this as a priority over a billion-dollar stadium?

### ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question. Short-stay accommodation is certainly an area of complicated measures right around the world. Over the last couple of months I have not been able to find any great solution in anything that I've read or anyone I've spoken to. We do know it is difficult to get accurate figures and as a mayor in a previous lifetime I realised just how many people were putting up their homes in various states for short-stay accommodation.

We have learnt that a lot of the homes - I think it is 68 per cent - are homes that weren't part of the rental market or available for any other form, but we understand that the pressure is there. We are talking with Hobart City Council. I think there's something coming up in the next week, or it might be a fortnight. I apologise for not understanding the diary fully on that one; in some of their solutions they might have it. I spoke to the Planning Commission and the State Planning Office regarding various solutions to this and I must admit that I don't have the perfect answer or have read or come across an answer anywhere around Australia or the world that has an immediate answer for this. People are investing in their own homes and if they see it as a way of supplementing their income, I fully endorse that.

**Mr Bayley** - Whole-home rentals are the issue.

**Mr VINCENT** - The issues we are facing with housing are right across the board. As I've explained earlier, I'm doing the very best I can with the knowledge that I have to solve those issues and will continue to do so, and this is part of what we need to adjust. I don't mind admitting I don't have the perfect solution to this, but I will continue to try to understand what we can do, either through legislation or understanding of making the situation probably a little bit better.

As to referring it to the cost of the stadium, governments have multiple roles in making sure the economy works and the future growth in the economy of Tasmania I firmly believe is centred around having major developments like the stadium, which drives the number of trainees, apprentices, construction, industry and everything else which bolsters the whole economy to be able to build more houses and have more social programs in place.

### Supplementary Question

**Mr BAYLEY** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Mr BAYLEY** - The minister managed to get to the stadium in the end and talked about that and not having perfect solutions for the range of issues across the board. Does he agree that setting housing as a priority over a billion-dollar stadium would improve the situation when it comes to the housing crisis?

**The SPEAKER** - Minister, do you have anything further to add to your answer?

**Mr VINCENT** - I'm surprised, Speaker, that we need to compare it to the stadium. We could also compare it to any part of the economy that we can take money out of to bolster up one part or the other.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order. The only one who has the call is the minister.

**Mr VINCENT** - The government has the opportunity of making sure the economy works across all parts of education, health, construction and housing and social crisis, and we will

work our way through those as best we can. That's what I've offered. I've been very open about that, and I can't be any simpler than that.

### **Salmon Industry - Code of Practice**

#### **Mr GEORGE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.38 a.m.]

This question comes in light of the bloviating non-answer of the Primary Industries minister yesterday. The report of what the government learned or didn't learn from last summer's shocking mass mortality event in which a million farmed salmon died in south-eastern waters, with rotting salmon flesh and fat washing up on our beaches, highlights the necessity for a serious and in-depth inquiry into the industry. With summer and warming waters approaching, urgent action is needed to prevent a recurrence and to hold the multinational owners to account, yet the government's report suggests that the industry lobby, Salmon Tasmania, merely wants to consider a code of practice and that is not good enough. Will the government urgently insist on or impose a code of practice that pulls the industry into line, ensures public accountability and doesn't simply rely on dumping ever more antibiotics into our waterways to keep the diseased fish alive?

#### **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question and his interest in this matter. No-one wants to repeat of last summer, no-one. Not the industry, not the community, not you and not me, and that's very clear.

What is important to recognise is that the purpose of the report is to support - as I said yesterday - continuous improvement in the industry and learnings of last summer so they cannot be repeated again, if that is at all possible given the extreme weather events we are seeing and the algal bloom in South Australia and the havoc that is causing to local communities and fishing communities as well.

The fact is, neither government nor industry have been sitting on their hands to that point regarding the unfortunate event last summer. What is important is regulation, the law. That's the strongest teeth you can provide an industry. Whether it's the forest industry, the mining industry, the aquaculture industry, it is strong regulation and the law with which industry - irrespective of the type of industry - simply has to comply.

There is a need for continuous improvement and of course there will be learnings from the event last year. I went through a number of them yesterday, including increasing veterinary and biosecurity compliance capability with additional staff - and three additional staff is the information that I have - implementation of the Salmonid Biosecurity Quality Certification Program, planning and implementation for a 2025-26 Biosecurity Compliance Audit Program and Marine Aquaculture Compliance Strategy, and increasing multi-regulator land- and water-based compliance assessment activities.

**Mr GEORGE** - Point of order, honourable Speaker. The Premier has spoken for two minutes now and hasn't even addressed the question that I asked about imposition of a code of practice. I would like to draw the Premier's attention to the question.



**The SPEAKER** - That was at the heart of the original question, Premier.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I believe I have answered it when it comes to the strong regulation, but I will mention the words 'code of practice' if you like, because as a government we are here to ensure that appropriate regulation of the industry is in place, regulation that is clear, adaptable and responsive when it comes to biosecurity and the environment.

In terms of a code of practice: yes, industry can consider progressing a code. However, the key issue from the government perspective is to ensure that the industry will operate effectively.

**The SPEAKER** - The honourable Premier's time has expired.

### **Supplementary Question**

**Mr GEORGE** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Mr GEORGE** - Premier, if the government wants a code of practice and I use its own words:

to outline timely removal of mortalities, prevent further disease outbreaks  
and get environmentally responsible management.

Why will not the government impose a code of practice in time for the warming waters and the potential disease outbreaks this summer? In other words, immediately?

**The SPEAKER** - That was part of the original question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - As I was saying, the industry can consider progressing a code. However, the key issue from a government perspective is that the industry comply with what is robust regulation and the regulatory environment and to ensure the industry operates effectively and sustainably within the regulatory framework. Learnings from last summer? Continuous improvement? That's why we have a study to have more learnings, findings, and recommendations from that so the industry can continuously improve. I want the industry to continually improve because I value the industry. Even honourable member, Mr Winter, a few days ago said the industry needed to improve, if I've quoted you correctly.

**The SPEAKER** - The Premier's time has expired.

**Northwest Transmission Developments - Compulsory Acquisition of Land**

**Mr GARLAND question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES,  
Mr DUIGAN**

[10.44 a.m.]

On 24 September I asked how many properties TasNetworks would have to compulsorily acquire for this billion-dollar extension cord to Robbins Island, and you refused to give a number. This morning, the ABC reports around 60 landholders - or approximately 25 per cent of affected land owners - still haven't signed up to voluntary acquisition of their land, despite your government trying to buy them off of the so-called strategic benefits payments funded entirely by Tasmanians through higher power bills. These strategic benefits payments offer nothing to affected neighbours and are dividing tight rural communities.

The message from a community meeting I attended in Stowport of affected landowners opposed to this project was to tell the minister he's dreaming if he thinks they're going to sign up to have their land voluntarily acquired. Given all this, are you really prepared to sign off on compulsory acquisition of the land of these brave farmers and citizens defending their properties? If so, when do you plan to do this?

**The SPEAKER** - The honourable member's time has expired.

**ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon for his question and ongoing interest in the Northwest Transmission Developments, which are, of course, a very key part of Project Marinus, which will be a hugely important project for all of Tasmanians for a very long time to come. It is really important that we understand all the benefits of Project Marinus. I would point specifically this morning to that role that it will play in Tasmania's energy security as we have come out of two years of essentially drought. The two driest years on record for Hydro Tasmania, which underscores the variability of our hydro assets. They are so important to our state, but what they are vulnerable to rainfall variability. Having Project Marinus gives us the ability to provide energy security to our communities and to our businesses and our industries and Northwest TD is a very important part of that.

I'm very pleased that, as part of the government, we have found a contemporary compensation framework for farmers and landowners who will be hosting transmission assets. I would make the point that on stage 1 of the Northwest Transmission Developments, which I assume you are speaking to, it is already 94 per cent of those landowners' host transmission assets. We're talking about 5 landowners who don't have transmission assets; they would be Greenfield developments. There are a range of contemporary offerings from government to reflect the adverse impact of hosting transmission. They are specifically for compensation that is via the *Land Acquisitions Act 1993*, and that is where in a process run by the Valuer-General, a fair and reasonable compensation payment is provided to landowners and that would take into account any injuries to the business, any injury to the amenity and so on.

On top of that there are access fee payments, there are participation payments, there are option fee payments, there are community benefit sharing and of course there is the Strategic Benefit Payment which is a new payment introduced this year at \$200,000 per kilometre payment to landholders indexed over the life of that payment.

With all of that said, we would seek to have ongoing engagement with all of the landholders on the line. We don't want to, and I think the CEO of TasNetworks was very clear in his statements, they won't be acquiring anybody's land. They won't be acquiring anyone's land. They don't want the land. They require an easement through the land, and we will continue to have those conversations.

**The SPEAKER** - The honourable minister's time has expired.

### **TT-Line - Government Bailout**

#### **Mr WILLIE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.49 a.m.]

I've been pursuing the *Spirits* bailout issue for nearly 12 months on behalf of Tasmanians. Your government is responsible for the biggest infrastructure stuff-up in Tasmania's history, the 'ferry fiasco'. The unplanned costs associated with the scandal have exceeded half a billion dollars and have plunged TT-Line's financials into crisis, leaving Tasmanian taxpayers to foot the bill for a bailout in this week's budget. Where will the money for your \$75 million bailout come from? Your Treasurer has already ruled out tax increases. Will it be added to the state's growing debt? Or will you cut more jobs and services that Tasmanians rely upon?

**Mr Abetz** - Speaker, I inquire whether this matter is an order of the day.

**The SPEAKER** - No, it's not an order of the day because it's not listed on the paper yet. In regard to that, it has to be tabled and have a first reading before it becomes a proper order of the day.

#### **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question. The negativity, of course, hasn't stopped over there. What we're about is getting on with the job.

**Mr Mitchell** - Imagine asking questions about the *Spirits*. The arrogance.

**The SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - In 12 months, the new ships will have arrived and be in service. It was fantastic to be in Devonport the other day for a community event at the Devonport Surf Life Saving Club, which gave me a great opportunity to thank the community and the volunteer surf lifesavers for their work. People within the Devonport area and the north-west coast are excited about their future. They can see a city transformed -

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Honourable members to my left, I'm listening to you more than I can hear the Premier. It is impossible for Hansard to be able to record the Premier's answers if you continually interject.

**Mr Mitchell** - We're doing Hansard a favour.

**The SPEAKER** - That's your second warning, Mr Mitchell. Remember: it's 'hear, hear' or 'shame'. Thank you, Premier.

**Mr Willie** - It would help if he answered it.

**The SPEAKER** - Second warning for you too, Mr Willie.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The community was positive, they were upbeat, as they were, I believe, at the Tourism Awards last Friday evening, which is fantastic. All looking forward, of course, to -

**Mr WILLIE** - Point of order, honourable Speaker. The question is about the \$75 million bailout. How is the Premier going to pay for it? He's ruled out tax increases. Will it be added to the state's growing debt, or will he cut more jobs and services that Tasmanians rely upon?

**The SPEAKER** - I draw the Premier back to the original question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We will be making the investments that we need to make to grow the economy. I commend the local employees at berth 3 at Devonport and the great work that BridgePro is doing - as one example, of course. VOS Constructions, I believe, had a contract awarded just the other day. I am very proud of local companies doing great local work and building Tasmania's future, like our government that gets on with the job, grows our economy and enables us to fund those essential services.

**Mr Mitchell** - That great local company: Apple.

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**Member Suspended - Member for Lyons, Mr Mitchell**

**The SPEAKER** - Mr Mitchell, this is your third warning. Therefore, in accordance with Standing Order 149, I suspend the honourable member until the end of the MPI.

**Mr Mitchell withdrew.**

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**Mr ROCKLIFF** - While those opposite are negative and all they do is try to disrupt -

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order. I ask the Premier not to incite interjections too, please.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - we are getting on with a job, like making positive steps forward for Bell Bay Aluminium, securing those 550 jobs, working with the federal government, working with the local community, working with the company, securing the future of not only northern Tasmania, but Tasmania itself.

**Ms Finlay** - That's bullshit and you know it. Sit down. A joke.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF

**The SPEAKER** - Honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition, this is your first warning. Premier, your time has expired.

Honourable members of the opposition, today you have an MPI. You also have private members' time. If you all do not want to be in the room for either of those two things or adjournment, continue on as you are, because I will keep removing members from the House. I ask that you use the accepted forms of this House for interjections but allow the Premier or the minister to answer, because you can ask a supplementary or ask further questions.

### Supplementary Question

**Mr WILLIE** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Mr WILLIE** - It's a serious question: how does the Premier intend to pay for the bailout? Will he add it to the state's growing debt, or will he cut more jobs and services in education, health, housing? How are you going to pay for it?

**The SPEAKER** - Honourable Premier.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - What we're about is investing in our community. The budget will be there in black and white tomorrow for all of you to absorb - at least the headline. You will make assumptions, of course, like you already are, and you will put out your silly media releases as you normally do without researching properly.

What we are doing and what we're about is building Tasmania's future and getting on with the job. That's why we're investing in key infrastructure in southern Tasmania. That's why we work in partnership with cities like Devonport in terms of the Living City project. That's why we are securing two new ships for the next many decades to service Tasmania and to service our hardworking primary producers. That's why we work with industry with the federal government and the Tasmania government working together to secure the future of Bell Bay Aluminium. That's what we're about, not the negativity of those on the other side, but upbeat and looking forward to a positive future for this great state.

**The SPEAKER** - The honourable Premier's time has expired.

### TT-Line - Financial Position Briefing During Caretaker Period

**Mr WILLIE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.55 a.m.]

TT-Line's finances were badly decimated, they were on the brink of insolvency and needed to have their borrowing limit increased during caretaker to stay afloat. Last week you bailed them out to the tune of \$75 million. During the recent caretaker period I requested an urgent briefing regarding TT-Line's finances and Treasury advised that they could brief Labor on TT-Line's financial situation with your permission. You denied that briefing and said there was nothing to see here. Why was that briefing denied?

**ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question. If there are matters honourable members wish to be briefed on, the crossbench is briefed all the time with respect to important matters of state, so I will consider the opportunity to ensure all members are well briefed. What is important here is to ensure that we are positive and getting on with the job. In 12 months' time or less there will be two new ships in service bringing people to Tasmania, with the opportunity of additional capacity and of course going to mainland Australia, interstate, with the fantastic produce of our producers who are working so hard day in and day out to make Tasmania's economy continue to grow.

Yes, it's been a challenging few years when it comes to the ships, but we're through those challenges and I commend the new leadership of the TT-Line, both in -

**Mr WILLIE** - Point of order, Honourable Speaker, Standing Order 45, relevance. The Premier is not addressing the question. The question is very specifically about a briefing requested on TT-Line's finances and the Premier denied it. Why did he do that?

**The SPEAKER** - That does go to the original question, Premier.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I'm advised that we were in the middle of an election. We acted in accordance with caretaker convention and -

**Ms Finlay** - You provided all sorts of briefings throughout caretaker, why did you deny this one?

**The SPEAKER** - Order, honourable member for Bass.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - happy to brief you on issues when they needed to be briefed on, so that's open to all members.

**Supplementary Question**

**Mr WILLIE** - A supplementary question, honourable Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Mr WILLIE** - Clearly the company was on the brink of insolvency. A decision was required. Why wasn't the Premier honest with Tasmanians?

**The SPEAKER** - The insolvency is going down a different question.

**Mr WILLIE** - That was in the original question.

**The SPEAKER** - Okay. Honourable Premier, is there anything further to add to your answer?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - No.

**Mr WILLIE** - What sort of precedent is this setting if a member asks a supplementary question and a member of the government refuses to answer it?

**The SPEAKER** - Premier, do you have anything more to add with regard to insolvency specifically?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - My understanding, honourable Speaker, is that there was no decision required when the honourable member asked for a briefing.

### **Education - Teaching Conditions**

#### **Dr WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.59 a.m.]

The Australian Education Union's Investment in Australia's Future report has frightening figures for Tasmania. A survey of 300 educators, principals and support staff has revealed that 95 per cent said the complexity of their students' needs had grown, 82 per cent of principals said they had experienced teacher shortages and every single one of them had unfilled positions, and a concerning 9 out of 10 school leaders say there isn't adequate wellbeing support that students need, which is required more than ever now as food insecurity and housing issues grow. This is Tasmania's public school system right now on your watch - overstretched, underpaid - and your government wants to usher in more austerity by adding intergenerational debt repayments for a stadium.

For all the teachers struggling to actually provide Tasmanian children with what they need for a prosperous future, tell them why you think it's a priority to spend at least \$866 million of state money on building a stadium instead of investing into school support?

#### **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for your question. Of course, we have been investing in school support continuously for the last decade and more in our range of areas. I can take you through the increase in FTEs when it comes to our education system and our school system. The growth funding that we've been able to secure back in 2017 on that bilateral agreement between the Federal and State Government at the time. I was Education minister at the time. More recently, minister Palmer secured an agreement for growth funding as well.

When I came to the Education portfolio back in 2014, the Labor-Greens government signed up to a deal where the growth funding for private schools was higher than the growth funding for the public schools - to your shame. We've reversed that over the course of the last decade and are investing in need when it comes to our education system and supporting students with disability. We have nation-leading student with disability support. When it comes to not only our highly valued support schools around Tasmania, but also the investment based on need going to the student, irrespective of the type of that need to ensure barriers to learning are reduced. Investing in trauma-informed practise within our schools as well.

The Wellbeing Unit within the Department of Education, Children and Young People as it was when I was Minister of Education, and no doubt that focus is there still as well. When it

comes to surveying the students and their wellbeing as well. That's why we also take in what really is a whole-of-community responsibility to ensure that our young people are well fed, when it comes to the breakfast programme, which Minister Palmer spoke of this morning; when it comes to school lunch program which we speak of many times, all designed to enhance the wellbeing of our young people in the school environment and take away the barriers to learning, because all the evidence points to, when young people feel safe and comfortable in an environment in school, then they learn through reducing those barriers to learning.

What is also important is we value the staff as well, whether that be the support staff, the facilities attendance, our teacher assistants and our principals, and of course our teachers as well. In fact, since 2014 we have 1975 more fulltime equivalents in our schools and that points to continuous investment. What is a challenge is the ongoing disruption created -

**The SPEAKER** - The honourable Premier's time has expired.

### Supplementary Question

**Dr WOODRUFF** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I note all the things that the government has invested in that the Premier's pointed out, but the survey and the evidence shows it is not enough to match the complexity of need and support that is required in schools in Tasmania today. Can the Premier tell teachers why you are choosing to spend \$866 million of state money to build a stadium instead of choosing to put that money towards extra money into schools that's required?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Again, and I know you know this, investment in stadium infrastructure, investment in our roads, investment in the capital improvements of our schools, investment in new schools is capital expenditure. It's not recurrent expenditure where I believe the focus of your question lies.

**Dr Woodruff** - No, it will be \$70 million at least every year.

**The SPEAKER** - Order. Dr Woodruff, you can ask another question. I ask that the Premier be heard, please.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - What is important is we continue to invest in enabling infrastructure such as stadia infrastructure, so that supports a growing economy. Therefore, when the economy grows, of course people invest. They pay their levies and taxes, and we are able then to fund those essential services that you care about; I care about, and I know that everyone else in this parliament cares about too. When it comes to a current expenditure, we've clearly demonstrated -

**The SPEAKER** - The honourable Premier's time has expired.



## TT-Line - Government Bailout

### Mr WILLIE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.05 a.m.]

TT-Line told the Public Accounts Committee that they asked your government for a \$100 million bailout to keep the company afloat. You ultimately provided only \$75 million to the company, with no plan to pay for it. It's unclear under what circumstances TT-Line will be provided additional funds. Are you confident that it's enough? Will there be further bailouts for the company? Was this a genuine assessment of the company's needs, or simply a political decision to make the bailout look smaller ahead of a budget?

### ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question. We will keep working with TT-Line. The board, the CEO - and Chris is doing a fantastic job on it - inherited a very challenging situation, which they're working through. We're the Tasmanian government. The Tasmanian government and the Tasmanian people own TT-Line. We will work with TT-Line to ensure their sustainability and their financial sustainability as well.

We're about ensuring that TT-Line has a secure future. The obvious reasons that it is a significant investment. It's had some rough seas along the way and along the journey, which we've always acknowledged.

**Ms Finlay** - That's not true. You didn't acknowledge it until you were put under pressure. You were hiding it.

**The SPEAKER** - Order, Ms Finlay, this is your first warning because you are continually interjecting - quieter, I acknowledge that today, thank you. I ask that the Premier be heard.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - TT-Line provides such a critical service to the Tasmanian people. Both in bringing people to our shores to create and strengthen our visitor economy, which was well on display at the Tourism Awards, last Friday.

**Mr WILLIE** - Point of order, honourable Speaker, it's getting tiresome. Standing Order 45, relevance, going nowhere near the question. It's specifically about the request from TT-Line for \$100 million, they were given \$75 million, with no plan to pay for it.

**A member** - What?

**Mr WILLIE** - You haven't outlined how you're paying for it. The question is specifically about the bailout and whether they were minimising it because of the Budget.

**The SPEAKER** - That was in the original question, Premier.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The government stands behind the TT-Line as I've said, and will always continue to say that because we believe it, and it provides such a critical service for the Tasmanian people. The business will always have a bright future under our government. We back the work of the board, we back the board 100 per cent. Ken Kanofski is doing a fantastic

job in that leadership role, to secure the long-term viability of the company. As I say, we recognise the challenges inherited by the TT-Line Board, but we commend their workers, as I've said before. It's a critical service for the Tasmanian people and to be clear -

**Ms Finlay** - Why did you minimise the impact?

**The SPEAKER** - Ms Finlay.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - the debt owed by TT-Line is owed to the government. That's why we will always work with TT-Line to ensure their financial security and sustainability so they can continue delivering for the Tasmanian people.

### Supplementary Question

**Mr WILLIE** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Mr WILLIE** - Under what circumstances will the government provide the additional \$25 million as requested by TT Line?

**The SPEAKER** - That's a new question. You didn't mention 25 in your original question. You didn't say \$25 million in your first question, it was 75. I encourage members, when you ask a supplementary question, to ensure that it does accurately reflect your original question and the answer.

**Mr WILLIE** - Point of explanation. The question was about \$100 million bailout, they've provided \$75 million. The supplementary was about the \$25 million that's missing. It's all related to the \$100 million.

**The SPEAKER** - Thank you, honourable Premier, anything on the \$25 million?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We will keep working with TT-Line to ensure the financial viability and sustainability, so they can continue delivering for the people of Tasmania. Happy to go to the lectern and tell you that, but I will save you some time for your next question and answer it here.

**Ms Finlay** - You're a let down.

**The SPEAKER** - I remind the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that there are other forms in the House. You do have other questions, you have MPI today, a motion, and Adjournment, so if you are not happy with the answer, there are other forms instead of continual interjections.

## Reducing Government Red Tape

### Mr Di FALCO question to TREASURER, Mr ABETZ

[11.10 a.m.]

We are fast approaching the busy season for hospitality and tourism operators. This is the time of year when business owners are time-poor and delays in liquor permits can be extremely detrimental. The government made a strong commitment at the last election to red-tape reduction within the first 100 days. What reforms have you taken to ensure better performance within your department?

### ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question and commend it to the Opposition as a genuine policy question, seeking information for and on behalf of a constituency. Just a bit of gratuitous advice, Mr Di Falco has it all over you when it comes to how to ask a question.

In relation to the matter raised by the honourable gentleman, I can say to you that within our 100-day plan we agreed to undertake a consultation and a host of letters arrived on my desk yesterday evening for me to consult with a variety of community organisations to ascertain how we can deliver more effective licencing laws and regulations, both for business and the protection of the community. That is why we are writing - if I might use the term - to the 'two strands' of our community that are interested in these reforms, namely - if I can describe them as such - the welfare and business sectors.

As a government, we do seek to consult, we do understand the difficulties of a small business and indeed I have personally raised some of those issues, some of what I consider to be the unnecessary delays. At one stage, people were not able to lodge their application electronically. If you lived in a regional community, you had to travel to a place to lodge it. They can now be done electronically. That was my little contribution to the cutting of red tape.

We are looking at it on a holistic basis, right across the board and we are seeking community feedback. We're getting on with our election promise and I commend the member for Lyons for being genuinely interested in what is happening within the community and the issues that are raised on a daily basis, I am sure, to all of us. It's interesting how certain people pick on certain issues, whereas Mr Di Falco is more than willing to raise the issues that are of concern within the community and I commend him for that. I can indicate that we're getting on with the job and, like you, I look forward to what the community consultation will provide to us to enable us to get the reforms right, to ensure better business opportunities and less red tape, whilst also protecting the community.

## Fallow Deer - Environmental Impact

**Ms BADGER question to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER, Mr PEARCE**

[11.13 a.m.]

Tasmania faces serious and escalating issues with invasive deer. With the state's rapidly increasing population of feral deer now over 70,000, significant damage is being continually inflicted on national parks, the World Heritage area, and primary industry productivity. Multiple reports, including the Tasmanian State of the Environment Report 2024, have recommended removing the partial protection of deer as the obvious and necessary measure for reducing the presently out-of-control population. Will you finally be the member of government who treats fallow deer as the biosecurity issue they are and commit to removing their partial protection status?

### ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for the question. In fact, this is a subject that we have spoken about in some detail prior to this Question Time and will continue to consult with you on this interest in the future.

The Tasmanian Wild Fallow Deer Management Plan 2022-27 and the implementation strategy is the Tasmanian government's blueprint for managing wild fallow deer across the entire state. It balances the interests of farmers, foresters, hunters, community and the environment. In fact, the aerial deer survey has shown that the epicentres for some of those populations are now concentrated in environmentally protected areas. I understand that; government gets that.

The plan manages the impacts of deer in three zones. The objective for zone one is to continue deer management to sustain it as a hunting reserve, providing landholders greater flexibility to reduce the impact of deer on them.

No deer through eradicating down is the objective for zones three and two. Zone two is traditionally the buffer area, and under the current legislation, landowners can eradicate deer or manage deer impacts while sustaining hunting resources. That's important.

Since 2122, \$7.2 million has been invested in delivering the Wild Fallow Deer Implementation Strategy. This includes a \$5.77 million in state funds and \$1.5 million in Australian Government funds.

When it comes to actions from the aerial deer survey, we understand that there has been an approaching 19,000 number increase in the last two years. We get that. The department gets that, and I have instructed the department to come up with an implementation strategy that will reduce that number, particularly concentrating on zones two and three. If you imagine an epicentre of an expanding population, you want to push that population back in from the outside.

The other consideration that we need to observe is the change in agricultural practice, particularly within the Northern Midlands. If you drive through now, you see more pivots, more green crops, and more impact from deer.

**Dr Woodruff** - There are deer in Cygnet.

**Mr PEARCE** - There are deer in the cities, and I will get to peri-urban deer in a minute.

**Members** interjecting

**The SPEAKER** - Order. Through the Chair please.

**Mr PEARCE** - It is important that we, as a government, provide a regulation framework that allows the flexibility -

**The SPEAKER** - The honourable minister's time for answering the question has expired.

### **Supplementary Question**

**Ms BADGER** - A supplementary question, Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Ms BADGER** - I will just go back to the original question, which was very specifically on the removal of the partial protection on fallow deer and what this government is doing to action that recommendation, which has been in multiple reports, including the 2024 State of the Environment report?

**The SPEAKER** - The minister did outline the strategy in different zones. Have you anything else to add to that?

**Mr PEARCE** - Yes, I do, Speaker. In relation to your question, specifically on the recategorisation, my department and the government's priority is to reduce those numbers back to a manageable level. If we can do that under site changes to the current legislation, that's what we will do, but we want to see those numbers down. We want to see those numbers controlled and we want to see greater flexibility within those respective areas, that is, environmentally protected land, peri-urban land, agricultural land, and where they are a danger to road users. It is only a matter of time -

**Dr Woodruff** - You have to stop protecting them. You keep feeding them. The strategy feeds them.

**The SPEAKER** - Dr Woodruff, order. Through the Chair, please. Minister, have you finished your response?

**Mr PEARCE** - Yes.

## Launceston Free Tiger Bus

**Prof RAZAY question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr VINCENT**

Last Friday I was riding the beloved Launceston Free Tiger Bus on its last journey after 15 years with dozens of youngsters who were campaigning to keep it going. I felt sad, but also hopeful. Sad, because Tasmanians are the least likely to use public transport. Their love affair with the car is growing. More than half a million vehicles are registered in Tasmania. We invest the least in public transport and you wonder why we have a poor public transport system. I was hopeful, because I looked at these youngsters and said, 'Wow, they are the future who will encourage people to use public transport and motivate them.' I'd like to ask the government: what are we doing to improve public transport options and make it more appealing?

**The SPEAKER** - The honourable member's time has expired. I must inform the member that anything you ask after your minute has expired, technically, the minister or Premier doesn't have to answer. I noticed that yesterday your question went over time, too, so I encourage you to trim it back a little bit. Also, you do need to ask it of the respective minister. In this case, I've noticed the Premier has risen to take it, but I encourage you to nominate which minister your question is for.

## ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question and in the absence of our minister in the Legislative Council, I will take the questions. Thank you, Prof Razay, for your interest in public transport and your familiarity with it. I agree with you that we need to ensure we do more when it comes to a modal shift from, say, cars, to other forms of public transport. That would be buses here in Tasmania. It is important in terms of alleviating traffic congestion and the like.

If my memory serves me correctly, when it comes to the greater need for that modal shift onto buses here in southern Tasmania, it's much needed particularly when school is in. When school is out, the traffic reduces by some 8-10 per cent and things are a little easier in terms of that. That's why we're investing particularly in rural and regional areas on half-price bus fares. It's not only a cost-of-living issue, which I know is valued, but also an issue of ensuring that Tasmanians take advantage of what would be an incentive to jump on a bus rather than a car in this case.

I'm also proud of the fact that we've established the Derwent River ferry service; it's great to see that. Mr Ferguson was instrumental in developing that, which was terrific. There's more and more opportunities needed for public transport, and we're expanding the ferries with federal and state government contributions, but also ensuring that we're investing in our public transport services as well.

We've continued our half-price bus fares through to June next year, which is a cost-of-living measure that I know Tasmanians all value. This reduction applies to all public buses and fare-paying school buses, as well as the Derwent River ferry service.

I thank you for your interest in this matter. We need to do what we can to increase that modal shift. If you have some good suggestions on how we can further enhance already what we've got on the table, I'd be very interested to listen and learn from you.

### **TT-Line - Impact of Publicity on Company**

**Mr WILLIE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[11.23 a.m.]

The Chair of TT-Line said that he believes all the bad publicity from the *Spirits* scandal has negatively impacted booking numbers and hurt the company's financial performance since the scandal was first exposed. Do you take responsibility for harming the company's reputation, since it is the decisions of your government that has caused all the bad headlines?

### **ANSWER**

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question. If my memory serves me correctly, all the negativity was coming from you and the Labor Party, so back on your head. If you'd like to go into the bistro and ask yourself the same question, you're welcome to.

What is important is that we are upbeat, we recognise the challenges, but we also recognise the very good quality leadership and the upfront nature - to your question - of new Chair Ken Kanofski. He has taken these challenges head on, as has Chris Carbone, the CEO, as well, and the ships will be delivered. The wharf infrastructure will also be delivered.

It's great to see so many local companies involved in that. No-one's denying the challenges, but let's talk about the opportunities because Tasmanians are sick and tired of the incessant negativity from the opposition. Whether it's Winter negativity, or now Willie negativity, you keep on the same pathway. It does you no good.

**Mr WILLIE** - Point of order, honourable Speaker, Standing Order 45, relevance. The question is very specific. Does the Premier accept responsibility for harming the company's reputation through the decisions of the government? It might be awkward for him and he might not like the accountability.

**The SPEAKER** - Thank you, your comment is on the record.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - No-one can accuse me of shying away from accountability. What we've done is intervene and get the project back on track.

**Time expired.**

## ANSWER TO QUESTION

### State Budget - Impact on Food Security

[11.26 a.m.]

**Ms OGILVIE** (Clark - Minister for Community and Multicultural Affairs) - Honourable Speaker, as to the second part of the question, I think I know where you're trying to get to, and I've got some additional information. I'm advised that all base funding for Neighbourhood Houses has been paid. When it comes to the Community Connect program funding, I can report that 24 houses have been paid, three have not returned their grant deeds as yet, three are currently with Finance for payment - which should happen today - and four deeds have only just been returned and will be processed and paid as soon as possible. When it comes to Neighbourhood Houses, I value their work, the efforts of volunteers and communities, and it's simply not accurate to say they haven't been paid.

## CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

### Bass Highway - Potholes

**Ms BUTLER question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr VINCENT**

[11.27 a.m.]

The Bass Highway is laden with potholes. On 22 October I stopped to assist a young apprentice baker stranded by the side of the Bass Highway, Deloraine, who hit a pothole on her way home from TAFE. Later that night, at an event in Longford, I learnt the keynote speaker cancelled, as she too had vehicle damage from a pothole. The Deloraine tow truck driver reported another three vehicles were towed that evening due to potholes on the Bass Highway.

My constituents would like to know how many vehicles are being towed after sustaining damage from potholes on the section of the Bass Highway between Westbury and Devonport over the last two years. When are you finally going to fix the Bass Highway?

### Housing Availability for Essential Workers

**Ms BURNET question to MINISTER for HOUSING and PLANNING, Mr VINCENT**

My question is on behalf of a doctor and his wife who's also a health professional. They arrived in Tasmania to work at the Royal Hobart Hospital in January of this year, along with their three school-aged children. My constituents are desperate to find suitable housing. They're living in inadequate housing in the northern suburbs currently and may need to leave Tasmania if another more suitable option isn't secured. What is your government doing to address the rental affordability and housing prices for essential workers like this family who moved to Tasmania for work?



## Northern Suburbs Community Recreation Hub

### Mr FERGUSON question for MINISTER for SPORT, Mr DUIGAN

My constituents in Bass are very excited about the Northern Suburbs Community Recreation Hub. I share that excitement. That's currently under development and nearly finished in Mowbray and we're all eagerly anticipating its opening. The question for the minister is to please outline for my constituents who or which organisation will be responsible for managing this significant facility once it's ready for operational use?

## Consumer Goods (Bicycle Helmet) Safety Standard 2024

### Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for SMALL BUSINESS, TRADE and CONSUMER AFFAIRS, Mr BARNETT

My question is from my constituents Anna and Adrian in Bellerive. Tasmania is the only state in Australia to not have adopted the Consumer Goods (Bicycle Helmet) Safety Standard 2024 interstate law. As the transition period lapsed in late September, bike shops across the state are now struggling to support bicycle helmets in their peak trade season. Suppliers are no longer supplying helmets compliant with the old standard, but helmets compliant with the new standard are technically illegal to use on Tasmanian bike paths and roads. This is a serious public safety issue as well as a major challenge for businesses and cyclists.

My constituent is asking you to provide an explanation for this long and confusing delay and to commit to bringing in the relevant legislation before the end of the parliamentary year and the summer season.

## Kate Reed Reserve - Reserve Activity Assessment

### Ms FINLAY question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr VINCENT

I have a constituency question for the minister for infrastructure following a non-answer to a previous constituency question. It's from mountain bikers in my electorate keen to understand the current status of the Reserve Activity Assessment (RAA) at Kate Reed reserve because they're excited about the road that is proposed to be built through the area to create safe access and access to increased amenities in the area.

The question directly is to the minister for infrastructure, yes or no. With the proponents of the housing at south-east Prospect, is the Department of State Growth willing to build the road and recover the costs from the developers?

# UNCORRECTED PROOF

## **JackJumpers High Performance Centre -**

### **Mr VERMEY question to MINISTER for SPORT, Mr DUIGAN**

I've been approached by constituents who live in Kingston and would like to know when the basketball courts at the JackJumpers High Performance Centre will be accessible for community use.

## **Heart Disease Rates Among People Under 40 Years Old**

### **Mr GARLAND question to MINISTER for HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mrs ARCHER**

My question comes from a resident in Latrobe. There is anecdotal evidence that there is a serious heart health issue emerging in younger people over the past decade. I have been prompted by a constituent who would like to know the number of young people, 40 years and younger, who have presented to emergency departments in Tasmanian hospitals over the past 10 years with heart-related problems or who have died with heart-related problems for each calendar year to date beginning in 2015? Can the Health minister also show the different presentation numbers comparing females and males and compare those aged 0 to 30 with those aged between 31 and 40 years old?

## **R. A. Rodda Museum - Unauthorised Human Remains - Inquiry**

### **Mr Di FALCO question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

In light of the deeply distressing revelations from the coroner's report about the unauthorised removal and long term retention of organ specimens from deceased Tasmanians causing profound grief to many families. Will your government commit to establishing a thorough parliamentary inquiry to fully investigate these serious breaches, ensure accountability, and implement reforms that respect the dignity and the rights of the deceased and their loved ones? Thank you.

## **RECOGNITION OF VISITORS**

[11.34 a.m.]

**The SPEAKER** - Honourable members, I would like us all to welcome students with the Beacon Foundation, students from Hobart College, Woodbridge School, Kingston High School, Sorell School and Taroona High School as well. Welcome to parliament. Some of us will be seeing you at lunchtime and for the speed career session as well.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

# UNCORRECTED PROOF

## TABLED PAPERS

### Public Works Committee - Reports

**Ms BUTLER** (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I have the honour of bringing up the reports of the Public Works Committee on the following references:

- Tasman Highway: Duplication of Midway Point Causeway and McGees Bridge (South East Traffic Solution)
- Kings Meadows Community Health Centre

Together with the evidence received and transcripts of evidence.

**Reports received.**

## MESSAGES FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

### Attendance of Legislative Council Ministers at Budget Proceedings

**The SPEAKER** - I am in receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council, which I shall ask the Clerk to read:

Honourable Speaker,

The Legislative Council desires to inform the House of Assembly that it agrees to the request of the Assembly in its message, dated 4 November 2025, and has given leave for the honourable member for Rosevears as Minister for Education, Minister for Children and Youth and Minister for Disability Services; the honourable member for Windermere as Minister for Energy and Renewables, Minister for Parks and Minister for Sport; and the honourable member for Prosser as Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for Local Government and Minister for Housing and Planning, to be given leave to appear before and give evidence to the relevant Estimates Committee of the House of Assembly in relation to the budget Estimates and related documents.

C Farrell,  
President,  
Legislative Council,  
4 November 2025.

# UNCORRECTED PROOF

## Attendance of Legislative Council Ministers at Government Businesses Scrutiny Committees

**The SPEAKER** - I am in receipt of the following further message from the Legislative Council, which I shall ask the Clerk to read:

Honourable Speaker,

The Legislative Council desires to inform the House of Assembly that it agrees to the request of the Assembly in its message dated 4 November 2025 and has given leave for the Honourable the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport and the Honourable the Minister for Energy and Renewables to appear before and give evidence to the House of Assembly Government Businesses Scrutiny Committee.

C Farrell,  
President,  
Legislative Council,  
4 November 2025.

## CHARITIES AND ASSOCIATIONS LAW (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT BILL 2025 (No. 65)

### ELECTORAL AMENDMENT BILL 2025 (No. 62)

#### First Reading

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

### MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

#### Budget

[11.39 a.m.]

**Mr WILLIE** (Clark - Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter.

It is timely to be raising this matter, which is the Budget and the decisions that go into the Budget tomorrow. This budget will be known as 'the bailout budget' because it contains \$75 million to bailout TT-Line's finances. I've been personally pursuing this issue now for nearly 12 months, because it matters to Tasmanians. We knew that TT-Line's finances were in difficult shape when the head of TASCORP at a parliamentary committee said that further borrowings and support from the government would be more likely than not.

What did the government do over that 12 months? They refused to answer questions and sought to cover up, because they know that they have made a huge mess of Tasmania's finances.

Today in question time, the Premier might not like it, he might say it's negative, but these questions are legitimate questions on behalf of Tasmanians because they're starting to impact them. Where is the money coming from to fund that \$75 million bailout? We got no straight answer from the Premier today. He refused to say whether it would just be added to the state's growing debt or whether he will cut jobs and services to pay for it. We know the Treasurer has ruled out tax increases and we know there are only two options left to this government. Which one is it: growing debt, or cuts to jobs and services, education, health, housing and the things that matter to Tasmanians?

This government gets no benefit of the doubt, particularly on this issue. The \$100 million that was requested by the company - we know that because we've had public commentary from the company - wasn't granted, just \$75 million. The question on whether that was for political expediency hasn't been answered today either.

I don't trust this government that \$100 million is enough. I know that's in the public domain, but the scale of this scandal, the biggest infrastructure stuff-up in Tasmania's history, is an international embarrassment. There are people in Scotland laughing at us about this. I don't trust this government that that \$100 million is the end of the matter. Will there be further bailouts in the budget in May next year and ongoing budgets?

We have a new board, a new chair and a new CEO and I do acknowledge they are credible people who have inherited an almighty mess under your watch, Treasurer, under the government's watch. There are serious questions that remain in terms of TT-Line's finances over the journey, so there's no benefit of the doubt from us.

In terms of a bailout, honourable Speaker, this is not the first time that a bailout has been kept secret by this government. Famously, the former treasurer approved a bailout to the shipbuilding company and refused to update Tasmanians in real time.

**Mr Abetz** - That's false.

**Mr WILLIE** - It was only through questions in this place that you were exposed. It might be inconvenient to you but you were exposed in this place through questioning. You have sought to cover up at every opportunity on this issue. It's a fact that there was an \$80 million payment to the Finnish shipbuilder.

Here's another inconvenient fact, former treasurer. There is a \$403 million blowout for the berth at Devonport under your watch and I know from industry insiders there were conversations with you. They were trying to warn you and say, 'It's not all going to plan, minister, you should intervene in this'. What did he do? He said the companies have to play in the sandpit together. It was inadequate.

**Mr Ferguson** - No, I brought them together because of that tip.

**The SPEAKER** - The honourable member for Bass can make his contribution on the MPI. I do ask that the honourable Leader of the Opposition be heard.

**Mr WILLIE** - His response was inadequate. He appointed a project integrator to try to get the companies to work together and what happened? They still didn't build the berth, and he was warned by industry insiders that that's exactly what would happen.

**Mr Ferguson** - I put that on the public record.

**Mr WILLIE** - You were told that and you failed to intervene with the appropriate action. Today we will be continuing to raise this issue because this latest bailout scandal is impacting Tasmanians when it comes to services. We have failed to get the right answers from the government.

**Time expired.**

[11.44 a.m.]

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Treasurer) - Honourable Speaker, for those listening in, there would undoubtedly be some confusion. Last week, the shadow leader of the opposition, the now shadow treasurer, claimed that this budget to be delivered tomorrow would be a fake budget. Today, we've got another term. Clearly the 'fake budget' line didn't fly. Undoubtedly their polling, or whatever, showed that this was not going to be a line that would fly with the people of Tasmania, so today we're trying a new line that it's going to be a 'bailout budget'.

The simple fact is that in relation to the issues to the TT-Line, the question every Tasmanian is asking themselves is where Labor had a problem at the last state election. They called the election, if you recall, on budget repair and on the *Spirits* and another matter. In relation to the *Spirits*, did they offer one solution? Answer - and they're quiet for once - no, they didn't, not a single solution. Once we as a government were confronted with the decision-making of a chairman of the board - and might I remind those opposite, who initially appointed that chairman of the board to be chair of TT-Line?

**Mr Winter** - So it's our fault?

**Mr ABETZ** - Who was it? Who appointed him? Crickets. It was a Labor government.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order. Members on my left, you can make a contribution soon.

**Mr ABETZ** - Of course they now seek to visit upon the Liberal government the faults and problems that we inherited. The simple fact is we, as a government, recognise that that which was occurring in TT-Line was completely unacceptable, and if I might say, ministers and other people were not necessarily given the whole truth in relation to it. When confronted with the situation, as a government, we acted decisively.

I still recall, with minister Ferguson, requesting or suggesting that a resignation might be in order. It was forthcoming. Other people didn't reapply for jobs. As a result, we now have a fantastic new board with a new CEO who is dealing with the legacy issues and getting a new crop of people and individuals into TT-Line to ensure it can be as effective as possible in uplifting our tourism and produce sectors. It is a fantastic initiative that will deliver for the people of Tasmania.

The question people have to ask is, once confronted with the issue, what would Labor have done differently to us on this side? They have offered nothing. They're saying they wouldn't give the \$75 million, as they call it, bailout - we call it an equity injection - but if you didn't put in that \$75 million, the TT-Line would not be able to operate.

**Mr Willie** - We want you to be honest.

**The SPEAKER** - The honourable Leader of the Opposition has made his contribution.

**Mr ABETZ** - The very thing we are doing which continues the TT-Line to be able to operate effectively is something that the Leader of the Opposition comes into this place to criticise. But what is their answer? Would they not deliver the money and allow the TT-Line to fail? They would have had to do exactly what we are doing but undoubtedly not as well.

I say to the Leader of the Opposition: relentless negativity, which he took to the last election, proved not a very sensible course of action. The people of Tasmania spoke and gave you a three per cent reduction in your primary vote. You don't seem to have listened to the people of Tasmania. They want positive and real solutions to the difficulties we face. The TT-Line has been an absolute difficulty. I accept that should never have occurred, but what we did was roll up our sleeves, get on with the task of fixing it, and we have. There are the developments in Devonport, the ships are underway, and we look forward to them being a very constructive part of our economy.

**Time expired.**

[11.49 a.m.]

**Mr BAYLEY** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I thank the opposition for bringing this matter of public importance forward. It's Budget week and there's obviously going to be plenty of opportunity to talk about budget. We in the Greens relish every opportunity to do so, because while the Treasurer is touting new terms for this Budget, it is very clear that the best and most appropriate term for this Budget is going to be the 'stadium austerity budget.'

Politics and budgets are all about priorities, and budgets are about political choices and priorities above anything else. It is clear that this government, aided and abetted by the Labor Party when it comes to this Macquarie Point stadium, has their priorities completely wrong.

The red flags about the stadium have been flown long and high for many months now. Whether it be Saul Eslake talking about policy, talking about debt, talking about the need to right revenue, or whether it be from Treasury - the red flags when it comes to the Budget have been flown very hard.

Treasury itself has said that you can't grow yourself out of this crisis. While the Treasurer talks about an era of prosperity and this stadium underpinning some kind of new renaissance in Tasmania, he is fundamentally ignoring Treasury's advice. In the Pre-Election Financial Outlook (PEFO), Treasury was really clear. They said:

The State Budget has a structural problem. Economic growth correlates weekly with the general government sector revenue growth in Tasmania. Accordingly, this structural problem will not be resolved through future economic growth. Explicit policy choices are required.'

These are the policy choices that this government has refused to entertain. They are going down a single track when it comes to this budget, and that is cuts. That is the austerity that is being driven by the stadium: cuts to the public service, cuts to community service organisations.

During the election, the Greens identified \$1 billion worth of savings: ending subsidies, stopping support for the stadium. We identified \$900 million of new revenue: taxing big corporations to make them pay their fair share, making sure that salmon companies and mining companies pay the national average of revenue. When you took into account some of our new spendings that we identified in the Budget, we improved the Budget bottom line by \$1.4 billion. It is significant, and that is what the experts are advising us to do: to find sensible savings and to improve the revenue situation.

Treasury's finding that you can't grow your way out of this crisis makes an absolute lie out of the notion that the stadium is going to herald a new era of prosperity. Whether it be Gruen, whether it be the Planning Commission, or whether it be Treasury who has identified a whole range of risks associated with the stadium, it is clear that this stadium will do nothing but load us up with more debt and enforce a situation on our budget where we are borrowing - literally borrowing - to service that debt.

\$1.8 billion worth of debt over the next 10 years, \$30 million of debt to service the Macquarie Point Development Corporation borrowings alone, and as yet, we don't have a set figure on how much it's going to cost to service the \$375 million that the state has to borrow.

Of course, we know that this taxpayer is on the hook for every single dollar of cost blowouts, of penalty payments to the AFL. Therefore, the Office of the Coordinator-General - I don't make a habit of quoting from the Office of the Coordinator-General, because most of his contribution in this debate has been quite farcical, to be honest - but he has identified that \$45 to \$70 million will be needed to service the debt. That somewhat correlates with some of the figures coming out of Treasury.

Clearly this is a big problem, and a credit-rating downgrade is high on the cards. Both S&P and Moody's have downgraded our outlook from stable to negative, and Treasury has identified specifically that this downgrade in outlook indicates that there is now a higher likelihood of the state's long-term credit rating being lowered over the short to medium term. Both rating agencies cited the state's weakening financial performance and growing debt burden as key factors in assigning the negative outlook for the state. Now is not the time to load onto that growing debt burden an additional \$1.8 billion or more to build the stadium, because it's coming at an expense to our community.

Story after story - whether it be community gardens, the Hobart City Mission, these housing stats that are released today, issues around food, hiking up TasTAFE costs - we simply cannot afford this stadium. This is a stadium austerity budget.

**Time expired.**

[11.54 a.m.]

**Dr BROAD** (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, this will be a bailout budget, because there's a \$75 million bailout for the TT-Line that we know is going to be in the Budget. What we see from this government is a continual farce when it comes to the TT-Line. 'Gaslighting'



is the best way to describe how the Premier and the new Treasurer, Eric Abetz, are trying to describe the whole project which is well and truly off the rails. What a farce, when we've got the Treasurer, Eric Abetz, pretending that somehow Labor is to blame for this *Spirits* debacle, because well over a decade ago, it was a Labor government who appointed the chairman. I mean, what a joke. I think the gaslighter in charge, the Premier, Jeremy Rockliff, has to be the one who takes the cake on this.

Remember, the Premier runs the line that he's intervened and the project is back on track. That's what the Premier says, day after day, when we ask questions about the TT-Line and the ongoing saga that is the new *Spirits*. He says it's back on track. What's happened since the TT-Line was so-called back on track? We've seen the fenders debacle come to light. That's under his watch, since it's been back on track. Now, we see that the TT-Line needs a bailout, that's also under his watch. This is all back on track, apparently. We've seen the minister put a post up with a nice photo in the background of the works there at Devonport, pretending that everything's back on track. If you look at the comments, my goodness, he got slammed. It just doesn't wash.

This government continues to gaslight. We knew TT-Line was going to need a bailout. We knew, there were denials. We were asking questions about a bailout and the government denied the necessity for a bailout. We knew it was coming, despite denials. It's \$75 million is what they're going to get in this budget tomorrow, apparently. That's not going to go very far.

We know that TT-Line is heading towards \$1.5 billion of debt. Let's just pretend the interest rate is 5 per cent, that \$75 million will only cover the interest on \$1.5 billion debt. We know that they might be able to get interest rates a bit cheaper, but that just gives you a bit of an idea, that \$75 million is not going to go very far. TT-Line, a state-owned company, that is in serious financial trouble - and once again this is something that was in great shape when Labor left government - and the Liberals have run it into the ground. TT-Line is in serious financial trouble, despite the denials from the government.

Why is it in serious financial trouble? It is because it has two ships that are ageing - and I would note that their value is declining, as in the annual report that was dropped yesterday. There are two new ships worth a \$1 billion, that are not carrying any passengers and freight. We're looking at \$1 billion worth of current debt, heading towards \$1.5 billion of debt when you count the wharf. There are lots and lots of outgoings from TT-Line, and there is no extra income. There is lots of extra outgoings, because the new ships, they've got to be staffed. They require fuel. They will be burning fuel everyday. They will require maintenance and also there is the servicing of the debt.

What is the only defence of this debacle, that the government has? Is to attack Labor for asking questions. What a complete joke. All along this whole sad and sorry saga, we have known that the government has been misleading Tasmanians and yet, it is required Labor to hammer, in this place, day after day, to get the truth. Finally, when the truth starts coming out, when the things that we know are happening are admitted to by the government, all they do is attack Labor for asking questions, by saying that we are negative.

All we are doing is trying to get the truth about how bad this situation is, so that Tasmanians know how bad this situation is. This is not something that is going away. This project is not back on track. The TT-Line is going to need another bailout. If the government

were honest about it, they would say exactly that. They can pretend that \$75 million is fine, but it is not. TT-Line is going to need another bailout.

Why can't this government be honest? They weren't honest about the state of the wharf. They weren't honest about the bailout for the Finnish boatbuilder. They weren't honest about the fenders. They knew a long time ago that the fenders were flawed, and yet it was only just recently updated. They should just be honest instead of attacking Labor for asking questions.

### **Time expired.**

[11.59 a.m.]

**Ms ROSOL** (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to speak about the Budget from the perspective of the community. That is where the impact of the Budget is going to be felt. Speaking with people around Tasmania, with community service organisations, with people who work in the public service and with members of the community. There is a lot of fear in the community about the budget and what it is going to mean for Tasmania. We heard this morning about Neighbourhood Houses in Tasmania. Their funding was promised for Community Connectors. We heard from the minister this morning that three Neighbourhood Houses received their funding today, three months after the beginning of the financial year. They've been struggling to provide services and stressed about finances within their organisation, and people in the community have been impacted by that slowness for them to be provided with funding.

That is a really specific example, but I am hearing across the board from community service organisations who've been working with chronic underfunding for many years. They are unable to meet all the needs within the Tasmanian community as it stands right now. They are waiting anxiously for this budget. They're anticipating cuts and are deeply concerned about what this means for the Tasmanians they support. It's not just an idle or a false fear that they have. They know where the government's priorities are because they've already been asked to provide information about services that they can cut within what they provide. They have been asked to consider what they can cut in other services. Where can other services be cut so that they can cover the cost of their own services? What's in people's mind, this budget, is cuts, cuts, cuts, and the fear that that brings to them.

There is so little regard for people in Tasmania at the moment. We're all aware of the perilous state of our budget. We're all aware that the situation isn't good. Despite that, the government can see their way to funding a stadium in the middle of this crisis. They won't fund services for Tasmanians to the level that they need, but they will pour over a billion dollars into a stadium that we don't need, and they will add to our debt levels. We will be borrowing money to pay the debt and even pay the interest on the debt. Meanwhile, cuts everywhere else. Make no mistake, the stadium will result in cuts to services across Tasmania; cuts to public services, cuts to community services, and, ultimately, this will mean cuts to the people of Tasmania.

People are going hungry; 25 per cent of Tasmanians are currently skipping a meal every day, sometimes going a whole day without food because they can't afford it. People who need dentures and dental work are waiting years for services because the services aren't funded sufficiently. People are waiting for surgery, people who need mental-health support, rehabilitation or housing - the list goes on. The people of Tasmania are already suffering, and are already unable to access the support that they need. Once that stadium kicks in and the government pour all their effort and all the money into funding a stadium, they have no other

option but to cut services for Tasmanians, and that can only make the situation worse for people in Tasmania.

Tasmanians will suffer as a result of the government's stadium austerity. There's money for a stadium, while people miss out. The Premier, Mr Rockliff, likes to talk up how much he cares for Tasmanians. Meanwhile, we have a Treasurer who, as federal employment minister, advocated for and delivered job cuts across Australia. That is why we know that the situation in Tasmania is serious and is not how it should be. That is not the way a government should treat Tasmanians. Those are not the values that we need here in Tasmania at the moment. The people of Tasmania deserve better and the government must commit to funding the services people need in this interim budget and in the budgets to come. They have to stop prioritising a stadium over what Tasmanians really need.

[applause from the Public Gallery]  
[12.04 p.m.]

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity that the Leader of the Opposition has given - I'm not sure if that applause is for me as I take my feet, or if it's for the honourable member for Bass, Ms Rosol's excellent contribution.

**A member** - I don't think it's for you.

**The SPEAKER** - They're applauding you standing up, Mr Ferguson.

**Mr FERGUSON** - I do hear the cheers up there, however, so welcome to those in the Gallery. I note that the Leader of the Opposition has glossed over the fact that Labor has repeatedly demanded that the government engage in budget repair and improve the budget position. On one day they will bring forward rhetoric and a rationale for improving the budget bottom line. The very next day they will demand that the government spend more money on this or that important area of government expenditure, whether it's a social program or a government department delivering a frontline service.

This has been the confused debate of the opposition. They are trying to have it both ways. Of course, the challenge for an elected government is to ensure that you balance priorities, make decisions and come forward with something that's responsible and defensible, and I look forward to the Treasurer's budget tomorrow. It has to be understood, however, that the reason we're having a budget delivered tomorrow is because we could not see a budget passed in May and June of this year because Labor and the Greens and some Independents combined to block the budget and force the government to an election.

It surprised me that the Greens today in Question Time challenged the government on an area of government budgeting for Neighbourhood Houses. I wonder if the Greens have explained to the Neighbourhood Houses that they blocked the budget that contained funding for them. This doublespeak that we see is confusing and it is unfair on Tasmanians to have to suffer this kind of debate.

Also, to make the point that a government cannot simultaneously spend more on important areas of public service and also spend less to improve the budget position. They're asking for two different and competing priorities. The Labor opposition needs to reconsider its long-held position of refusing to publish an alternative budget. It's now 11 years, may be more, but for the entirety of Labor being in opposition, they have skulked away from their

responsibility to tell Tasmanians, 'Well, if you don't like the government's budget, have a look at what we would do differently.' They may laugh, but it's fake laughter because they know that they're caught on this.

The Greens with fewer members, I believe about half, and with fewer resources, routinely publish an alternative budget - routinely. They wear it as a badge of honour because they do the work that the Labor opposition should be doing. They put it down and we often don't agree on many of the decisions that they take to negative money here and to add money there, but at least they go through that disciplined process and produce a financial statement.

Finally, I want to address the TT-Line matters again. I'm always prepared to take responsibility for the matters that fell within my portfolio. In particular the appalling - and it is a travesty what happened within the TT-Line company. I have to remind the House that under the Chairman, Mr Damian Bugg, the company took full responsibility for the matters that we have been touching on today, but they didn't do so until two months after I'd resigned from Cabinet, where I took responsibility for those appalling failures. I want to remind the House, if they will be gracious enough to let me say a few things without being interrupted, nobody else was taking responsibility at that point in time. However, I cannot allow the Leader of the Opposition to come in here with two false statements, so I take the opportunity to correct him.

First of all, the 'secret bailout' as he described it, was not a decision for the treasurer of the day. He knows that because it is on the public record. It was a decision for the board.

Finally, the decision to make that deal with the Finnish government and the board was not completed until 5 April, two weeks after that election. The debate should be had, but it must be had with truth not made up rhetoric.

[12.09 p.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, I will give member for Bass, Mr Ferguson, a couple of things. One is he did take responsibility for the *Spirit of Tasmania* fiasco, as he should have. He was the only shareholder minister responsible and he should have taken responsibility. He did the right thing by resigning from those portfolios and his position in the Cabinet because of a catastrophe that has cost Tasmanian taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars - \$500 million per year from our economy in opportunity costs and more than half-a-billion dollars in cash that has been spent on that project that would not otherwise have been.

The bailout was a decision of the TT-Line board. The chairman called the Treasurer directly after they'd made that decision within the boardroom and told the Treasurer of Tasmania, during an election period, that they'd made that decision and the then-Treasurer decided to keep that a secret and -

**Mr Ferguson** - No, that's not accurate, because you know that the Finnish government hadn't made their decision until after, I think, 5 April.

**Mr WINTER** - The TT-Line board had made their decision to bail out a Finnish shipbuilder with \$80 million of Tasmanian taxpayer money. The Chair of the board called the then treasurer of Tasmania, the now honourable member for Bass, Michael Ferguson, and told him of their decision and then he did not tell anyone - and, we believe, including the Premier of Tasmania - which is where the catastrophe started when it comes to this Liberal government.

I have to reflect on the honourable Treasurer, and who walks back in at the right time, and the idea that you could blame Labor for the *Spirit of Tasmania* catastrophe. Mr Grainger was appointed in 2012. He was appointed some 13 years ago -

**Mr Abetz** - By Labor.

**Mr WINTER** - By Labor, 13 years ago. He was reappointed for another five-year term; so reappointed at least once by this Liberal government.

The then CEO of TT-Line, Mr Dwyer, was appointed at the end of 2014 under the careful watch of this Liberal government, and then they oversaw the project for the next 10 or so years before the catastrophe really hit Tasmanians hard.

The idea that anyone could stand there and blame someone else just speaks to the entire government; that this would be someone else's fault, not theirs. They're at almost the 12-year mark and still looking for someone to blame for these issues that are entirely of their making.

When it comes to the bailout that's happening - and this will be a bailout budget - the \$75 million, as said by the Leader of the Opposition and Dr Broad, will just be the start. The rest of the money won't be in the budget because we know there's going to need to be more bailouts to come.

It reminds me of the conversations I'm having around the community sector at the moment when it comes to this budget. Organisations that are living week-to-week waiting for the next grant to come, spending all their time trying to apply for these 12-month grants so they can keep their staff on - speaking to staff last week at GeCo, at the Geeveston Community Centre, who don't know if their job is still going to be there in the next few months because they don't know what's in the Budget.

Community connectors that have had uncertainty around their workplace now for a very long period of time because the government continues to go with these one-year contracts and short-termism in their budgets because they don't want to show the spending in years two, three or four. Five-year contracts were promised to these organisations in 2014. Five-year contracts, in the vast majority of cases, still haven't eventuated, which means community organisations can't plan for the future. It means community organisations can't employ the best staff and they can't retain the outstanding amazing staff that they have right now. This is another symptom of a government that is always just playing the moment and not playing for the future.

Again, I would like to talk about those great workers up at Rio, up at Bell Bay, where today the government has proudly announced a one-year extension on their power price deal, a deal that should have been dealt with years ago. I have been talking about this in this place, the power price deal, since I was a shadow minister for energy two or three years ago. This problem has been building up and building up and they kicked the can down the road on this again for another year and we'll get to this point.

Earlier on the radio today I heard the minister for Energy talking about how good it was, but it was then pointed out to him that what he was saying is the polar opposite to what is in the Hydro Tasmania annual report. Talking about profitability and trying to make more money and trying to talk about moving away from the sort of deals that have kept Rio and the other

three major industries in this state. This government is kicking the can down the road and not dealing with Tasmania's long-term future.

**The SPEAKER** - The member's time has expired.

[12.14 p.m.]

**Ms DOW** (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to speak on this matter of public importance, and it is a matter of public importance. It was Saul Eslake who said that every policy decision made by this government has ultimately led to poor economic consequences for this state and the perilous state of our state's finances. That's from esteemed economist Saul Eslake. He also said that every decision made by this government around the *Spirits of Tasmania* project has had dire economic consequences for Tasmania.

The honourable Treasurer gets up and he talks about lines, he talks about asking -

**Mr Abetz** - Thanks for listening.

**Ms DOW** - I will always listen to you because I love to then critique what you've said, Treasurer.

The fact is this government is all about lines, they're all about politics and they're all about spin. This is a very serious situation that we find ourselves in with the state of our budget. I remind those on the other side that there was a vote of no-confidence in the premier of this state that was supported by members of the crossbench who are now propping up this Liberal government.

It's a funny world that we find ourselves in. In fact, it was the Premier, Jeremy Rockliff, who took us to an early election, not we on this side. It was he who called an election. He was the only person who had the ability to do that. They are the facts. Just like the facts are that the *Spirit of Tasmania* project is five years late. It's half a billion dollars over budget and counting. Every time those ships are delayed, there is a hit of half a billion dollars to our economy. That is substantial. So is the fact that the TT-Line finds itself in a very poor fiscal position and this is very serious. This is not about blaming it on Labor, however many 100 years ago.

**Time expired.**

**Matter noted.**

### RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

[12.16 a.m.]

**The SPEAKER** - Honourable members, I acknowledge in the gallery that we have students with the Beacon Foundation here today as well as students from Rose Bay, Hobart College, Woodbridge. We welcome them to Parliament House. We look forward to seeing you at lunch and at the Speed Careers session. Welcome students.

# UNCORRECTED PROOF

## MESSAGE FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

### Assent to Bills

**The SPEAKER** - I am in receipt of a message from the Legislative Council which I shall ask the Clerk of the House to read:

Honourable Speaker, the Legislative Council has this day agreed without amendment to bill intituled - A Bill for an Act to amend the *Commissions of Inquiry Act 1995*. (Bill No. 37)

Legislative Council  
5 November 2025  
C.M. Farrell, President

Honourable Speaker, the Legislative Council has this day agreed without amendment to a bill intituled - A Bill for an Act to amend the *Electricity Companies Act 1997*, the *Government Business Enterprises Act 1995*, the *Hydro-Electric Corporation Act 1995*, the *Irrigation Company Act 2011*, the *Metro Tasmania Act 1997*, the *Motor Accidents (Liabilities and Compensation) Act 1973*, the *Racing (Tasracing Pty Ltd) Act 2009*, the *Rail Company Act 2009*, the *Tasmanian Ports Corporation Act 2005* and the *TT-Line Arrangements Act 1993*. (Bill No. 36)

Legislative Council  
5 November 2025  
C.M. Farrell, President

Honourable Speaker, the Legislative Council having this day agreed with amendments to a bill intituled - A Bill for an Act to amend the *Electricity Companies Act 1997*, the *Electricity Reform Act 2012*, the *Government Business Enterprises Act 1995*, the *Government Business Enterprises (Sale) Act 2003*, the *Irrigation Company Act 2011*, the *Metro Tasmania Act 1997*, the *Racing (Tasracing Pty Ltd) Act 2009*, the *Rail Company Act 2009*, the *Tasmanian Ports Corporation Act 2005* and the *TT-Line Arrangements Act 1993* - now returns the same to the House of Assembly and requests its concurrence therein. (Bill No. 42)

Legislative Council  
5 November 2025  
C.M. Farrell, President

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the last mentioned message be taken into consideration at the later hour.

Briefly I can indicate that we would seek to bring that on after the conclusion of private members' time. I believe that there is no controversy in relation to the amendment.

**Motion agreed to.**

**MOTION**

**Macquarie Point Stadium - Call for Re-negotiation with AFL**

[12.18 a.m.]

**Mr GEORGE** (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House -

(1) Notes that -

- (a) the State's public debt is approaching \$13 billion, the highest in Tasmania's history, placing growing pressure on essential services such as health, housing, education, and mental health;
- (b) the Government nevertheless remains committed to a \$1.13 billion stadium project at Macquarie Point, despite widespread public opposition and escalating costs;
- (c) the final cost of the stadium and surrounding infrastructure will further increase the cost to the public purse;
- (d) Tasmania already possesses suitable AFL venues which could be upgraded at a fraction of the cost of a new build;
- (e) the proposed stadium has become a symbol of misplaced priorities, at a time when Tasmanians are struggling with record housing shortages and declining service standards; and
- (f) the AFL's requirement for a new stadium as a condition of Tasmania's entry into the national competition cannot be justified, given both the State's fiscal position and available facilities.

(2) Calls on the Government to -

- (a) reopen negotiations with the AFL to remove the Macquarie Point stadium requirement from the current agreement; and
- (b) continue Tasmania's unprecedented financial support of the Tasmanian Devils AFL team and ensure the team's establishment proceeds without further burdening the State's finances, through a further \$5.9 million stadium subsidy to be paid annually in lieu of the income the Macquarie Point stadium would have generated for the club.

**The SPEAKER** - Is a vote required today?



**Mr GEORGE** - A vote is required.

I first apologise, honourable Speaker, for breaking House rules and bringing a newspaper in. It was in the pursuit of research rather than to distract myself from the debate.

This parliament finds itself confronted with a grave task over the next few weeks. The decision that we make on the Macquarie Point Stadium project will determine the next two decades of our island's destiny. Tasmania faces an unprecedented budget crisis that is drawing comparisons nationally with the disastrous New South Wales Land Government Black Bank crisis of 1932. The spectre of federal intervention is already being raised in the national press.

What is the Rockliff government's answer? A stadium. A magic pudding that he pretends will magically solve all our problems and for which he has no factual basis for any of it. To the myriad problems of underdevelopment, to the growing housing crisis, to the worst education and health outcomes of any state, what is the Rockliff government's answer? The stadium. The stadium Tasmanians do not want and have never wanted. To the growing social misery that is besetting Tasmania amidst the shambles that is the hallmark of this administration, the Rockliff government has no answer but, of course, the stadium.

To the debt crisis, to the sweeping loss of services, to the loss of public sector jobs, to the eventual inevitability of rising taxes, to the systemic shock all this will bring to the state's private sector, to the business closures, to the abandonment of social services - what is the Rockliff government's answer? An uncoded but fabulously expensive stadium, not Tasmania's answer to the Eiffel Tower, but Tasmania's answer to Donald Trump's gaudy ballroom, only at vastly increased cost. That is it. This stadium, according to the Tasmanian Planning Commission, will cost us, the taxpayer, in excess of \$1.8 billion over 10 years and rising, plus hundreds of millions of still uncoded extras. In the face of a debt blowout without even a final design or final costing, the Premier wants this parliament to sign him a blank cheque.

Jeremy Rockliff is the captain of a sinking ship who convinces his terrified crew to pump water into the boat rather than out of it. 'Let's sink the boat, lads,' he calls out, 'because only by sinking this boat can we make it float.' At a time when Tasmanians need their government and its public service fully focused on our rapidly engulfing debt, the Rockliff government has instead had no other policy for two years, no other ambition, no other agenda, no other solution than the stadium. Wharfs, ferries, wages, the homeless, the sick, the young - all have been forgotten in order to build the Rockliff folly, a vanity project we don't have the money for. Absent of ideas for dealing with Tasmania's problems today, or visions for Tasmania's future, this autocratic administration threatens to take our entire society into the abyss of state bankruptcy.

In the pursuit of this great white elephant - the greatest in Tasmania's history - the Premier has been contemptuous of established processes for good governments. He's trodden all over the planning and heritage rules that this stadium utterly breaches, with arrogant contempt for the POSS process. Within 30 minutes of the Planning Commission's release of its devastating findings, the Premier, having clearly not read it, chose to publicly dismiss the patient, year-long assembly of facts, statistics, analysis and expert advice as 'just a matter of opinion'.

In the real world, if I was broke and walked into a Porsche showroom and insisted on buying the most expensive car on the floor, the salesman would tell me, 'Mr George, your credit

card's maxed out', but using the Premier's logic, I would reply, 'Well, that's just a matter of opinion.'

The facts of our budget crisis are not just a matter of opinion. The facts of our worsening health and education system are not just a matter of opinion. The facts of our housing crisis are not just a matter of opinion. The facts of yet another blowout of the Budget to the tune of almost half a billion dollars in six months is not just a matter of opinion.

From the moment Jeremy Rockliff signed up to this - the worst deal in our history - deliberately avoiding Treasury and Cabinet advice, far less parliamentary consideration, our 'not a red cent more' Premier has not been on familiar terms with truth about this stadium's cost and benefit. Apparently, the Premier is unaware of Treasury guidelines that government business borrowing must have a positive benefit-to-cost ratio for investments over \$50 million. The Planning Commission finds the stadium returns only a miserable 45 cents in the dollar. This is not just a terrible abrogation of good governance and good process. It is not just trampling on the state's conventions and rules. It is, at heart, a moral crisis that is corrupting our democracy.

In pursuit of the stadium, we have seen some shocking behaviour from government. The very best sources inform me that a minister for the Rockliff government told the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra it would lose state funding unless it stopped warning about the stadium's noise pollution and its impact on concerts. I will challenge the Premier here and now in the Chamber to confirm or deny that that happened.

I've learned that one of Tasmania's most distinguished architects was threatened by a senior public servant with no more government contracts should he continue to speak about the stadium's immense impact on Hobart's heritage and unique colonial cityscape. Would the Premier endorse such threats? We need to hear his answer from the Floor. He and his colleagues have repeatedly breached the bounds of decency. Eminent economists and others, giving of their knowledge and expertise, have had their reputation smeared and besmirched. Conspiracies have been invented. Meanwhile, there's been no hesitation in breaching democratic conventions to prop up the Rockliff folly.

The Coordinator-General, one of our most highly paid bureaucrats, was not only allowed but encouraged by both the Premier and the Treasurer to use his position to publicly spruik for a highly politicised project. This is the behaviour one expects of an autocracy, and like any autocrat, the Premier cultivates his image as that of an affable everyman; but behind every autocrat stand the toadies ready to do his bidding and ready to help him govern in ways utterly inconsistent with good government.

Regrettably, the opposition stands on the sidelines in this existential battle. They're too afraid to stand with the crossbench - or God forbid, the Greens - for what they know is right for Tasmania. Instead, Labor bleats about an imaginary Liberal-Greens coalition, where in fact what we now witness in this state is the very first Liberal-Labor coalition in Australian history.

**Mr Willie** - Says the person who voted for them. You supported them!

**Mr GEORGE** - Labor - your party - gave up the fight for Tasmanians, although they well know that the Rockliff folly will wreak havoc on our economy and will divide Tasmanians. You know that.

During during the election campaign, the Liberal-Labor coalition buried the stadium issue, far too fearful to deal with such a divisive issue. Well, I didn't. No-one was left in any doubt about where I stood. It was in my flyers, it was on my website, it was on social media. When asked if I supported the stadium, my invariable answer was, 'I'm afraid I don't. It's the wrong place, the wrong time, the wrong cost and unnecessary.' Nine out of 10 questioners said they would vote for me just on that position.

With that position, I outpolled the Labor leader, I outpolled the honourable Eric Abetz, and every other candidate in Franklin. I received the third-highest vote in the state. What a shame, then, that Labor would rather back the Rockliff government and the Rockliff folly than the people it purports to represent.

Let's be clear. This Premier has lost every single argument for his stadium. With his leadership, his party's gone from a commanding position under Peter Gutwein to the sorry political flotsam it is today. Without the Labor Party's pub choir singing along in coalition, the electorate would have sent his government packing long ago.

The Premier's great gift - his only political gift - is presenting relentless failure as success, every cock-up apparently a victory. Now he's expending what little political capital he has left making the stadium look inevitable. It's his Last Chance Saloon, the last roll of the dice, and it is all a bluff, the hollow threat to all of us in the lower House and in the upper House - no stadium, no team.

Bluffs work with cowards, bluffs work with fools, and the AFL's bluff has worked with both the government and the opposition. Yet when the AFL tried to ignore a small crossbench delegation, we called their bluff and they caved.

**Mr Willie** - What outcome did you get?

**The SPEAKER** - Order, Leader of the Opposition, please be silent.

**Mr GEORGE** - They caved. The point is they will push you to the very edge and then they will cave. It is all bluff. Will it work in the upper House? I very much doubt it. Legislative Councillors are independent thinkers.

Yet, in Melbourne last week, the AFL told us that they knew the stadium would be voted through by the Legislative Council. This will be news to those independently minded members. Either the AFL reckons the fix is in, or it's just one more bluff as the AFL gets close to the deal of the century with a near-bankrupt state delivering, according to the Planning Commission, a stadium that will cost us, the taxpayer, \$1.8 billion over 10 years and rising. What a sweet deal for the AFL.

What happens if we, or the upper House, vote the stadium down? How can the AFL kill a club that already exists, is up and running with more than 200 000 supporters? A club that has become Melbourne's sentimental favourite. At the start, perhaps it could have, but now? Who's got the ticker or the stupidity to destroy a club already up and running with contracted players, an active, rapidly growing business, and even a shop? Imagine the Premier getting up, or the Treasurer getting up, and telling Tasmania it's over, I'm giving up. The Premier and the AFL will strike a fresh deal, or his political career is over, and it will be home to the farm.

Why would the AFL shut the Devils down? They've got a sponsorship deal that mainland clubs would die for, and all of it paid for by us. As taxpayers, we are on the hook for an eye watering total of more than third of a billion dollars, \$339 million in state support for the Tassie Devils, and that is separate from the stadium. It comprises \$25 million between 2023 and 2027 - \$144 million for 12 years from 2027. It is \$105 million to establish a high-performance centre and \$65 million to upgrade the Launceston Stadium for the Devils' games there.

The Premier will doubtless deride this motion with his characteristic combination of untruth and bluster and hand-wringing. He will brush it aside and wander off into fantasy. It's not just the stadium; it's the Disneyland of the South, it's the Eiffel Tower and the Gold Coast wrapped into one gigantic death cap mushroom.

He will say it will reinvent our economy. He will say without it we have no future. He will say anything and, unfortunately, does unbound by truth or reality. It is a joke. I agree with you. It's a joke. This stadium will be a very sad joke on Tasmania.

He will ignore the fact that not one independent expert agrees with him. He will ignore the warnings of his most senior Treasury officials. He will ignore the warnings of the financial burden on every Tasmanian household of up to the tune of \$5900. No doubt, too, he will dismiss the crossbench meeting with the AFL last week. Let me tell you, that when we warned the AFL that the stadium is now dividing Tasmanians and undermining the very viability of a team, they did take notice.

The idea that this still uncosted stadium is needed to make the Devils financially independent is a cruel joke, when brought at the cost of higher taxes, lost jobs and homes unbuilt. It will come at the cost, too, of support for the Devils as Tasmanians become aware of the stadium's drain on our already stretched public services. What happens then? The stadium meant to save the Devils may just doom them. For what?

In their own submission to the Planning Commission, the Devils make clear that continuing to play at Bellerive, rather than a billion-dollar Macquarie Point Stadium will come at a cost to them of \$5.9 million a year in lost revenue. That's what this whole crackpot scheme boils down to: \$5.9 million a year for the Devils. Surely it is wiser for Tasmania to gift the Devils \$5.9 million a year than to shackle ourselves to an uncosted, under-designed Rockliff folly.

I don't expect much rational thinking from the government benches when it comes to the Rockliff Folly. The three-line whip will be in and there will be no independent thought allowed on that side of the House. How can the opposition benches bleat about the record numbers of Tasmanians waiting for public housing for a record amount of time and still vote for the Rockliff Folly?

How can Labor support the Rockliff Folly when Treasury says, 'We're acting like someone forced to use their credit card just to buy their weekly groceries'? How can Labor justify this wicked spend when the workers they supposedly support can't get a proper wage rise because the piggy bank's empty?

How can anyone support the Rockliff Folly knowing we're confronting a credit rating downgrade, a budget deficit blowout of \$9 billion, or you can make that \$21 billion if you count

government business debt, stagnation, public service layoffs, and the real possibility of federal intervention.

I beg you on the floor of this House to seize the moment and come to your senses. I commend the motion to the House.

[12.36 p.m.]

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Deputy Speaker, I thank the gallery for their applause for me coming to the lectern.

There are many issues in this motion that need to be debunked. They need to be dealt with, and the incorrect information exposed and done so exceptionally clearly.

First of all, the debt is approaching \$13 billion is an assertion: that is, without government intervention. We have indicated that there will be such government intervention and therefore that figure is sort of thrown out as though it's some sort of fact when the honourable member must know that that is not going to be the case.

Then, in paragraph 2, he says about the government's commitment to the stadium, 'despite widespread public opposition'. Well, we had an election not so long ago; 25 out of 35 members of this place were elected on a very firm policy. Nobody had any doubt as to where I stood, where Mr O'Byrne stood. Indeed, I think for the first time ever, Mr O'Byrne and I shared poster sites in the community because of people wanting the stadium.

If Mr George is to be believed that 9 out of 10 people who he spoke to want didn't want the stadium, it's a bit puzzling he didn't get 90 per cent of the vote, but he didn't. Sure, he topped the poll but then when you have a look at everybody else on his team, there are a couple of 100 votes each.

Sure, I came in second, but when you run with a good performer like the Speaker of this place, Jacqui Petrusma and Nic Street, and others, they congregate literally thousands of votes as well. Mr George can laugh but what I would say to him is if you want an accurate picture, ask how much did the Peter George team get compared to how much did the Liberal team get? Twice as many votes came to the Liberal Party as opposed to Peter George.

I believe everybody knew where the Liberal Party stood on the stadium, courtesy of Mr George and the Greens having posters everywhere saying, 'no stadium', and trying to make that the differential.

Then, on the third one, we are told that the final cost of the stadium and surrounding infrastructure will further increase the cost to the public purse. There is a cost to the public purse, there is no doubt about that but. For example, the Northern Access Road, that was determined as being needed under the Hobart City Deal in 2018. It was going to happen in any event. The stadium and the precinct development can leverage off that. No stadium, no team, but still a Northern Access Road, and that is where the mischief comes into this motion from the member for Franklin, Mr George, because I believe he knows that sort of detail, he just seeks to brush over it to try to increase the figures, to try to increase the amount that will be relied on from the public purse. What he also glossed over is that federal Labor will contribute \$240 million and the AFL will contribute \$360 million. That is \$600 million coming our way which, if we don't go ahead, will be denied to us.

**Mr George** - Eric, the Macquarie Point Corporation gets the money, not the stadium.

**Mr ABETZ** - That's the sort of information that the honourable member for Franklin, Mr George, deliberately takes off the table to try to spin his narrative. He tells us that we already possess suitable AFL venues which could be upgraded at a fraction of the cost of a new build. Can I say to the honourable member, do you think nobody thought of that?

**Mr George** - Yes.

**Mr ABETZ** - Oh, right. The AFL didn't think of it, the state government didn't think of it, the federal Labor government didn't think of it. Nobody thought of that other than the great Einstein in this place, Mr Peter George.

**Mr George** - Thank you, I accept that.

**Mr ABETZ** - What I can say to the honourable member is it was thought of, it was considered and it was determined that Bellerive couldn't be expanded and similarly, York Park. Does York Park have the best playing surface in Australia? Chances are it does, but do you know what? You need a little bit more than a good playing surface to have a functional and viable team both on and off the field.

I also say to the honourable gentleman that when he talks in paragraph 6 about the AFL requirement for a new stadium as a condition, that's correct, but where did that come from? It came from Tasmania's very own AFL taskforce chaired by Brett Godfrey. Tasmania looked at it, considered it, and that taskforce said we need a brand-new stadium, the others can't be retrofitted, and it should be in the CBD. That is what was then taken to the AFL. The AFL looked at it and said, 'This makes sense, a new stadium with all the necessary facilities, because if we're going to poke \$360 million into this proposition, we want it to work, we want it to be viable', and so -

**Mr George** - The Tasmanian Planning Commission - would you like to address that?

**DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Mr George, I remind you that the minister has the call.

**Mr ABETZ** - Thank you for your protection, Deputy Speaker, and I did listen mostly in silence, I think, to Mr George's contribution.

This was organically grown from Tasmania. This is what we would need to do if we were to achieve an AFL team. On top of that we had an industrial wasteland that had been sitting there vacant for over a decade. We had all sorts of proposals. I remember the former Labor government - over 10 years ago - had a proposal for a hospital. That fell over. Then the Greens came up with the Eden Project, which out of interest would have been even higher than the stadium but Mr Bayley and the Greens never want to talk about that anymore because it doesn't fit the narrative, but at least Mr Bayley has the decency to have a wry smile on his face to acknowledge it.

It was a wasteland for over 10 years. What could be done with it? All sorts of proposals. All of a sudden, this opportunity came along for a convention centre, a multipurpose facility in which the AFL would be the anchor tenant. Of course, if you have a major development there,

a shopping centre or an office block before you get started, you do want an anchor tenant to make it viable. The AFL will be the anchor tenant to make this proposal viable.

I stress again that this was a Tasmanian-developed idea taken to the AFL. The AFL accepted that these proposals were sensible and needed for the viability of the Tasmanian Devils and therefore they signed off on it. Yet Mr George and others within this community seek to turn this around as AFL bullying. No, it was a Tasmanian proposition to the AFL which the AFL accepted. I would have thought that was a tick to the AFL, not condemnation that somehow they're bullying, because we are adopting that which Tasmania requested. This is part of the crooked thinking.

There are lots of other issues. Time is running out, Deputy Speaker, so let me simply note that in the last subparagraph there is an acknowledgement that the stadium will in fact produce revenue and Mr George wants that revenue to come out of general sources. The other thing he's done is confuse capital expenditure with operational expenditure. If we were to do the public service pay increase it would cost about the stadium but for every four years ongoing. The stadium is a one-off in about 50 years. You know that difference; we all know that difference. You ought to acknowledge that difference. We will be opposing the motion.

[12.46 p.m.]

**Ms JOHNSTON** (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise on the motion of the Independent member for Franklin, Mr George. It will come as no surprise to anyone in this House that I'm in furious agreement with Mr George in relation to his motion put forward today.

I was one of the four who had the privilege to attend AFL House last week to meet with representatives of the AFL executive to put to them an alternative view, one that they hadn't heard previously because they'd only heard from the voices of the government - and the opposition, unfortunately - championing the stadium and blatantly disregarding its impacts on Tasmania and the division it has caused within Tasmania. It was an excellent opportunity. It was a very frank, robust, but civil conversation that we had.

We outlined the concerns many Tasmanians have with the dud deal that this government has signed us up to, and put to them what the likely impact would be of this dud deal on Tasmanians. What became very clear in that conversation was that the AFL cares about the AFL's business interests only. They don't care about Tasmanians. They don't care about the state, they don't care about the future of the state, and they don't care about the people living in it. They care about their business interests. That should be no surprise, but we here in parliament have a duty to Tasmanians to care about Tasmania and its future, to care about the people living here - a higher duty than the AFL. It was an excellent opportunity for us to present to them those interests and those considerations.

When we asked the AFL what success looked like, what they thought successful Tasmania Devils teams would look like, they didn't mention the increase in Auskick numbers. They didn't mention the pride, or the vision, or the feeling, the vibe, of walking out onto the field with the Tassie Devils jersey on. No, they mentioned numbers, finances, business, money, profit. That's what they were concerned about. All this rhetoric that they are backing in a vibe, the team, the vision, the good feelings - contrary to all the mountain of evidence that we are destroying Tasmania with this deal, it's clear the AFL only cares about its bottom line.

As Mr George has outlined in his excellent motion, that bottom line is \$5.4 million to \$5.9 million a year. That's the difference they said a stadium would make to the financial success of the team. Yet this government, with the blessing and cheering on of the opposition, are willing to plunge generations of Tasmanians into enormous debt - to see essential services, frontline services, jobs cut, communities suffer and division - and that is despicable.

It became very clear that the AFL seemed to think that the division here in Tasmanian was not their problem, but we put to them that it is their problem. If the only thing that they care about is the financial welfare of the AFL and the team, then they need to understand that Tasmanians are angry and they will vote with their feet. They need to understand that this will damage their brand. If they force us to stick to this terrible dud deal, they will suffer.

They will annoy, upset and disrespect veterans by building this massive white elephant right next to the Cenotaph. They are disrespecting the Aboriginal community by failing to engage with them respectfully. I note that Mr Dillon was unable to meet with us because he was in the Northern Territory meeting with Indigenous communities there. As Ms O'Connor, member for Hobart, said, it'd be really lovely if Mr Dillon would show some respect for the Palawa people and come here to meet them on Country and talk about the impact of his stadium on Aboriginal communities. Let's be clear, the AFL holds rounds for both veterans and for the Indigenous community, yet they are more than happy to see this government and the opposition trash those particular communities and be utterly disrespectful to them.

Tasmanians will let it be known that they do not want this stadium. They will be protesting in the streets. They will be very angry if this stadium gets put through this parliament. The pain of the AFL does not stop when the vote in this parliament happens in December. If the stadium is approved, every time the government stuffs up - and let me be clear, they are aware of the government's *Spirit* stuff-ups, they are mindful that this government has a major issue with project delivery and sticking to budgets. They don't want to be associated with that pain forever and a day.

It became very clear to me walking out of that meeting that, whilst we did not expect the AFL to say, in a meeting with four representatives from Tasmania, 'Of course, let's renegotiate the deal now,' they will blink. They will absolutely blink.

Democracy matters. The vote of the other place matters. They're not in the pockets of the AFL. Members of this parliament, whether it be this place or the other place, have a much higher duty; one to Tasmanians now and in the future - not to the bottom line of the AFL or the Tasmania Devils team, but to Tasmania's moving on.

I commend this motion. I thank Mr George for bringing it on.

**Mr BAYLEY** (Clark) - Honourable Deputy Speaker, I rise to support this motion and I thank the member for bringing it on. Budget week is an incredibly good time to have this conversation. I am sure the stadium will be a central theme through contributions of many people in this Chamber, and the other place for that matter, on the budget because austerity is going to be a hallmark of this budget. The cuts, the efficiency dividends, the pauses to recruitment and the direct cuts to the public service, the community houses that don't get funded, the community gardens and playgroups that are going to be closed, the housing issue that isn't addressed, and the children who are dreaming, not about an AFL team, but about their next meal - because of the revelations today that hunger is a key issue in children.



This is an important conversation for us to have, because while the government wants to try to anchor their argument for building a pathway to prosperity through this stadium, it is clear that that is not the way forward. Not only is this stadium a massive white elephant - we have had that warning time and time again, whether it be Prof Nicholas Gruen, or the Tasmanian Planning Commission itself - no-one with any credibility, not even the proponent itself, is predicting that this stadium is going to deliver a cost-benefit ratio that delivers for Tasmanians. It is 50 per cent - 50 cents in the dollar - at best, and with radically escalating costs, that return is going to get reduced even further.

The other reason we can't accept this argument from the Treasurer that the stadium is central to our prosperity, and to growing the economy is because Treasury itself is advising us that this is not the way forward. Treasury's Pre-election Financial Outlook is the only document Treasury produces that doesn't have the fingerprints of the Treasurer over it and it can be brutally honest. It says:

The state budget has a structural problem. Economic growth correlates weekly with general government sector revenue growth in Tasmania. Accordingly, this structural problem will not be resolved through future economic growth. Explicit policy choices are required. [TBC]

In relation to some of those policy choices, the Treasury says this:

This rate of growth in debt is not sustainable and the size of the problem will only increase, if not addressed. Immediate, sustained action is needed. [TBC]

What is the action that the government take? What is the action that the government takes in the face of Nicholas Gruen's advice? In the face of the Tasmanian Planning Commission's advice? In the face of the Treasury's own advice, around immediate action? It's going to add to that debt burden. It's going to add \$1.8 billion at least, to that debt burden. Not only do we have to borrow \$800-odd million, to build this stadium - \$490 million borrowed directly by the Macquarie Point Development Corporation; \$375 million borrowed by the government - to invest in this, we also have to borrow to pay the interest on this stadium.

When the government says, 'Don't worry about this, this is just borrowing, this is not operational costs,' we have to understand, that borrowing the money needed to build this stadium is going to add tens and tens of millions of dollars to the operating costs of the budget, simply to service the debt. That is why this is completely unsustainable. That is why Treasury is warning against going into this kind of debt, and that is why the notion that this is a pathway to prosperity is absolutely preposterous.

The reality is, this budget is going to be a stadium austerity budget and Mr George highlights where that austerity is going to be felt the hardest. It's in health: we have the poorest health outcomes in any of the states. It's in housing: record levels of people waiting, applying to be housed on the public housing register, waiting ever longer. It's in education: some of the lowest literacy rates and schools struggling to support their children. It's in mental health: a critical area of need for additional resources. That's why the impacts are significant.

Of course, the impacts of this stadium don't stop there, and they are not just financial. The Tasmanian Planning Commission has warned, it has been abundantly clear, that the

impacts will not stop at the money that it's going to cost us. It will impact the city itself. It's going to impact on one of our most cherished heritage precincts, down at Sullivans Cove, which is central to our identity as a city and as a state. It's going to impact on stakeholders that would otherwise be cherished.

Who else would shaft the RSL so profoundly, except the AFL and this government? This stadium, despite protestation from the RSL, despite evidence after evidence, and render after render, showing its significant impact on the values of the Cenotaph, this government, supported by the AFL, cheered on by the Labor Party, has bulldozed on irrespectively. Who else would ignore the returned servicemen?

Of course, there is the opportunity cost. It's great to have an opportunity to talk about the opportunity cost, because the Treasurer is being utterly disingenuous, when he talks about this site as simply being an industrial wasteland and a car park. Of course it is. It's had a significant amount of money invested in it, at the moment to improve its quality, to deal with toxicity and the like.

This government itself, spent many years and many millions of dollars working up a development master plan for that site and came up with a vision that was broadly supported by the community. The centrepiece of that vision, the Truth and Reconciliation park was broadly supported by Palawa people. It had housing, it had a commercial precinct, and it had a fundamental improvement in terms of science and Antarctic research. What happened to that vision? It was thrown out the door in exchange for a stadium, a new precinct plan written by the proponent itself. The very people who are going to build this stadium, got to write the rules against which it should be assessed.

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

### MOTION

#### **Macquarie Point Stadium - Call for Re-negotiation with AFL**

**Continued from above.**

[2.30 p.m.]

**Mr BAYLEY** (Clark) - Prior to lunch we were talking about the cost and I had moved on to the opportunity cost of this site. I highlighted the fact that one of the things that has been completely jettisoned with this pivot towards the stadium is the previously well-worked-up plan for this site, the escarpment, the precinct, the gateway, the promenade, the Goods Shed, the underground and, of course, the Truth and Reconciliation Park, and that's another key stakeholder of not only this government, but the AFL, who have managed to offside the RSL and the Aboriginal people. So, when we talk about the costs of the stadium, let's not forget that this government contracted a developer to build a development at Macquarie Point and ended up paying them out \$1.6 million of taxpayers' money to not build it. If you want to talk about additional costs, there's one there.

Obviously, that is not the only additional cost. The Tasmanian Planning Commission identifies a whole raft of other additional uncoded issues. Things like the ongoing site works, the Northern Access Road, the car park, event buses, \$4.45 million to the Tasmanian

Symphony Orchestra (TSO) in compensation and, \$17.6 million for path widening on Davey, Collins and Hunter Streets. There are uncoded elements to this proposal that Treasury itself has identified in the PFO as a budget risk. I read from them that they have identified that the full cost of the project won't be known until it's contracted, that there's a tight construction market, that there's a bespoke nature of the roof design and the costs of related projects to support the project. These costs were not included in the revised estimates report, and they are represented as an unfunded budget risk.

To correct the Treasurer in the few minutes I have, the \$240 million from federal money - I have the agreement here, it does not even mention a stadium. It's for urban renewal at Macquarie Point and it's for housing and a wharf. They are the preconditions, so the notion of paying that back is ridiculous. Also, the notion of the AFL's money, that is the whole premise of the member for Franklin's motion here, and that is what I walked out of the meeting with the AFL about. I believe they heard very strongly that where they thought this stadium was once upon a time critical for the financial success of the Devils, it is now a net negative. It is now an albatross around the neck of the Devils, and it will be a branding risk to the AFL over the longer term. This is clearly an unsustainable project going forward.

**Time expired.**

[2.33 p.m.]

**Mr WILLIE** (Clark - Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, I will address a couple of those points that were raised then to start my contribution because it is interesting that the Greens like to verbal the federal government all the time about that \$240 million.

**Mr Bayley** - I have the agreement here.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, you have the agreement there, but I also know the Prime Minister came down here in the federal election and talked about his support for the stadium and the AFL teams. He has been very clear about that, you can talk about it all you like -

**Mr Bayley** - The precondition is housing and a wharf.

**The SPEAKER** - Order, through the Chair, please.

**Mr WILLIE** - You can try to manipulate it to say that the federal government is not supporting this project, it's not true.

**Mr Bayley** - Find me where it says 'stadium.'

**The SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr WILLIE** - I know from my time last week, I spent some time in the capital of the country and there are many people in that building, the federal parliament, who are looking on at Tasmania with bemusement at the moment. They can't understand it. They were saying things to me like do you want the AFL teams, Josh, or not? I met someone from the Northern Territory who was hoping it was all going to fall over so that they could pinch the team. These are people who represent different areas around the country, one person said to me, 'Nobody ever regrets building a stadium, Josh. It's difficult at the time, but everywhere it happens, people, they wonder what the fuss was about when they're experiencing it, and they

see the city change and the things that come from it.' You can verbal the federal government if you like, about that money.

**Mr Bayley** - I'm just quoting their agreement.

**Mr WILLIE** - I'm telling you that they support the project and they support the AFL teams.

**Mr Bayley** - But would they pull the money?

**The SPEAKER** - Order. The Deputy Leader of the Greens has made his contribution. The Leader of the Opposition has a very minimal amount of time. I do ask that he's heard in silence, please.

**Mr WILLIE** - The way that this motion is worded, it's like that the stadium funding is new funding that hasn't been allocated. Now, there are \$630 million that is already sitting with Macquarie Point Development Corporation.

For context, the stadium is less than 15 per cent of the state's infrastructure budget. This is an infrastructure project, one-off capital funding with \$630 million that is already been allocated and accounted for. There is some hyperbole in this debate and there has been outside of this place, too, around the numbers. When you put it in the context of the state government's budget in terms of infrastructure, it's less than 15 per cent.

If you listen to some members in this place, they will say that this is Armageddon, that the state is going to end up bankrupt, that we're going end in a bailout. You could cancel the stadium; you could do that. It would be a tragedy if that happened, but the state's finances are still in the same situation. The charts that are in the Budget, they still look the same. This is a one-off capital project. People who say you can put it into health, education, and housing - that's salaries. It goes up every year and you have to fund it every year. It's not one-off capital funding. I just wanted to correct a few of those things.

A lot of this comes from the task force report. I noticed that the Independent member for Franklin had a lot of supporters in the gallery before lunchtime. Some of them have disappeared, but some remain. You can find the task force report online, I think it was from around 2019. In it they go through the viability of a Tasmanian team. This is the report that was put together to convince the AFL that Tasmania was a viable option.

They looked at Launceston to base the team. You can read this in the report. They looked at Launceston. Launceston is a great surface. It's a great place to go and watch football and it will be part of this arrangement and great for the north of the state. They came to the conclusion, however, that Launceston would not be able to attract and retain AFL players for the team to be successful. They came to the conclusion that Launceston would not be able to attract the professional support staff - and let's face it, there is a huge industry around this - to support a successful AFL team.

Now, if you accept that, they said that the team had to be based in the south. If you accept that the team has to be based in the south just for those reasons - I'm sure most Tasmanians who say, 'I support the team,' want the team to be successful, not a basket case that's getting flogged every week and putting its hand out for handouts because it can't survive. I don't think

Tasmanians want that. If you accept those things in the task force report, the team has to be based in the south. We currently don't have a venue in the south that will support an AFL team in the business case.

You could upgrade Ninja Stadium. It's 12,000 seats at the moment. People say, 'Oh, it's 17,000.' If you've actually been to a game and I went to the Hurricanes games, the finals, it is crowded at 15,000. It takes you about an hour to get in there and out. It's in the wrong spot. You could probably upgrade Ninja Stadium, and it would cost you nearly as much as a new stadium to get it from 12,000 to 23,000 seats. It's in the wrong spot. It's in a residential area. You would never be able to activate it with all of the other things that can come with the stadium - the entertainment, the other sports. Why would you spend nearly as much on a new stadium there and you'd never get the transport right either? You're going to increase the seating from 12,000 to 23,000 and you'd never get the transport right.

We need a new venue to actually support an AFL team. I know that many Tasmanians, if we have an AFL team, will want it to be successful. I encourage people who are still saying that this could happen without a new venue in the south to go and read that task force report because that is what convinced the AFL to proceed. We have fought for this for generations. There have been proposals put to the AFL and knocked back at every single term, but that task force report convinced them. It was independently reviewed by the AFL's own people; Colin Carter independently reviewed that report and he said that the team is financially viable and could be successful on the field.

We need a venue to support the business case. Eighteen million dollars million needs to be generated every year in stadium revenues, corporate partnerships, memberships. We need a venue that's going to support player retention and recruitment and professional support staff. We don't have one at the moment.

If people think that the AFL is bluffing and that they will continue, they are wrong. It's not just the AFL commission acting alone. The Independent member for Franklin there is shaking his head - he went off to AFL House to speak to them directly.

**Mr O'Byrne** - Could you confirm that was Mr George? Because I'm an Independent member for Franklin, and I'm nodding, Mr Willie.

**The SPEAKER** - Your comment is on the record, thank you.

**Mr WILLIE** - Mr George went off to AFL House with his delegation to give his view, and he's saying in this motion that it can be renegotiated. The AFL will walk away. I am very confident of that. It's not the AFL commission acting alone; it's the 18 other clubs. They have their own constituency, their own politics to manage. Those 18 other clubs could not care less if the Tasmanian government defaults on their end of the deal. They could not care less.

The politics on the mainland is a bit like what I experienced in Canberra last week. There are people on the mainland looking at Tasmania with bemusement, saying, 'What on earth is going on down there? Do they want an AFL team or not?' That's the politics on the mainland. It's a big story here, but the AFL could withdraw the teams and the mainland wouldn't bat an eyelid. In fact, there'd be other places like the Northern Territory and I'm sure Western Australia, where there's been talk of a third team there, there'd be other regions in Australia

saying, 'Don't worry about them, come to us.' That's exactly what would happen, because the 18 other clubs act in self-interest. They act according to their own club's interests.

If the government says here that they won't proceed with the stadium, those 18 other clubs will say to the commission, 'All those draft picks that we've given up for the draft this year, can we have those back?' The AFL will say, 'Yes, of course you can. That \$360 million that we're giving up collectively for the Tassie Devils over the next 10 years. Can we have that back too, because we'd like to pay our players and get some more professional staff and support our club?' The AFL commission will say, 'Of course you can have it back.' That is the reality that some people are not facing up to.

This is not perfect. I've been very critical of the process. I've been critical of this government in many areas. The process hasn't been perfect, but we are at a decision point now. We can either take these AFL teams and make the best of it, or we can lose this opportunity. I think if we lose this opportunity it will be highly detrimental. What sort of message will it send to boards on the mainland and overseas who want to do business in Tasmania? We need investment and capital from elsewhere. We're a small island at the end of the globe, with a small population.

To have a good economy here, where Tasmanians can live a good way of life, they need certainty, they need predictability, and when a government says it's going to do something, it does it, and hopefully it does it on time and on budget - and we've seen some examples of that not happening. However, just because we've have a government with a chequered track record in delivering major projects, does that mean Tasmania should not build any more major projects ever again? Of course not.

I would say to the member who's moving the motion: this is the reality. We can support the way forward or you cannot, but don't pretend that we can have the AFL teams anyway. Be honest about it. You heard it from the AFL yourself last week.

**Time expired.**

[2.43 p.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, it will be no surprise I rise to speak against the motion from my fellow member for Franklin, Mr George. Obviously, this is a very contentious issue. It's been heavily debated for a long time. I acknowledge the people who Mr George represents in this debate and brings voice to in this parliament. These debates are important. I will leave my substantive contributions on the project when we debate this next week in the more substantive debate around the approval for the Macquarie Point Stadium, but I think it's important.

A number of people, and probably people who were in the gallery before, have contacted me and emailed me. Mostly they are respectful, and most of them have avoided making references about my physical looks or whatever, most people engage respectfully, not all people. I think that happens on both sides, and that's unfortunate; in part because the government - and the member that just resumed his seat has referred to - the inability of the government to explain the idea, the proposal, the opportunity, and what this stadium and what this opportunity will deliver for Tasmania. The government have struggled. We have had multiple options on planning processes. There has been confusion about ownership; there's

been confusion about various commitments from the state, Macquarie Point Development Corporation, equity transfers, funding, a range of things.

It has been confused in the public debate - and even people who support the stadium still raise with me issues of concern. For example, 'I don't really support the stadium because we will get penalised if we're delayed. We have to pay a penalty to the AFL.' No, we don't. That's not true. Essentially the deal that was agreed to was that if you fail to build the stadium by the time that we say, you need to contribute an underpinning piece of revenue to the club. There's no penalty; it's an underwriting to the club so that they are successful. It's the business model and the business case that was put forward.

There are a number of elements of this motion which do need to be challenged. Listening to some of the contributions by some members - Mr George, you said that people are saying that the stadium will solve all of the state's ills. I support the stadium and I've never said that. If the government have said that, they're wrong. At times they do link the economic opportunity that the stadium will deliver - that will resolve and will go to dealing with a range of things - and it does, but it doesn't solve the state's ills. It doesn't fix everything. It was a very theatrical monologue, Mr George. The death cap mushrooms; nice touch. It was entertaining, but we do need in this place to deal with fact and reality. For members to get on their feet and to say that this stadium and this investment will destroy Tasmania. Seriously?

**Mr George** - Who said that?

**Mr O'BYRNE** - The member for Clark. Essentially, your proposition was that the fabric of Tasmania will unravel as we know it because we will invest in this. This won't destroy Tasmania. It's a challenge, and an opportunity for Tasmania, but the hyperbole is just over the top. This will not destroy Tasmania. It's a complex build in a complex spot, and it's not easy to work through. I get all of that. It's not going to destroy Tasmania. I tell you what: if we can get through this debate and we can build it in the manner in which it's been promised, it will be everyone's idea in six years.

You mentioned in your contribution, Mr George, about the threat to the TSO. I have heard that second-hand. If that's true, that is a disgrace, and I would not support that at all.

**Dr Woodruff** - Let's see some facts on that.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - It's now on *Hansard*, right? I have heard that around the traps. If that's true, that needs to be dealt with. Mr George, you referred to your personal vote in the seat of Franklin. I congratulate you on your vote. I've never claimed a mandate for any single issue in my parliamentary life; whether being in a party or as an independent. Mandate stuff can be thrown around. People vote for a whole range of reasons, but in terms of the argument you use to support your position, to say that people voted for you because of the stadium. When you look at published polls, Franklin's the only seat where there is majority support for the stadium in virtually every poll that I have seen.

I reckon I was really clear about my position on the stadium going into the election, and my vote went up a third. I probably didn't even have a third of the money that you spent over two elections, Mr George. That also played a role. I reckon salmon was your key thing, mate, with the greatest respect; salmon, in your federal campaign, and in your state campaign.

I don't claim a mandate for the stadium. I've made my position clear how I would vote. People voted for me for a range of reasons. I had some discussions with people at kitchen tables in Risdon Vale saying, 'Oh, we just can't afford the stadium.' I had conversations with them. They're still voting for me, they're still supporting me, but they're concerned about the stadium. I said, 'I'll do my best to make sure it's the best it can be, because I believe in it for these reasons'. People vote for a whole range of reasons. Claiming mandate on a single issue, particularly given the context of the state and federal election in your campaign, Mr George; I don't think that's right at all.

The Greens member for Clark, Vica Bayley, talked about the MONA plan. The original MONA plan, which I think most people think is what this parliament and the council approved, could never have been built because it's inside a working port. The original MONA plan, which everyone still thinks was the the idea that we settled on, actually removed the working port. What happened post that - if you talk to people from MONA - was a compromise and a mixed-use development which could have been anywhere in the world. Apart from the Aboriginal interpretation centre that was very place-located and very important, and I think that still can be accommodated, it was not the MONA plan. It was a mixed-use development.

**Mr Bayley** - I didn't mention MONA. I mentioned this one.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - No, but you referred to that and that's -

**Mr Bayley** - That is a master plan.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Yes, and that was the compromise because the state government was desperate to get something done there after five or six economic development ministers, but I'm talking about in the eyes of the community, the MONA plan was what they thought was happening.

In relation to the motion, state debt of \$13 billion is forecast without any corrective action and as we know, as soon as the Budget is announced it's out of date because things change and governments need to make decisions. Regarding confusing capital and recurrent costs, everyone says the cost of the stadium is outrageous, but when you look at the overrun in health alone this year, it was just under \$400 million recurrent. That overrun was basically locums and staffing costs. That's a recurrent cost that's added in. When I was in government in 2014, the health budget was \$1.2 billion to \$1.3 billion. It is now \$3.2 billion to \$3.3 billion. It has significantly increased. A one-off capital cost over the forward Estimates over four years which then moves off the books does not add a significant amount of debt in comparison.

As to your point about the AFL's requirement for a new stadium as a condition of entry, it wasn't a condition of the the AFL; they accepted our business plan that we've been negotiating. You say go back and negotiate. We've been negotiating for 30 years. We've been knocked back because we haven't had the business model and the business case to underpin the success of the team. For people to slag off the AFL because they are a big business, I will slag off the AFL for some of their decisions that haven't supported Tassie football, but I will give them credit for giving us a team and finally giving us a chance.

Just because they're a business corporation making money, it doesn't mean they're evil. What it means is that we can get access to the economy that they build here in Tasmania that will build jobs and opportunity. It's not just a football stadium. People say it's a lot of money



for seven games, but football will be a small part of the activity of that facility over 360 days of activities that will bring so much to Tasmania that we can't host at the moment.

There was an economist called Jonathan West who criticised the Tasmanian economy for being so narrow. It was around 2008-09 when he said that close to 65 per cent of people in Tasmania either rely on the state government for direct wages, the federal government for direct wages, or social security or some form of benefit, and our private sector was so narrow that that underpinned our unhealthy, uneducated community.

Building our economy actually builds greater levels of education and greater levels of health. I disagree with the motion because it's factually wrong and I'm looking forward to next week's debate.

[2.54 p.m.]

**Ms BURNET** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I really welcome this motion from the Independent member for Franklin, Mr George. I might go back to what Mr George spoke about when he introduced his motion. He spoke about this being the worst deal in history for Tasmania and that may be true, because we know that the AFL have got a gift, really. They have the Tasmanian government and backers falling into line in relation to this stadium deal. The Greens, Mr George, and various other people have pointed out that this is a dud deal for Tasmania and we can't get away from that.

Not only is it a dud deal for Tasmania, but there are a number of other imposts on Tasmania's economy which the government should be really concerned about. Thanks to Labor and their dogged pursuit of the ferries, we know that there has been, in their words, 'a major stuff-up' in relation to the ferries and the delivery of that project, the blowout in costs. We heard in the Public Accounts Committee last week that there are even further blowouts in costs, and there will be pressure on the government's Budget and borrowings. If you add up all of these things, including the huge Marinus project as well, the rollout of Marinus, the costs will be significant to the state of Tasmania as well.

It's not that we're looking at something in isolation, we're looking at a cumulative effect of either stuff-ups, as Labor says, or projects that really should be out of the remit of this government because they will not be able to deliver it. It is guaranteed that they will not be able to deliver this on time or on budget. We know there have been ongoing increases in caps. It's uncapped as to how much will be spent by the government on the stadium. It's really interesting to see that Labor can hammer the government on the ferries and we will be discussing that in the next motion.

**Mr Willie** - We support the ferries and hold them to account. Same thing.

**Ms BURNET** - Well, there's a lot of blowout in costs, Josh. There's a huge blowout of costs. If they don't see that this is going to be the same situation with any stadium at Macquarie Point, they have another thing coming.

The stadium is one of the biggest asks of the Tasmanian population. Mark my words, this is going to be one of the biggest asks financially. This will be a huge drain on Tasmania's finances. Every man, woman and child will be paying for that stadium for a long time to come. There will be intergenerational debt and I don't think we can get away from that. To think that there isn't going to be an impost on future Tasmanians is laughable. We hear the Premier talk

quite often about the dream for Tasmanian youngsters, but I think Mr Bayley eloquently stated the concerns of Tasmanians now, with young Tasmanians not being able to access nutrition, food, housing and all of those things that should be a right.

We've heard people talk about how there are two pots of money, operational versus building infrastructure, but at the end of the day, this government has a responsibility to its people. We're not seeing that responsibility taken up.

Should this stadium go against what the Project of State Significance findings were from the TPC, if this House and the other House vote in support of the stadium, we might as well have the naming rights for the stadium as the Rockliff Austerity or the Abetz Austerity stadium, because there will be massive cuts to services and other infrastructure projects. I wonder how many infrastructure projects will be set aside so that money gets poured into the stadium build? That might be a question for Estimates.

Will the AFL stadium help with health and wellbeing outcomes for Tasmanians? I don't think so. I fear that this will be a situation where we throw good money after bad, bad money after good, whatever the saying. We will continue to waste money on this project.

Thank goodness for the delegation that went to speak to the AFL because having those conversations to turn the AFL around, while it wasn't successful, it's important to have those conversations. We haven't seen that from this government. The opposition has been reluctant to think that we could possibly change the AFL's mind. However, this is an important thing and it's through conversation that you can get those changes. Therefore, I commend this motion to the House and thank Mr George for bringing it forth.

[3.00 p.m.]

**Prof RAZAY** (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, we have contributed in the previous debate about the Macquarie Point Stadium. I will just address some of the points raised today. We will have more details in next week's bill. This stadium has created so much passionate debate and division but what I feel has been missed is that it is not about just football in the south. It is about the whole of Tasmania. I rarely hear about UTA Stadium in Launceston. How good was it? It is one of the most successful business models of football when it was built. As has been mentioned before, it has one of the best football grounds. The way they built the stadium, because it was so successful, it was replicated by the West Coast, the Gold Coast, West Sydney Giants. Do they have one in Canberra? They have some in Canberra based on the same model because it's so successful.

I feel Launceston has contributed greatly, but we don't address the impact of this on the northern Tasmanian economy. The fans have supported the games in the past and you look at their record for 22 years: the average attendance in UTAS Stadium is 14,500 while the Hobart average is 9500. That's how successful it was.

**Mr O'Byrne** - It shows how bad the ground is at Bellerive.

**Mr RAZAY** - It's not about the ground. It's about people's support. The people in the north are really concerned about the \$30 million turnover for their economy during these games. There is no security about the future of football in the north. That's what we are not addressing.

The south deserves to have an excellent stadium, too. Absolutely, we agree with that. However, look at how the AFL treated Tasmania. Based on our successful model for nearly 25 years, we deserved to have a good AFL team years ago because we already have a good stadium. The attendance at UTAS Stadium is equivalent to what it is on the Gold Coast, for example, so we deserve to have it. Then the AFL put the rules that you have to have roofed stadium. Why do you need roofed stadium when you have a sport that is a winter sport? There is no roofed stadium in the rest of Australia, apart from one in Melbourne. Look at most winter sport in England. It's always raining. You rarely find a covered stadium.

We should look at football for the whole of Tasmania. The government especially should look at how we can make it fair and reassure people in the north about the continuity of football in providing an economic boost for the north as well as the south.

The next point is, you look at the reports from taskforces and they are so biased to tell the truth, just as some reports about so-called football players, football commentators. One of them, Eddie McGuire, said, 'I don't think there's any kids at the moment lying awake hoping that they are going to play in Tasmania on a refurbished oval in Launceston.' Already you have downgraded the stadium in Launceston rather than being proud of it. You should show how successful it is, and we could have built a case years ago about getting an AFL team.

What about the cost of the stadium? We support having a new stadium here but is the time right to spend that much money, \$1.3 billion. Our honourable Treasurer is going to tighten the belt and make sure the budget will be balanced. We are allowing this stadium to go ahead, but we are hearing so many of our workers - the health and education workers are now going to strike. We cannot even try to reach an agreement of how much we should give them. We are very strict about we should give them 3 per cent. That is what the community feels. There isn't fairness here. That is quite important in addressing it.

I am not speaking about my own views here; it is from the people I meet in Bass and all the correspondence they have given me over the last few months. This is why I am going to continue to support a motion by the honourable member of Franklin.

[3.07 p.m.]

**Mr FAIRS** (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for bringing his motion to parliament to debate. I thank those that have hung around to hear us all, even though your minds are made up, but thank you for coming and listening to democracy in action.

I have been sitting around thinking how to start this. My background is as a sports journalist so, obviously, I am pro sport and pro sport for Tasmania, That's where I'm coming from. However, one has to wonder how long it takes for the anti-stadium brigade to clearly understand the AFL's message: no stadium, no team. No team, no stadium. No stadium, no team. It's not bluff or spin. That is fact.

Without the stadium - and it's a multipurpose stadium, as others in the Chamber have pointed out, the AFL said we will not have our own team. It is that simple. It's black and white, even though I hate admitting that to a Collingwood fan like Mr O'Byrne. We will have no Devils, no local pathway for our boys and girls of the future to play our great game and perhaps get drafted and play for Tasmania, play for our Devils. There'll be no song and no night at the football celebrating our team. I personally cannot wait to see our team run out on our stadium

for the first time down and hear the roar; the hair stands up in the back of my neck already. No Rum'un either. If we don't have the stadium, we don't have the high-performance centre.

Regarding a couple of points others have made in response to the motion, I believe it was Ms Johnston who said that the AFL doesn't care about Tasmania, and it's not caring about the state of the game in Tassie. That is wrong. The AFL is committing \$360 million to grassroots development of AFL football. That's our kids, our future, who could play for that great game.

I want to point out too, before I get to some facts on the stadium, just how big AFL football is. It is big business. It's worth millions and millions of dollars that we are not getting now and we're entitled to. Our contribution to our great game has been incredible and now we have our team right there. How big is the AFL? For those who may not know, 42 per cent of Australians identify as an AFL fan. It's our most popular game in the nation. It is huge, and that's according to the Deloitte Media and Entertainment Consumer Insights 2025 report, if you want to have a look. I just thought I'd point that out.

The AFL isn't just shown across the nation; it's across the world. We're in the United States of America, Asia, Africa, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Latin America. Our great game is being showcased all over the world and something I don't think people have considered is the amount of Tasmanian branding. Wherever we play, wherever we go to all over the world, they will be showcasing Tasmania. They will come, they will visit, they will tour.

Moving on to the stadium, Mr George knows and it's been pointed out here that it was not the AFL demanding our stadium, it was our taskforce.

**Mr Bayley** - That's not what they told us last week. We asked them directly.

**Mr FAIRS** - But they did tell you no team, no stadium - again.

**Mr Bayley** - Of course, that's what we expected them to.

**Mr FAIRS** - You talk about a stadium at Bellerive Oval as a possible alternative, but as Mr Willie, the opposition leader, pointed out, it would cost more. You'd have to remove half a stadium in a residential street. Good luck trying to get that done.

The social benefits of this team are going to be massive. People talk about Hawthorn and the amazing community effort and achievement they have done over 22 years of being here and that's incredible. Our own team needs a high-performance centre and backing to the hilt to be successful, because as Mr Willie pointed out again, we don't want a team who are going to be cellar dwellers. We want a team who is going to be up there challenging.

If you look at the stadium's benefits because it is multipurpose and I'll get to that in a second, but with sport alone, it's not just going to be AFL. At the moment we have little to no chance of getting the Wallabies, the Socceroos, the Matildas, rugby union and rugby league here. There'd be no chance because we don't have a facility capable of doing it. This stadium opens that door massively. How good would it be to have the Wallabies playing here against the British Lions or something like that? It would be incredible, but that's just the sporting side.

Then you have concerts and festivals and stuff. The narrative now should be focusing on who's going to open the stadium, be the first concert playing there? Ed Sheeran? Why not?

**Mr Bayley** - Because people say that not going to happen.

**Mr FAIRS** - It's going to inject millions and millions of dollars into the economy.

**Mr Bayley** - People who work in that space say it's not going to happen.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr FAIRS** - I was very quiet for your contribution.

**The SPEAKER** - Sorry, Mr Fairs, I do have to interrupt because in accordance with Sessional Orders, I need to call on the honourable member for Franklin, Mr George, to speak in reply because there are only five minutes remaining in this debate, so your time has expired.

**Mr FAIRS** - Thank you. We won't be supporting the motion.

[3.14 p.m.]

**Mr GEORGE** (Franklin) - So much to say, so little time. Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for Bass. I understand the hairs on the back of your head are raised when you think about the team running out onto the pitch, however I suspect they would raise the hairs on the back of your head if they were running out onto a gravel ground at Queenstown or at Bellerive Stadium or York Park.

To address Mr O'Byrne, my colleague from Franklin, I have never suggested that Tasmania will be destroyed by a stadium. However, I will say that a lot of lives are likely to be ruined if this state is unable to meet its requirements and commitments financially. We're already paying interest of \$700 million a year. God knows what it's going to be once this stadium is built, if it is built. What it will do is take away operational funds for Tasmanians to pay for interest rates.

I might quickly respond to the honourable opposition leader, who said he thought no-one had ever regretted building a stadium once it's built. It was before you were born, Mr Willie, but for the 1976 Montreal Olympics, they were still paying off the capital and the interest rates 35 years later. I draw your attention to a 2000 *Wall Street Journal* survey of 36 metropolitan city areas, all of which debunked the myth that stadiums bring economic growth to cities. They don't. In many cases the cities actually bail out the stadiums. That is a fact - 36 cities. Unfortunately, there is a long-held myth that stadiums bring economic benefits. They don't.

As for the Treasurer, I suspect he knows better. He is, after all, the Treasurer. If it wasn't for the three-line Liberal Party whip, I'm sure he would be standing up here and opposing it. As for Macquarie Point being a wasteland, that's pretty insulting, because it's down to his government's complete lack of action for more than a decade that the Macquarie Point precinct is in the condition it's in now. What kept it lively was the Longhouse, the centre dedicated to cultural activities for the Aboriginal community. How offensive to call it a wasteland only because the government decided to allow that to happen.

I call on my friends on either side of the House, since they are dismissing the rational arguments of a bevy of expert witnesses with deep understanding of all the issues, to make a wise choice, a political choice, and one that is fundamentally a moral argument. If you're impervious to reason in this House, then I hope to convince the Legislative Council, who might still be swayed that this is a moral issue.

I would love Tasmania to have a team and we absolutely can have a team. However, I have to say, that I am not prepared to have a team at the cost of turning our backs on vulnerable Tasmanians - the homeless, sick, young and vulnerable - and instead, pouring our resources into the pockets of the AFL and into a stadium which is simply a vanity project for the Premier.

I don't need to go on. We don't need to build a monolith on a piece of land that is actually of great value to Aboriginal people and close to where every year the RSL commemorates people who fell during World War I and World War II and other wars. Think instead of a rarely used stadium standing empty -

**Time expired.**

**The SPEAKER** (Mrs Petrusma) - The question is -

That the motion be agreed to.

**The House divided -**

**AYES 10**

Ms Badger  
Mr Bayley  
Ms Burnet  
Mr Di Falco  
Mr Garland  
Mr George  
Ms Johnston  
Prof Razay (Teller)  
Ms Rosol  
Dr Woodruff

**NOES 24**

Mr Abetz  
Mrs Archer  
Mr Barnett  
Dr Broad  
Ms Brown  
Ms Butler  
Ms Dow  
Mr Ellis  
Mr Fairs  
Mr Ferguson  
Ms Finlay  
Mrs Greene (Teller)  
Ms Haddad  
Ms Howlett  
Mr Jaensch  
Mr Mitchell  
Mr O'Byrne  
Ms Ogilvie  
Mr Pearce  
Mr Rockliff  
Mr Shelton  
Mr Vermey  
Mr Willie  
Mr Winter

**Motion negatived.**

**MOTION**

**TT-Line *Spirits* Project**

[3.26 p.m.]

**Mr WILLIE** (Clark - Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, a vote will be required. I move -

That the House:-

- (1) Notes that the Rockliff Government is responsible for the biggest infrastructure stuff-up in Tasmania's history, the Spirits fiasco – which has plunged TT-Line into financial crisis and left Tasmanian taxpayers footing the bill.
- (2) Recognises that:-
  - (a) unplanned costs associated with the Spirits replacement project have now exceeded half a billion dollars;
  - (b) these cost blowouts have pushed TT-Line to the brink of insolvency; and
  - (c) the upcoming State Budget, to be delivered on 6 November 2025, will include a \$75 million bailout payment to TT-Line as a direct result of the Rockliff Government's incompetence.
- (3) Calls on the Government to:-
  - (a) outline in full how it intends to fund the \$75 million bailout payment to TT-Line; and
  - (b) be honest with the Tasmanian people about whether the 2026-27 Budget will include a further bailout for the Spirits project.

I was keen to get to the lectern again to make a contribution on this very important matter and we're spending the day pursuing this matter because in Question Time we didn't receive the answers that Tasmanians deserve. We have a budget being delivered tomorrow, an interim budget, it will be known as the 'bailout budget'. The bailout budget -

**Mr Abetz** - Poor old Dean Winter. It was the 'fake budget.'

**Mr WILLIE** - I know it's a sore topic for you lot over there. You don't like us talking about it, that's fine. It doesn't mean we're not going to keep talking about it because this matters to Tasmanians. It has been the biggest infrastructure stuff-up in the state's history. You might not like talking about it, but Tasmanians want us to hold you to account. The bailout budget being delivered tomorrow, \$75 million to bail out TT-Line; a company that Tasmanians are proud of. It has a proud history in this state of delivering for our economy, delivering jobs and

opportunities. It was a great initiative of the Bacon Labor government who actually delivered two new ferries, three at one point, delivered those ferries and transformed the economy and the way that Tasmanians view our state. Under this government it has been a debacle from start to finish.

We have a bailout budget which will be delivered tomorrow. This is not the first bailout that this government's tried to keep quiet. We spoke on the MPI about this issue and how the first issue that was raised about the *Spirit* replacement program was an \$80 million bailout to the Finnish shipbuilding company. We had the former treasurer and the Infrastructure minister saying that was a decision of the board. That wasn't the point I was making. The point I was making was that this government kept it quiet for as long as they could, until they were asked in this place about it and exposed. It was through the Public Accounts Committee and questions in this place that Tasmanians got to understand the full extent of this infrastructure stuff-up including the Devonport berth not being built. Despite warnings, despite the signs being there, this government failed to deliver those berths for the new *Spirits* to go into service.

I've been pursuing this issue for nearly 12 months now. We had the chair of TASCORP, at a parliamentary inquiry say that an increase in the loan facility and supported borrowings - meaning a potential bailout from the government - was more likely than not. I continued to raise this issue from that point onwards. Every time I raised it, 'Nothing to see here.' I knew it was an issue and, as I said this morning, this government doesn't get the benefit of the doubt, particularly on this issue.

TT-Line has requested \$100 million to support their financial position. I don't think that's the end of it. That's all that's in the public domain at the moment, but we know from form that things start to unravel. I have been pursuing this issue for nearly 12 months and the reason is we've got a state government drowning in debt that is now having to use borrowings to support a company which was on the brink of insolvency. That's money that's not available for health, for education, for housing. It's borrowed. We haven't heard from the Premier or anyone on that side how they plan to pay for it. I gave opportunities this morning for that to occur. Is it just going to go on to the spiralling debt bill, or are you going to cut jobs and services in health and education and housing to pay for it? We haven't heard that answer.

We raised some of this history in the election campaign, because I knew TT-Line's financial position was going to run out this year. They actually said that in the parliamentary inquiry, that they only had enough finances to get them through to September this year and that was a stretch. We raised this in the election campaign. I wrote to the Secretary of Treasury in the election campaign and said:

I write following your publication of the pre-election financial outlook report in which you stated -

'There remains uncertainty in relation to TT-Line's ability to service its debt funding requirements, so alternative options including additional funding support are likely to need to be considered by the government.'

I wrote:



I urgently seek your advice on the likelihood of an additional equity injection being required by TT-Line in coming months, as well as Treasury's best estimate of the quantum of funding potentially required.

That was the prudent thing to do. We were in the middle of an election campaign, and I didn't know whether we were going to inherit the mess of this from that side.

**Mr Abetz** - No chance.

**Mr WILLIE** - Well, just be careful over there. The hubris, the hubris. You are in minority.

**Ms Dow** - Propped up by the Greens as well. You're only there because of them.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yeah, propped up by the Greens at the moment. I had a reply from the Acting Secretary James Craigie in the election. I won't read the whole letter. He said:

While the guidelines state that consultation between heads of agency and non-government parties may occur during caretaker period under strictly controlled conditions, they specifically state that leaders of non-government parties may make a request for consultation with agency staff through the Premier.

I took that advice. I went to the Premier and said, 'Can I have this briefing with Treasury? I'd like to understand the financial position of the company because Treasury has made some statements in the Pre-election Financial Outlook.'

He denied it. We were in the middle of an election campaign. He denied the briefing because he didn't want to be honest with Tasmanians. Then, post the election,. just in recent weeks, we've found out that the company was on the brink of insolvency. It was about to run out of cash. A decision was required. They were holding on for dear life on that side, not to make the decision in the election because they didn't want Tasmanians to understand the full extent of the problem, because it would have been electorally a problem for them. That's why the briefing was denied by the Premier in the election campaign.

Post that, we found out the company was on the brink of insolvency, and they were holding on for dear life. When did we hear about this? I got a phone call. We were in the caretaker period post the election. I think the votes were still being counted. I got a phone call from the then-Treasurer, the Treasurer who couldn't pass a budget through the parliament, about TT-Line's position. That was on 25 July, I believe. He called me, won't go into the details. He did say it was consultation. I would probably characterise the conversation as being informed that an increase in the loan facility was required for TT-Line. An increase in the loan facilities from \$990 million to \$1.4 billion. Very convenient. We have the head of TASCORP saying borrowings are likely - supported borrowings. We're raising this issue. The government saying, 'Nothing to see here,' deny a briefing in the election campaign because they don't actually want Tasmanians to find out the full extent of it. Post the election, phone call, increase in the loan facility.

Some very strange statements were made that afternoon. I said, 'Are you going to inform the public, Treasurer?' He said, 'Yes, I'll be putting out a statement this afternoon.' I thought

'Okay, that's interesting.' I said, 'When did you find out about this?' He said that he was given advice on 25 July, which was in his statement, but he said things in his statement like:

Guaranteed borrowing amounts of government-owned businesses is a routine requirement as part of ordinary courses of business', 'This temporary increase' -

temporary indicating that there may be some equity injection or other way of paying off the increase -

... in TT-Line's borrowing limit will provide the confidence the company needs to continue its planned operations. In accordance with caretaker conventions, the government has consulted on the guarantee with the opposition on this decision.

'Consulted' - I was told after it had already happened. There's no mention in this statement of the increase amount. I was told that in the phone call - no mention. That's the way this government has operated.

**A member** - That's the second time they did that.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, that's how they have operated. They don't want to give Tasmanians the truth. They have to be dragged kicking and screaming at every turn to give Tasmanians the truth.

I helped Tasmanians. In my statement, I told Tasmanians how much the loan facility was being increased - by nearly half-a-billion dollars. Because this government wouldn't be transparent, I thought people deserve to know. I know there was some interest from the media pack, saying, 'How did you know that?' It's because I was told, not 'consulted.' I would have thought the government would have put that, being transparent, in their own statement, but that's how they've operated.

There's a bit of the history. We've been denied briefings. They were holding on for dear life with the company's position close to insolvency. They didn't want to make a decision during the election campaign because it would have had electoral consequences. We get post-election in caretaker period, the phone call, the increase in the loan facility, still holding on in terms of the bailout. We knew the bailout was going happen. We knew. Now we're asking the Premier how he's going to pay for it, and he won't tell us.

That's specifically in the motion, where it calls on the government to outline, in full, how it intends to fund the \$75 million payment to TT-Line, and to be honest with the Tasmanian people about whether the 2026-27 budget will include a further bailout for the *Spirits* project. We know the company has requested \$100 million, and we don't really have an answer in terms of why that \$25 million was not included. Is it political expediency, because the numbers in the Budget don't work tomorrow, and they want to try and minimise it? Why didn't they give that other \$25 million if that's what the company required? We haven't got an answer to that, but I suspect that is because there will be ongoing bailouts for the company. That is the scale of this disaster.

It's something that we should all be celebrating as Tasmanians - a company that we're all proud of. We're proud of those red ships that go to the mainland; they bring people here, they create jobs, they help us sell our unique island and brand, and the things that we all celebrate together. It should be a great thing for our economy right now.

The Premier was talking about positivity in Question Time. I am really positive about this project. I would have loved to see it in service right now, where Tasmanians could be seeing the benefits, not stuffed up. Unfortunately, this government doesn't like the accountability that comes with stuff-ups like this, and that's our job; to hold you accountable.

I know it might be awkward at times on that side of the house. You don't want to talk about these sorts of motions, you don't want to have those questions asked in Question Time, but we're just doing our jobs on behalf of Tasmanians, because they should be benefiting from this project right now.

A little bit of history before we finish: we had the \$80 million bailout to the Finnish shipbuilder, which was kept secret until they were asked in this place; we had the \$403 million cost blowout for Berth 3 at Devonport. We had the former Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure who was in charge solely alone as the shareholder minister - I know for a fact that he was warned by industry people that it wasn't going to plan, that he should start questioning some of the advice he was receiving. He appointed a project integrator, Mr Gemmell. Mr Gemmell did some work with the company - we also had some evidence

**Mr WILLIE** - (cont) that it wasn't going to plan, that he should start questioning some of the advice he was receiving. He appointed a project integrator, Mr Gemell. Mr Gemell did some work with the company. We also had some evidence provided in inquiries where, allegedly, the minister had told the two companies to play in the sandpit together. Mr Gemell did some work and realised that his role as project integrator wasn't really what was required to deliver the project. It was the wrong response. That's what happens when ministers don't question the advice being given to them and don't listen to other people outside of the bubble.

A \$403 million cost blowout has happened since that berth wasn't delivered on time. That is because the ferry company didn't have the capability at the time to deliver that project. They didn't fully scope the project. They didn't understand that it's one of the most complex parts of the Mersey River to put a gantry. I did a site tour and spoke to some people there - I won't identify them. I said, 'I've heard the geotech in the river is not great', and they said: 'If you were going to put a gantry in the Mersey River, you wouldn't do it here, Josh. But it's interesting work. We're building a bespoke barge in Melbourne; we've got this specialist drilling equipment from Canada that we have to fly over here. We basically have to vertically tunnel these piles in. It's really interesting if you're an engineer, but it's going to be expensive.' That all happened post the ships being delivered, and now we have this massive cost blowout.

We had a \$13 million blowout in terms of the price of the ships and some denial around that. We had a \$5.9 million cost for sending *Spirit IV* to Scotland and still counting because now *Spirit V* is going to spend some time in Scotland.

We had the company give the wrong specifications to the shipbuilder. Now, we have a \$9 million hull upgrade for two ships that haven't spent a day in service, that cost nearly a billion dollars together. We tried to get to the bottom of that for a few weeks. Denial over there. There were ministers like Mr Vincent making statements like, 'Oh, we've done the calculations, we just want to double-check them.' They knew full well what it cost. They just didn't want to say, at the time.

Now we have a \$75 million bailout in tomorrow's Budget. Tasmanians deserve to understand the full extent of this. We won't stop pursuing this on their behalf. This may not be the end of it. Not only is it now costing the state budget; it's costing the economy nearly half a billion dollars every year that they're not in service. We've had a botched local content rollout. We had promises on that side for nearly \$100 million of local content. We've had things like Finnish engines being counted in local content because the company has a site in Melbourne, from memory, or somewhere like that. Absolutely botched, from start to finish.

What this really means has been a loss of confidence in our economy. We have had a state government that has made commitments. The ferry replacement program is something that Tasmanians were excited about.

**Mr Abetz** - You wanted to cancel it.

**Mr WILLIE** - The ferry replacement program?

**Mr Abetz** - Mm.

**Mr WILLIE** - Cancel what?

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Ignore the interjections. Speak to the Chair.

**Mr WILLIE** - If you want to do some more history, you cancelled it when you first came to government and you refurbished them, so you cancelled it.

**Mr Abetz** - What?

**Mr WILLIE** - The ferry replacement program. Yes, your friend Rene Hidding refurbished them instead of replacing them. Tasmanians were excited about the ferry replacement program. It hasn't gone to plan. I was getting to the point of a loss of confidence in Tasmania. It's not just me who has said that. It's the peak business lobby in Tasmania, who said that it would be difficult to trust this government again in the wake of this scandal. What businesses in Tasmania need is certainty and predictability. When a government says it's going to deliver something, it does it on time and on budget. That's what creates confidence. When a government manages the budget well, the state's finances well, that's what creates confidence.

What we've had is a government that has fallen into minority, racked up some of the biggest debts in Tasmania's history, hasn't been able to manage major infrastructure projects, and it is hurting confidence in Tasmania. It's an extraordinary statement for the peak body to make. It wasn't the only one they made either. In the post-election period, they also said it

would be difficult to trust this government because of some of the decisions that were being made in terms of selling out jobs and industries.

This is a government that puts its own survival ahead of the interests of Tasmanians, ahead of being transparent and ahead of taking Tasmanians on the journey. We will continue to hold them to account. That is why we have brought this forward today. We call on the government to fully explain how it is going to fund the bailout in tomorrow's Budget. Will it be added to the growing debt? Are they going to cut jobs and services? Will there be further bailouts in subsequent budgets? My strong suspicion is that there will be, and they no longer get the benefit of the doubt when it comes to these sorts of things.

[3.46 p.m.]

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Treasurer) - Honourable Speaker, what the people of Tasmania want in relation to this, and all other matters, is leadership and the capacity to deal with the issues that confront a government from time to time. What we have from the Labor Party is just relentless negativity, never a solution. If the sacked shadow treasurer, now Leader of the Opposition, is going to be critical of that \$75 million, would the opposition allow the TT-Line to simply stop operating, or would they provide funding in a different manner? What is their solution?

**Mr Winter** - You were trying to sell it at one point.

**Mr ABETZ** - This is when the Labor Party becomes uncharacteristically quiet because they don't have any solutions to the issues that arose.

**Members** interjecting.

**The SPEAKER** - Order. Sorry, honourable Treasurer. The honourable members of the opposition can make a contribution soon. I appreciate your passion. I just ask that the honourable Treasurer be heard, please.

**Mr ABETZ** - Thank you, Speaker. In relation to the \$80 million referred to, everybody knows the circumstance. A contract was let out. The situation became that the shipbuilder found itself in extreme financial difficulty. Nobody at the time was critical of the contract being let to that particular shipbuilder. Hindsight and trying to reinvent history is a great convenient thing if you're not into practical solutions. However, for those of us who are, it was a sensible, reasonable decision for the board of TT-Line to make that they go to this Finnish shipbuilder.

Circumstances turned that they were unable to complete without extra funding for that project. As a result, consideration was given: do you cancel that contract, walk away from it and seek out a new shipbuilder? That was done to consider what the options were. It became clear at the time that this would delay the project considerably. Not only would it delay it considerably in time; it would cost more than the \$80 million extra, the reason being that costs had gone up considerably courtesy of Mr Putin sending a few shells into the Ukraine that saw one of the smelters that make shipbuilding steel demolished. As a result, the amount of shipbuilding steel available on the world market had diminished. What happens when that occurs? The price goes up. If we had gone to a new shipbuilder, the assessment was that the cost of the two new ships would be a lot more than the extra \$80 million.

Then you would ask, if you were commercially minded: what's the guarantee that there won't be a further call on the \$80 million? That is where we gained the guarantees from the Finnish government that if there was going to be an extra cost above and beyond that \$80 million, the Finnish government would step in and ensure that the two ships were completed.

I would have thought in anybody's language, unless you're trying to play crass politics, that was good, reasonable, commercial decision-making. They were decisions taken by the then board, and I have praised them for their fleet-footedness and agility in making those decisions in a relatively short time, because without it we would have had delayed completion and an extra cost well and truly above the \$80 million. It was a good and proper decision. The Labor Party can whinge and whine and do whatever they want about that, but the simple fact is, on any objective analysis it was the right decision to make in the circumstances. You can complain about it. Was it desirable? Of course not. Does anybody want to have to pay an extra \$80 million for a ship build? Of course not, but if you wanted the new ships, that was the only, or the cheapest, way out, and that is what the board did.

In relation to government involvement, let's be exceptionally clear that under the corporations law, ministers have to be exceptionally careful that they don't become shadow directors. You're a shareholder minister. You can potentially give directions, but you have to be careful that you don't become a shadow director. That is where the decision of the board and the then leadership of TT-Line made the correct decision and with respect, nobody has been able to say how we could have received two new ships cheaper than the extra \$80 million. This is something the opposition has to come to grips with if they want the people of Tasmania to believe they are genuinely an alternative government as opposed to just a whinge-fest. It's good and easy to whinge. It's a lot more difficult to come up with solutions and then be able to move forward.

In relation to the berths in Devonport, that was something I have referred to a number of times, possibly less delicately than I will now, but it was completely unacceptable. The board and the leadership of TT-Line that I have praised in relation to the acquisition of the ships and how they handled it, failed dismally in relation to the construction of the berth. With respect, I don't believe they had any understanding of the task before them. That is why they unfortunately advised government and government was not given alternative advice, either from the board or the department at the time, that \$90 million just wouldn't be enough. We hear about the cost blowout. Yes, of course the dollar term has gone up considerably by about \$400 million, but it has gone up because the task that had to be undertaken was so much bigger than was initially considered, assessed and understood by the then leadership of TT-Line. Once these matters came to light, it became clear to the government that action needed to be taken.

Today, as I speak in this Chamber, there is a completely new board in place. There is a new CEO and a new management team is being developed. We are overcoming the issues. We have also legislated, and will continue to legislate, to ensure better governance of these GBEs so that when there are matters such as a ship build cost increase, the boards will report to the relevant minister. Something which in the past had not been considered fully has now been considered and this will require boards to be a lot more open with their shareholder ministers. As with any amendment to legislation, any reform, we learn from experience and then fix the problem. This is what this government is about. When problems come forward, whether we like them or not, we are more than willing to confront them, roll up our sleeves and seek to deal with them.

The proposition from the Leader of the Opposition is that I should somehow reveal what will be in tomorrow's Budget. Wait and see.

**Mr Willie** - Just tell us how you're paying for it, then.

**Mr ABETZ** - I know you are full of anticipation, but you will have to wait and see.

In relation to the TT-Line, it is a great venture, something that the government will back in all the time and will not allow to fail.

[3.56 p.m.]

**Ms BURNET** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to give my contribution on behalf of the Greens and thank the honourable Leader of the Opposition for bringing this forward. I think it's an important motion in relation to the ferries and something that we should be talking about and shouldn't forget. There are a lot of learnings, as the Treasurer has suggested, and I will go into that.

I'll just pick up on a couple of things that Mr Willie mentioned. He spoke about the Public Accounts Committee discussion around TASCORP and the information that came out of the committee's deliberations last week and TASCORP members talking to the committee was illuminating. There was a massive weight of ballooning debt and it's a significant issue for Tasmania that there will be this ongoing weight of debt dragging our economy down in relation to this and we cannot get away from that. We cannot get away from how big an impost the TT-Line's ferries debacle has been for Tasmania.

Minister Abetz talks about the cost blowout and reasons in relation to those and I think it is important that the government has taken heed of some of those things. There are always things to learn and it would be an imprudent government not to take heed of some of those things. We know that during the ferries debacle, and with that persistent questioning from Mr Winter and Mr Willie in particular, there was a clear finding of one shareholder minister and that was the problem. We had one shareholder minister who was also the Treasurer, and we know full well that the Treasurer resigned as a result of that and gave up his portfolio. It might be seen as a scalp, but it's clear that the any state-owned company or GBE needs to have that clear line of sight with shareholder ministers. There needs to be two shareholders ministers. I'm not sure if there is for TASCORP. Are there two shareholder ministers?

**Mr Abetz** - For TASCORP? No.

**Ms BURNET** - However, regarding the ferries and TT-Line there have been learnings, and it is a good thing that that has occurred, despite how expensive that was for the government.

Minister Abetz also talked about the cost blowout and how COVID and wars - all of those things - had a significant impact on how much this was costing our state. What hasn't come up is that cost in time and those opportunities that have have befallen tourism operators. I often think about the north-west tourism operators when they were expecting many years ago to have a 20 per cent increased capacity, I think it is, for TT-Line. They planned for those changes and that increased capacity of the *Spirits*, and yet there this was like the building started in 2017 and they are seven to eight years behind schedule at this point. We don't have them

yet. The gantries are not in place and there are still a lot of ocean to cross before *Spirit V* is here and we have both *Spirits* in operation.

The saga of the *Spirit of Tasmania* replacement program has made headlines around the world. It's almost a case study in major project mismanagement. Seven to eight years behind schedule. As I said, it's not all the government's fault, but there are certainly a lot of concerns in relation to this.

Why would TasPorts and TT-Line be treating each other like commercial rivals? We saw that writ large and they were trying to squeeze each other instead of pulling in the same direction. Again, getting back to governance, the review of governance for GBEs and SOCs has been very important because the document that I saw was, I think, from 2007, for how the governance worked for these GBEs and SOCs. So, having that reviewed was well overdue.

The latest debacle with the fenders has also been because of this tension between TasPorts and TT-Line. It's really unforgivable. Again, no line of sight by responsible members of the government. It's an absolute debacle. Somehow with the big numbers battered about with this project, \$9 million for this alteration starts to sound like a drop in the ocean compared to some of the other sums that have been sunk into this project. How many more issues are still to come? We are seeing this unfold in slow motion like a trainwreck.

There are casualties along the way. Again, I go back to the consequences on hospitality businesses in the north-west tourism. Think of the Tarkine and all the opportunities that could be opened up for tourism ventures. There was an article on the ABC online where they interviewed Prema Smith, a business owner in Devonport, who relies on those ferries. Unfortunately, for so many businesses, there is this ongoing strain on their businesses as a result. I don't know if the work has been done, but it would be interesting to see how many businesses have folded as a direct result of the ferries stuff-up.

Our state debt is blowing out. We are heading for \$13 billion debt across the four years estimates and that continues to rise. TT-Line itself has over \$1 billion in debt and has had an extra half a billion bailout. How on earth will this ever be paid back? Will it amount to increased fares? There are lots of questions still to be answered.

How can we possibly believe that lessons have been learned and that this government could be trusted to manage another major project with this track record? Again, I go back to the stadium. We have an example of TT-Line as an important infrastructure project, which is needed for all Tasmanians to get on and off the island, for businesses, for families to be reunited. Yet, when we look at the stadium, it is another infrastructure project, but it's an unnecessary one will that will not benefit all Tasmania, mark my words.

The ferries' replacement is critical to Tasmania, and a little bit out of out-of-date, but it was required to meet maritime standards to reduce emissions. Those things were all put in place by the former board. We are still waiting for this to be delivered.

The Greens support this motion and we welcome debate around it because it is important to point out that the government still has a long way to delivering infrastructure projects well.



[4.06 p.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to support the motion this afternoon, quite obviously, as - I didn't hear the Treasurer say whether the government's planning to support the motion, did you hear anything?

**Mr Willie** - I don't think I heard.

**Mr WINTER** - No, it's interesting, because the motion is pretty factual. It notes that the Rockliff government is responsible for the biggest infrastructure stuff-up in Tasmania's history; the *Spirits* fiasco, plunged TT-Line into financial crisis, and left Tasmanian taxpayers footing the bill. Now, if you didn't know the history of this, you might think that was hyperbolic rhetoric, but it is true. That is what's happened. This is the biggest stuff-up in Tasmania's history and it has caused a financial crisis for TT-Line, as the Public Accounts Committee heard only last week and the week before.

The motion recognises that 'unplanned costs associated with the *Spirits* replacement project have now exceeded half-a-billion dollars.' Fact. 'These cost blowouts have pushed TT-Line to the brink of insolvency.' Fact. We heard in the Public Accounts Committee only last week that there were real concerns about the solvency of TT-Line, our flagship tourism and freight company, publicly owned by the state of Tasmania since the mid-1980s, was in so much strife that they thought they were going to become insolvent. The request came on the Monday and the additional loan arrived by the Saturday; six days to authorise more than \$400 million of additional lending. That is the fastest I have ever heard of this government moving. It shows the seriousness of the situation.

'These blowouts have pushed TT-Line to the brink of insolvency, and the upcoming state budget to be delivered on the 6 November will include a \$75 million bailout payment to TT-Line as a direct result of the Rockliff government's incompetence.' Fact.

It 'calls on the government to outline, in full, how it intends to fund the \$75 million bailout payment to TT-Line' - that is a pretty simple question that the Leader of the Opposition asked repeatedly this morning, and was not answered - 'and to be honest with the Tasmanian people about whether the 2026-27 budget will include a further budget bailout for the *Spirits* Project.'

Now, is the government really going to vote against this? Are they really going to say to Tasmanians that they do not accept responsibility, or are they going to accept the fact that this is true, this is their stuff-up, and it is their fault? Unlike Mr Abetz who stood here this morning and tried to blame state Labor from 2012 for appointing a chair that they then reappointed twice before he finally left the role - one of the more extraordinary comments and contributions.

It wasn't just that from Mr Abetz. He tried to talk about the bailout of the Finnish shipbuilder RMC as though there was nothing to see; as though TT-Line negotiating with a foreign government and shipbuilder and not telling anyone, and gifting \$80 million of Tasmanian taxpayer money, was not a big deal. If that is the case, why did they not tell anyone about it? Why did it take us asking questions in this place for anyone to own up? Why did it not appear in TT-Line's annual financial report last year, except for in the very fine print if you went right through it?

If it was not a big deal, why did they try keep it a secret? He talked about not wanting to become a shadow director, but he was the Transport minister that directed TT-Line and TasPorts to come together and try and fix berth 1 in some kind of interim solution that was never ever going to work. We heard from Chas Kelly at the time.

**Mr Willie** - There was a government report saying it couldn't work.

**Mr WINTER** - And a government report. Chas Kelly: name me someone who knows more about shipping in the Mersey than Chas Kelly who was on radio saying, 'This is a very bad idea. It is dangerous and there are huge risks to my business.' Yet they went ahead and directed TT-Line and TasPorts to look into it, wasted a lot of time, and eventually came to the solution that anyone who had been looking at this knew which was they had to do the proper job at berth 3. He says:

Labor is offering no solutions on how we could not have spent the \$80 million to bail out the Finnish shipbuilder.

I will just name one. How about we don't cancel the RMC MOU and spend a year's time running around pretending as though somewhere in Australia could have built those ships, all for a political handshake agreement with someone in Canberra? One year was wasted on this project by TT-Line because the former premier, Peter Gutwein, directed them to stop what they were doing and spend a year looking in the mirror and coming to the conclusion they already knew the answer to.

It was Mike Grainger at the at the table who told us not that long ago that it was ridiculous to think that anyone in Australia could have built those ships. That's how we could have avoided it. The timeline could have been at least 12 months ahead of schedule, and the entire timeline's ended up six years behind schedule due to the incompetence. That's one thing. I don't have a time machine because that's what it would take to resolve this problem, but I believe a very fundamental part of this is to build a berth before the ships arrive, especially if they're going to be six years delayed.

I also want to talk about the government's promise around the up to \$100 million of local content. It was around November last year that this House carried a motion, amended somewhat by the crossbench, but effectively the outcome was that the government was to report back to the parliament and tell the parliament how much local content was in these ships.

The outcome was that we received this document. The TT-Line Vessel Replacement Project Local Content Update. It had a list of suppliers including Wärtsilä Australia Ltd. It claimed that the main engines that were built in Finland were part of the local content on the ships. These were engines built in Finland by Wärtsilä, then sold from an Australian shell office back to RMC as part of local content. They included that in the \$100 million. It was given to the Clerk of the House, following a resolution of the House, who then emailed every member of the parliament at the time and told them that this was a fact, that there was a huge number of 'local' suppliers who had provided this.

We called, you know what, at the time because it was total and utter fiction. This was not local content. This just was a list of things that TT-Line was trying to claim. The government of the time said, 'Nothing to see here, no problem at all'. Again, it was only last week during

the public hearings when Mr Kanofski, the new chair, spoke to the Public Accounts Committee, and he said, this is about the local content:

I will answer the question in terms of saying the current numbers that we have and there's been \$97 million-worth of local content.

That's consistent with what we'd heard. He goes on to say:

But I will say, because I want to be absolutely transparent with this, that \$60 million of that \$97 million - and the \$97 million is not a finished number. We haven't fitted out, so that will go up. I don't know by how much, but it will go up. I will say that \$60 million of that, let's call it \$100 million, for equipment is equipment that was built in Finland, ordered by an Australian company.

Here's the skinny. Here's what happened. Minister Abetz, the then minister for Transport, provided this House with a document claiming that almost \$100 million worth of local content had been coming from Australia. We now have the Chair of TT-Line telling us that was wrong.

Today, the question for minister Abetz is: what's he going to do about it? Is he going to correct the record? Because even though it's a year later, it's just been proven that what he provided to the House in response to the notice of motion was false. The information provided to the House was completely incorrect. It was a fantasy, and the Chair of TT-Line outlined that to the Committee only last week.

The former Minister for Transport - now Treasurer - needs to come back to the House and correct the record. He needs to own up to the document he provided to members of parliament and say 'that was wrong'. He should do that this evening.

[4.16 p.m.]

**Mr JAENSCH** (Braddon) - Deputy Speaker, I will make a brief contribution on this one today. I've just come from a meeting of the Parliamentary Accounts Committee, as has Mr Winter; we're both on the Parliamentary Accounts Committee which, as he's mentioned, is in the process of an inquiry into a range of matters that have been alluded to and discussed in today's debate here - not only in this debate, but also in the MPI and in Question Time.

It has clearly been a very important day for Labor to have a debate on this topic, even though we have an inquiry that was referred by this parliament to a very special Joint Standing Committee to look into all of the circumstances - what happened when, who was involved, which decisions when, who told who - all of that is the 'stuff' of the inquiry that's been operating now for over a year and which at some point will report its findings so that everyone can see what happened.

That's what these committees are for. I believe everybody deserves and looks forward to the matters being laid out, the evidence that was gathered. Some people have been able to see, if they've been following the public hearings, but the conclusions and findings and recommendations are for the Committee to deliberate on and ultimately to report.

I believe that what we're seeing here is that Labor has seen its window closing to be able to come in here and give its own version of all of that - to characterise who did what when,

who decided, who told the truth, who's to blame - before the public is actually furnished with the information, the evidence, the working through all of these complex issues with the Committee. This may be Labor's last chance to give this a run in such a way that they can form conclusions that it was the government's fault and that these matters can all be sheeted back to government competence or otherwise. I have not heard much of a reference to the decision making of other organisations and bodies, their communications between them, the circumstances in which they made it.

This is very much written as a matter that goes to the Rockliff government's competence, which I think, for those listening and watching today, helps you understand what we've spent today doing. This is a Labor stunt, three times, praying on the absence of the inquiry's diligent work over the last years and to have information out in public, and for Mr Willie and Mr Winter to wrap this up in a Labor skin with a Labor spin and put their own conclusions forward ahead of the parliamentary inquiries to do so. I'm sure they were very careful as well to be sure that any of their content and contributions here didn't stray into areas that were privileged information for Committee members; I certainly hope so.

Anyway, there will be a time when these reports are out and everyone can see what's in this, and perhaps what this series of debates today have actually been about. It's a little bit about taking some paint off the government before the facts of the matter are laid out for everyone to see. I do think that we need to ensure that on a matter -

**Mr Willie** - You've done a good job at taking the paint off yourself.

**Ms Finlay** - Not much paint left.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr JAENSCH** - that is actually a serious matter that a lot of Tasmanians are concerned about, and rightly so, and that this government is serious about and acting on fixing to get the best possible outcomes for the state of Tasmania. It is important that I put that on the record so we understand why we're having this conversation today and the language and context that it's come to us in.

I respect the committee process and I won't share any further insights into what it's been up to in its work. That will be reported in due course. What I will do is address some of the matters referred to in the motion and the language that's been used. I will do that through a slightly different lens to Mr Winter and Mr Willie.

It must be clear at the outset that the government takes the cost and timing issues associated with the *Spirit* replacement project seriously. They are real and they are serious. That's why this government has intervened and continues to act to secure the best possible outcomes for Tasmania and Tasmania's best interests, including supporting the PAC inquiry process so everyone can see what happened and what we can learn from it. The situation is serious and the government is taking it seriously. I think you've heard that from the Treasurer today. We will discuss that further.

I would argue, though, in terms of the language Labor has used and the way they have laid this up, that these matters would be far more serious and alarming - the issue of a state-owned company requiring an injection of funds and questions around risk of insolvency - if we

were talking about a company that was in a normal operating mode, in normal time, going about its normal business. The current situation is anything but that, even if everything had gone perfectly to plan.

What we have here is a generation or a series of investments all required to happen within the same window of time - two new vessels to be ordered, constructed and commissioned, while two existing vessels were still in operation and two new port facilities created to support them. Even if everything had gone perfectly right, with no war in Ukraine, no pandemic-related delays and requests to consider other procurement options during COVID and no liquidity issues driven by forces outside our control with our shipbuilders, this was going to be a period in which a company that the state government owns was going to own four ships, with only two of them earning revenue and those two doing extra sailings to continue to meet demand - so working suboptimally in terms of their revenue and profitability - and building two new port facilities to accommodate the ships.

Under any circumstances, when any business employs a new person and invests in new plant and equipment to grow its productivity, its markets, its reach, they are going to face significant challenges. They're going to risk being overcapitalised, they're going to have to borrow more money, their cash flows are going to be stressed and their business model is going to change. It is normal under those circumstances for shareholders to invest in their businesses to grow them. That's what you do. You spend money to make more money to grow a business. This is not unusual. Everyone who has ever owned a business expects their shareholders, their owners, to tip a bit more in during these periods and then to review and adjust those arrangements as the new operating realities bed in.

In this case, the new ships, with their new capacity working a schedule which may not involve day sailings to make up for extra volume - because you have it in the larger ships - operating in their new ports with different turnaround times because of the efficiencies, will take a little while to bed in. That's why we have 'temporary' written around some of the arrangements that have been made. I don't think any thinking Tasmanian - particularly people who run businesses and make decisions about growing their businesses - would not understand that.

I think it's entirely reasonable and it's entirely irresponsible for the Opposition to come in here and start to frame these matters in the language of blowouts and bailouts and those sorts of matters, because whilst costs have grown - and elements of that are to be fully expected because we are scaling up this business dramatically and there are aspects that have come about through various issues that will be explored through the committee's inquiries - this was always going to be a period in which there were a range of massive new costs hit that business model and the owners would need to responsibly invest to ensure that they could see those through successfully. That's what we're doing.

We'll be picking over this for quite some time, but I do think it's been irresponsible, but possibly predictable, for Labor to come in and dumb this down -

**Mr Willie** - Will you be supporting the motion?

**Mr JAENSCH** - and do everything they can today to frame this as a failure of this elected government alone -

**Mr Willie** - Tell us whether you're supporting it.

**Mr JAENSCH** - and ahead of the parliament's commissioned inquiry doing its job.

[4.26 p.m.]

**Ms BUTLER** (Lyons) - Deputy Speaker, it's my absolute pleasure to rise in support of our leader, Mr Willie's, motion that the House notes that the Rockliff government is responsible for the biggest infrastructure stuff-up in Tasmania's history, the *Spirits* fiasco, which has plunged TT-Line into financial crisis and left Tasmanian taxpayers footing the bill; recognises that unplanned costs associated with the *Spirits* replacement project have now exceeded half a billion dollars, which have pushed TT-Line to the brink of insolvency; and that the upcoming State Budget to be delivered on 6 November 2025 will include a \$75 million bailout payment to TT-Line as a direct result of the Rockliff government's incompetence. It also calls on the government to outline in full how it intends to fund the \$75 million bailout payment to TT-Line and to be honest with the Tasmanian people about whether the 2026-27 Budget will include a further bailout for the *Spirits* project.

This is completely real and completely reasonable, and I am aghast by Mr Jaensch's response just now. Don't we teach our children to take responsibility for their stuff-ups when they make mistakes? Isn't that the most basic number-one rule of parenting? If you make a mistake, you take responsibility for it. That is called good parenting. I also think there are a lot of values around good governance, which also means you have to take responsibility for your own actions.

We just heard Mr Jaensch refer to this as 'scaling up this business dramatically'. You haven't scaled up the business dramatically because business has changed, you scaled it up dramatically because you have overseen the biggest infrastructure stuff-up in Australian history. That is what you are responsible for. That is why your government has had to scale this up, Mr Jaensch. You have caused the biggest stuff-up of infrastructure history in Australia's history. This is an absolute embarrassment for us.

We also heard that this is an entirely reasonable approach. To what? It's like your child coming home after crashing your car that they took without you giving them permission and them saying, 'Oh, it's entirely reasonable I crashed the car'. It is absolutely ludicrous that this government still refuses to take full responsibility for this.

I've never ever got over just how quick this government was - especially Mr Abetz and the Premier himself - to let Mr Ferguson take the full brunt of all of this on himself. Yes, he should have taken responsibility, but there are also other shareholder ministers and there was also a Premier whose electorate is Braddon who knew that berth wasn't being built, who must have driven past it countless times, who, when it boils down to it, was at the time Mr Ferguson's boss, who should have also taken responsibility for the biggest infrastructure stuff-up in Australian history. That is what is on your hands.

I don't think coming in here and saying, 'Oh, look, there was a war in Ukraine', 'forces outside our control'. 'This is not unusual' was another thing that came out of Mr Jaensch mouth just then.

To put this in context, we are an island state and the *Spirits of Tasmania* provide an essential service across Bass Strait for passengers, passenger vehicles and freight. They are the link between Tasmania and the Australian mainland. They are an essential service to our state.

We have incurred millions and millions of dollars of losses as a consequence of the government's complete stuff-up. There are so many losses, such a loss of revenue for our state, that it almost sounds like monopoly money when this government talks about it, and I think that's how they like it. They don't want to take any responsibility for it. As those numbers keep ticking up, you have no ability to repay the debts being accumulated as a result of those two *Spirits* not being able to be utilised. Saul Eslake said it has cost the Tasmanian economy at least \$350 million for every year the ferries are delayed. Others have estimated that loss at about \$500 million a year.

That is just the loss of revenue for Tasmanian businesses and Tasmanians. That's not the loss we are accumulating with having to service four boats at the moment. That's not the debt that is accumulating. That's not the loss of the berth not being built. I believe that was four times more than your original estimate for that original berth you failed to build on time.

That is \$500 million a year being lost to the people of Tasmania. That is your businesses on the east coast of Tasmania. We can't ignore the fact that the tourists come in or exit on those boats from the north of the state. It is essential that those tourists then spread their money throughout regional Tasmania. That is one of the beauties of those boats. With that lost capacity because of your stuff-up - and you must take responsibility for it. It is responsible and adult. You cannot sit here and pretend that it is not.

**Mr Jaensch** - It's not lost capacity, though.

**Ms BUTLER** - The lost capacity? Let me explain that to the minister if he doesn't understand. The new boats are double the size -

**Mr Jaensch** - They have met demand. There's opportunity costs, but it's not lost capacity.

**Ms BUTLER** - They have double the freight capacity, they have double the passengers, just to explain it 101 to you, minister. It's a basic concept.

It is also amazing that we are having to pay, I believe, \$6.4 million for them to berth in Scotland. The berthing and storage costs form another significant cost: \$6.5 million is what it cost. 'But that's all right. We won't take any responsibility for that. We will find someone else to blame. Maybe we could blame Putin for the cost of having them berth in Scotland for that time.' You guys are a joke and it's disgusting that you're not taking responsibility for this.

Another interesting part of this is how much it is costing us to maintain the existing *Spirit* boats. That's another thing they need to clarify. Those boats were meant to be sold by now because the project is five years behind. It is not business as usual and these things happen, and, as Mr Jaensch said, scaling up this business dramatically to cover up a massive stuff-up. All you're doing is adding to the huge debt that Tasmanians will have to pay off for these *Spirits*. It is also the loss of freight opportunities for many of our businesses.

If you read through the annual report, *Spirit of Tasmania* was dry docked in Sydney as recently as August 2024 and underwent significant works. There was also an upgrading of

lighting at existing terminals, screening and biosecurity equipment. There was also the introduction of 18 new terminal tractors. They are other examples of how we are having to pay for two lots of infrastructure where those terminals should not even be used any more, should they, Mr Jaensch? Those terminals should actually be out of action. You don't have a new terminal because you didn't build it in time.

There was another interesting loss we learnt about. The Tasmanian wood finishing, the celery top pine surfaces, that were shipped to Finland were part of the build of those two *Spirit* boats. Apparently 6000 linear metres were sent. No one back here had bothered to see whether the EU timber regulations were recognised in Finland, so when that wood arrived, apparently they had to send it back to Tasmania. They couldn't work with it because it wasn't recognised under their EU standards. Would the minister like to outline how much that cost? I reckon that would have cost hundreds of thousands of dollars - a waste of taxpayer money yet again. Take some responsibility, support the motion.

### **Time expired.**

[4.36 p.m.]

**Ms DOW** (Braddon) - Deputy Speaker, all I can say is thank goodness Mr Jaensch wasn't responsible for the oversight of this project, or we would be in a lot worse position than we are now. There is nothing usual or procedural about this stuff-up in any aspect of this project whatsoever. It might be business as usual for your government, with stuff-ups and incompetence, but this is not how any ordinary Tasmanian would run their business, and that's what they tell me.

I listened to the Premier talk this morning about tourism operators saying what a great job his government is doing, supposedly intervening and getting this project back on track, when each day there is another iteration of the *Spirits* saga we find out about through the media months after the government found out about it. What they talk to me about is that they cannot understand how this happened. The ordinary Tasmanian on the street, our business owners, they wouldn't run their business like this and they don't have the liberty of going to the government for a bailout. It's extraordinary for you to stand in this place and say that this is normal business as usual, and this is just an ordinary thing as the business is ramping up; this was always to be expected. Far from it.

You can't trust the Liberals. You can't trust them full stop, and you can't trust them when it comes to this project. Over the course of almost two years now, it's been like pulling hens' teeth to get information out of this government.

**Mr Jaensch** - Pulling hens' teeth?

**Ms DOW** - It's an old-fashioned saying.

**Mr Jaensch** - No, it's not. It's two sayings joined together.

**Ms Ogilvie** - It's a mixed metaphor.

**Ms DOW** - Well, it's an old saying. 'Like pulling hens' teeth' - haven't you heard that before?



**Mr Jaensch** - No. I've heard about pulling teeth and I've heard about hens' teeth, but usually in different contexts.

**Ms Ogilvie** - Rare as hens' teeth.

**Ms DOW** - Anyway, it has been really difficult to get information out of this government. They demonstrate that time and time again. That was demonstrated again with the most recent increase of the borrowing limit for TT-Line and their inability, or unwillingness, to provide a briefing to us during the election period about that. Numerous briefings were offered to opposition members during the election campaign, during caretaker mode. I was privy to a number of those as a shadow minister. This is something that is of such state significance and importance that we should have been informed about that at that time.

This is an important motion and despite Mr Jaensch's rhetoric, it is important that it is debated today. Yes, we have spoken about this three times in the parliament today, but that's because it's important. It is an issue of state interest and significance. There has been an enormous amount of public money wasted throughout this whole project and process, so why wouldn't we be doing our job and raising this? Why don't you do your job and manage this project appropriately, and get the results Tasmanians deserve, and we'll continue to do our job.

The government has not indicated whether it will be supporting this notice of motion today. I am keen to understand that, and maybe three of the other members here in the Chamber might be able to provide us with an update on that, so we can understand what your position is on this motion because at the moment it's not really very clear.

I, like many Tasmanians, have listened to the Public's Accounts Committee hearing, because part of my role as shadow minister for Infrastructure is to understand the intricacies of this project. I was really concerned last week when I listened to the chair of TT-Line's concerns about the financial sustainability of TT-Line, and explain that they will require more funds, and that they were on the brink of going broke, which is incredibly serious.

As others have said in this place, TT-Line is a major freight and tourism service for our state. It is so important for where we live, Mr Jaensch, in the north-west to drive regional tourism, as Ms Butler said, and also for our primary producers and for those business owners across our region and across the state who rely on that shipping service to get their fresh products to market. Berry farmers, for example - Costa, Perfection, and others who use that service to get their berries to market - there are lots, and I could go through them all. They rely on that service. It is very important to our regional economy. It's very important to the state's economy. We are at a critical point with this government business enterprise where there are serious concerns about its financial sustainability and that should not be taken lightly by members of the government.

I cannot understand, for the life of me, when you look back at how this project has been mismanaged by this government from day dot, how Mr Abetz, the Treasurer, can say, 'What would you do differently?' Well, why wouldn't you have had the expertise in place to manage this project? I'm not an engineer. Ministers on the other side weren't engineers; they didn't have the expertise. There certainly wasn't the expertise around the board table at the time, either. I would have thought, as a responsible minister of the Crown, that you would see fit to have those types of governance and project management oversights in place. Clearly, that didn't

happen. There is a whole host of things that you could have done differently and, as Mr Winter said, the first thing you do is make sure that you have the berth built.

Fundamentally, this government had a responsibility in this project to see that it was delivered. The *Spirits of Tasmania* are the most important economic investment for this state pretty much since the since the hydro, and the economic benefits that they will bring to the state are enormous. Tasmanians are proud of their *Spirits*, and they will tell you that, no matter where you go across the state. Quite frankly, they're devastated by the way this whole project has been mismanaged and by the opportunity that's been lost - that half a billion dollar hit to our economy each year that these vessels have been delayed. To think that the government took ownership of one of these vessels without realising that the specs were incorrect, that the fender would need to be fixed. There's more money that, the responsible minister and I believe the chair of the TT-Line described at the time as 'routine maintenance'. There's nothing routine about building your ship or your berthing requirements to the wrong specifications - that's incompetence.

I will say it on the record again today, you cannot trust this government when it comes to this project or full stop. Right throughout, the Premier has sought to deflect responsibility. Ms Butler is quite right in that Michael Ferguson did do the right thing by resigning.

**Mr Willie** - He lost support of the House first, though.

**Ms DOW** - He did lose support and it took him a long time to do that and to bear that responsibility, but, ultimately, it was the right thing to do. Quite frankly, there are other members of his government who could have done the same.

It is unheard of. It's unprecedented. It's the biggest infrastructure stuff-up in history. Ms Ogilvie, you might raise your eyebrows at me, but it is an international embarrassment, and that is borne by your government in its inaction and mismanagement.

**Ms Ogilvie** - I was just looking at you. It's nice you're noticing me.

**Ms DOW** - Today, the House has before it a pretty clear choice. I would encourage members of this House to support this motion. It's a very important motion. It's gleaned important information about that bailout, about what is required further for TT-Line and to understand what will be required further out in other financial years to make sure that our TT-Line stays solvent and operational. I again call on the government to outline whether or not they are supporting this notice of motion today.

The last point I want to make is that during the Public Accounts Committee hearing last week, the other things that concerned me were to do with the reviewed financial modelling that had been done for TT-Line. The fact that the new board had sought some additional financial modelling to understand exactly their fiscal position. I ask the government, do you have full confidence in the modelling that's been provided? Be upfront about how much more financial assistance is required for TT-Line. Be honest. Tasmanians deserve that at the very least.

The way this government has handled this project has been an international embarrassment, it is a disgrace, and it is high time that they are held accountable and take responsibility for their role in what is the state's biggest infrastructure stuff-up.

[4.46 p.m.]

**Mr WILLIE** (Clark - Leader of the Opposition) - Deputy Speaker, I thank members for their contribution. It's still unclear on what the government's going to do. We require a vote and in none of their presentations did they say whether they supported the motion or not. It will be interesting to see what they do on the division, or even if there is a division, or whether they just allow it to go through.

Through the debate we had the Treasurer questioning Labor's support of a bailout and keeping the company afloat. Of course, we want to keep the company afloat. There were some questions about some of the decision-making on that side which has been highly questionable, but the point we have been making consistently today and on other days, is that the lack of transparency is the real issue here. We support the company staying financially viable and being able to get to the end of this project and start delivering for our economy and for Tasmania. Of course we support that. That's not the question here. It is about this government having to be dragged kicking and screaming to give Tasmanians the truth.

We also had another member of the government, Mr Jaensch, questioning whether this is the domain of the PAC. Of course, we can ask questions in this place and this particular matter is in the budget that's going to be delivered tomorrow. It's specifically about a bailout payment for the budget in this place. To say, 'That's the purview of a committee, you shouldn't be bringing that stuff in here,' is a ridiculous statement. Of course we are going to ask questions in here, on behalf of Tasmanians, because this is going to impact them. It hasn't been handled well, it's now coming onto the state government books, which means it impacts other services if they don't outline how to pay it, or they're just going to add it to the continuing debt. They won't be honest about that, but this motion will make them outline that for Tasmanians.

This is an important project, this government needs to get on with it, they need to deliver it. We are positive about the potential of this, and of the extra capacity. We are a state who is wholly reliant on the shipping industry for our lifestyle, our way of life and the goods that we consume. We have a proud history when it comes to shipping in Tasmania. We're the only state that's completely surrounded by water, but we have a government that is not very good at procuring ships or shipping infrastructure. For an island state you would think that would be critical.

Unfortunately, this debacle has damaged a company that Tasmanians are proud of, in terms of the difference it's made to the state and our economy. Reputational damage that's come from the Chair himself. He said that that's impacted their bookings and their financials. I asked the Premier whether he would take responsibility for that this morning, and he tried to blame us. We also had the Treasurer trying to blame us for the Chair, who was appointed in 2012, which had stayed in place and been reappointed by this government twice. That was our fault, apparently.

The arguments and the knots you are twisting yourself into to try and defend this is quite comical. I think people watching on would see the comical nature of that argument - trying to blame this on the Labor Party for a chair appointment in 2012, when you've been the government for 11 years, reappointed that person, and let's face it, it wasn't just that person responsible. There are plenty of members on that side who are running the government who are responsible. It's all very well for you to try and put this on one person. I don't think that's entirely fair on that side because there have been numerous people who should have known better. We want Tasmanians to have the truth, to have transparency, to continue to understand

how this is going to impact them, and it's up to this government, if this passes, to provide that information.

**Time expired.**

**Motion agreed to.**

**MOTION**

**Greens Member - Mr Bayley - Notice of Motion No 36**

[4.51 p.m.]

**Mr BAYLEY** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House accepts:-

- (1) Capital expenditure for the stadium is officially estimated at \$1.3 billion - \$865 million funded by State Government and proponent borrowings.
- (2) Additional elements required to build or operate the stadium that are not included in this cost estimate include:-
  - (a) additional site works (\$32 million);
  - (b) northern access road and event plaza (\$75.9 million);
  - (c) carpark (\$97 million);
  - (d) event buses (\$49 million);
  - (e) Tasmania Symphony Orchestra compensation and upgrades (\$4.45 million); and
  - (f) Davey, Collins and Hunter Streets path widening (\$17.6 million).
- (3) The State of Tasmania is entirely liable for any future costs, including cost overruns, penalty payments to the AFL, and failure to acquit the federal funding grant for urban renewal.
- (4) The Coordinator-General stated in the Public Accounts Committee on Wednesday 22 October 2025 that the State Government will pay between \$45 million and \$70 million annually on interest alone, without repaying capital costs.
- (5) Further borrowing could be required to fund operational expenditure for the stadium, net operating cash deficits, penalty payments, and life cycle and event attraction costs.

- (6) At past cost estimates, the stadium is estimated to add at least \$2 billion of debt to the state over 10 years, and that figure would be greater with updated costs and aforementioned unbudgeted components.
- (7) S&P Global revised its long-term credit rating outlook for Tasmania from stable to negative, and Tasmania's rising debt burden increases the likelihood of a credit rating downgrade, increasing debt servicing costs and resulting in reduced public services.

This is a motion that we have brought to the House to try to establish some agreed facts as we go into what is one of the biggest debates that this parliament will have, and indeed any recent and likely any future parliament in the near future anyway, is going to have, that of the Macquarie Point Stadium.

It is a big debate we have debated already in this House. We've heard people's perspectives about the amount of people who come up to them on the street. I don't know for other members who were just downstairs at lunchtime in the Beacon conversation with school students, but I believe that just about every group that sat down with me to have a talk about how a parliament operates and asked any question they wanted raised the stadium. It's on the street. It's in the polls. This is a big debate and we're going to disagree on a lot of things, but one of the things we do need to agree on is some of the facts around the finances. In any negotiation, in any big debate, it is really important that we have an agreed statement of facts. It's really important because from that you can make informed opinions and make a contribution, and your contribution can be assessed against those facts.

While we in the Greens would like to accept that the Tasmanian Planning Commission's report is a really good basis of agreed facts, it's a report that took a year to develop, an expert panel of members expert in law, expert in planning, expert in architecture, experts in treasury, public hearings, guidelines, consultation and ultimately a very well-written, a very well-constructed report that comprehensively rejects the stadium.

From our perspective, this debate should end here. It should end here with this process that this parliament itself stood up and asked and commissioned that panel to assess and to write the Integrated Assessment Report. For *Hansard* it is abundantly clear that in very simple terms, the Planning Commission writes:

In very simple terms, the stadium is too big for the site and the benefits it will bring are significantly outweighed by the disbenefits it creates.

Those are the agreed facts that we would like to support, but that's not what this motion is trying to do. We're happy to set that aside in the interests of trying to get some agreed facts, because we know that view is disputed. The Premier originally tried to discredit the Planning Commission when it's Draft Integrated Impact Assessment was put out. He said that they went into it with a preconceived view, which is an outrageous thing from a premier to say about his own panel. The Treasurer, the minister responsible here, also described a lot of their views as 'subjective'.

Putting that aside, this motion is trying to get some agreed facts. The issues that the TPC raises have been well ventilated in the past, the issues on the heritage of Hobart have been ventilated a lot, and we Greens accept that this stadium will have a negative impact on the

heritage of Hobart. The impacts on the Cenotaph are well understood. The RSL has been loud and proud about the state War Memorial - the oldest in the country - that will have its view-fields damaged, some of them completely obliterated by this stadium, and of course the view of other stakeholders have been well captured. This motion is trying to get to the facts of the debate.

To go to the motion, and as a result we've taken the politics out of the motion, we're hoping that both the Labor Party and the Liberal Party can accept that this is a straight bat motion that talks about the costs associated with the stadium. I look forward to the contributions of others. You laugh in relation to that, so it seems you're not that supportive, but I invite you to point out where there are errors in the motion.

To start with, the capital cost at \$1.13 billion. That is the statement of the Premier. He didn't seek to update the Planning Commission in the lead-up to its writing of its report. The report got released on the day that it did and the Premier came out in the same breath rejecting it and saying, 'Well, don't worry about that, we're not going to accept their view,' and said that the capital expenditure had now blown out to \$1.13 billion, the fourth cost blowout. It started at \$715 million, then it went to \$775 million, then it got to \$945 million, and then it ended up at \$1.13 billion. This is probably not the last cost blowout in relation to this project, but that is not what this motion is saying, and that's why we have deliberately written it to take the politics out of it.

Calculations provided to both the budget panel and the Legislative Council make it really clear that the state government will borrow \$375 million to invest in the stadium and the Macquarie Point Development Corporation will borrow \$490.7 million to invest in the stadium and that's how we get to the \$865.7 million to be funded by the state government and the proponents. That really should not be contentious at all.

Additional elements required to build the stadium that should be considered and should be captured here are identified both by the Planning Commission and the Treasury. I have listed them there, and I have just read them into the *Hansard*. Things like additional site works, the Northern Access road, the car park, the event buses, the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, and the Davey, Collins and Hunter Street upgrades. The Planning Commission is utterly clear that these should be considered and added onto the capital cost of the stadium. Onto the \$945 million capital cost of the stadium as it was then.

As too, was the Treasury in its pre-election financial outlook (PEFO). I will read into *Hansard* what the PEFO says. It says:

A range of issues could further impact the cost of the stadium. A tight construction market.

We're not dealing with this in this motion.

The bespoke nature of the roof design.

We're not dealing with this directly in this motion. And they also say:

The cost of related projects to support the stadium not included in the \$945 million estimate, including the Northern Access road at an estimated cost of \$75.9 million and the underground car park.

The PEFO goes on to say,

These costs were not included in the 2024-25 revised estimates report and represent unfunded budget risks.

That is why we want to capture them here, so that members have the opportunity to understand the full scope and scale of the costs of the stadium and the essential elements that go into it.

This is not only of interest to us as parliamentarians as we make this decision. I raise the point that things like the Davey, Collins and Hunter Street path widening - \$17.6 million - have been directly raised with me as a member for Clark by the Hobart City Council, because they are deeply afraid that they will have to foot the bill. Ratepayers in Hobart will have to foot the bill for this kind of pedestrian uplift for those streets and won't get any recompense from the state government for it. So, this is an issue not only for us as parliamentarians, but for every single rate payer in the Hobart City area.

Cost overruns and the liability of this mega project are important and, while we haven't tried to capture or quantify what they will be or define exactly what they will be, it is a simple statement of fact that we as taxpayers, the state of Tasmania is entirely liable for any future costs, including cost overruns of construction, penalty payments to the AFL and failure to equip the federal funding grant for urban renewal. That is simply a statement of fact. It is abundantly clear with no private entity involved in this project, with the private sector not wanting to touch it with the barge pole. It is a state government project. We are the proponent. Tasmania is the proponent. We will be on the hook for every single dollar of cost overruns.

We just had a debate about the mismanagement of the *Spirits*, the fact that the bungalows keep adding to the cost of the berth and the *Spirits* themselves. I remind the House of independent expert, the economist Nicholas Gruen, who found and concluded in his independent report, commissioned by government, that this project shows all the hallmarks of mismanagement.

There are likely to be cost overruns, but we are just simply saying that Tasmania is liable for them, as we are for penalty payments to the AFL. That's a statement of fact. They're written into the dud AFL deal. As we would be for the \$240 million of federal funding that is tied to the delivery of housing and wharf infrastructure at Macquarie Point, not to a stadium or anything else. If we do breach that agreement, it would stand to reason that we are liable for the \$240 million.

Point (4) in this motion is talking all about servicing debt and this is where the rubber hits the road when it comes to this stadium. We have heard a lot of arguments, particularly from the Labor Party who have already written their blank cheque for the government on this, about one-off-cost infrastructure, and to not worry about the money because this is just how it works. However, where Tasmania is servicing the debt on the borrowings, that \$865.7 million at least, that's where the rubber really hits the road because that does get paid by the general government sector. That is captured in our budget. That does have to be paid for every single

year. We are running deficit budgets, which means we are going to be borrowing money to pay the interests on the capital borrowings. This is a critical issue.

The Coordinator-General in the Public Accounts Committee has highlighted this as an issue and that's what this part of the motion says. It's a statement of fact that he said we will pay between \$45 and \$70 million annually.

Again, however, the documents that have been provided to both the Budget Panel and the Legislative Council highlight in the forward Estimates that simply servicing the \$490.7 million Macquarie Point Development Corporation borrowings is going to cost \$30.7 million in 2030-31; and \$32 million in 2031-32. Obviously, that has a really big caveat next to it, and I quote, 'Interest cost estimates are subject to revision and may change in response to movements in borrowings requirements and interest rate assumptions.'

Servicing this debt is going to be significant. That's \$30 million a year simply to service Macquarie Point's debt. We have asked the Treasurer, and we hope that he brings an answer to this House before we debate the order, what is going to be the cost of servicing the \$375 million debt that is the capital in equity transfer from the state government. We do not have that sitting around as spare cash in the bank at the moment.

Further borrowings could be required to fund the operational elements as well. Basically, the stadium will run at a loss for certain periods. We're going to need to borrow further money to fund the operational expenditure for the stadium, any net operating cash deficits, penalty payments, life cycle and event attraction costs, so as we run a deficit-backed budget until we reach peak debt, until we reach a point where we're earning such that we can actually service the interest on our debt from those earnings, we are going to have to continue to borrow to service any underperformance or additional expenditure. We've heard a lot about concerts. We've heard a lot about the 1500-seat convention centre. What we haven't heard about is Hobart or Tasmania actually bidding in the international and national scenes to attract those concerts and conventions takes a significant amount of money. Life cycle and event attraction costs are something that we will have to continue to borrow money for. It is really significant.

Point 6 in the motion is simple, the Tasmanian Planning Commission has estimated that the stadium will add \$1.8 billion to our debt burden over the next 10 years and that's based on the \$945 million, so not the additional \$1.13 billion. This is significant and this is where pushing ahead with the stadium at the moment in the face of the red flags being flown by Treasury, in the face of the advice of independent experts like the Tasmanian Planning Commission is absolute recklessness in this day and age. Not least when we are seeing and hearing so many tragic horror stories about the desperate needs of Tasmanians with regards to food, housing, literacy levels, and healthcare including dental health. We are seeing Tasmanians in desperate need and that debt that we are racking up to build this stadium is something that the experts are recommending against.

Finally, we talked earlier about servicing the debt on the Macquarie Point Stadium borrowings as being between \$45 and \$70 million or well over \$30 million, according to Treasury's reports. Well, that'll get a whole lot worse when it comes to our credit rating because both Standard & Poor's and Moody's have downgraded the outlook for Tasmania from 'stable' to 'negative'. I quote and read into the *Hansard* just quickly from Standard & Poor's -



The negative outlook reflects our view that Tasmania's fiscal metrics are weakening and its debt burden is rising. The negative outlook revision reflects our view that Tasmania's fiscal controls are loosening, leading to weaker financial outcomes and rising debt burden. We project the state debt as a proportion of operating revenue to grow to about 119 per cent by fiscal 2027. This would be roughly double the debt ratio in fiscal 2023. The state's relatively low debt burden was previously a key pillar of its credit strength. [tbc]

Where our low debt burden was a key pillar, our high debt burden is now a massive weight. The PEFO itself has identified this as a major problem. Treasury says:

These changes indicate that there is now a higher likelihood of the state's long-term credit rating being lowered over the short to medium term. Both rating agencies cited the state's weakening fiscal performance and growing debt burden as key factors in assigning a negative outlook to the state. [tbc]

Servicing the debt we are going to borrow to pay for Macquarie Point Stadium is only going to get more expensive if those credit ratings are downgraded. Point (7) is simply another statement of fact.

Before the Treasurer takes to his feet and talks about the economic nirvana that will be coming because of this stadium, the age of prosperity -

**Mr Abetz** - Thank you for recognising it.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Let's remember that Treasury itself has said that we cannot grow our way out of this problem. We can't grow our way out of this problem because the issues and problems are embedded and baked in. What we need to do is change policy. One of the first policy changes we need is to ditch the Macquarie Point stadium because that's going to head us onto a trajectory that is completely unsustainable and untenable in the wake of expert planning advice from the planning commission that says we should not build it.

### Time expired

[5.12 p.m.]

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Treasurer) - Honourable Speaker, the Greens have always been opposed to the stadium. That's well and truly on the record. It seems that they're either mourning the loss of the Eden Project which, of course, would have been higher than the proposed stadium, and as we get closer to the decision-making point for this parliament, they are becoming somewhat shriller in relation to their affected concerns.

We were promised that they would take the politics out of this with this motion. Of course, they ran on a banner of 'No stadium'. It wasn't political when they were opposing the stadium but if we oppose their position, we must be political. It is that double standard that always interests me.

The Greens are now making stuff up to suit their narrative. Let's just go through some of the points in paragraph (2), where it is said:

Additional elements required to build or operate the stadium not included in this cost estimate.

Let's go to the northern access road, and I've mentioned this time and time again. If I may correct the record, from time to time, I've said the 2019 Hobart City Deal. From the Hobart City Deal, the northern access road was required to be built. So, much as we know no stadium, no team -

**Mr Bayley** - So, rapid buses?

**Mr ABETZ** - I also say, no stadium, no team, but there will be a northern access road. It is in the Budget and has been in the budget as a separate item. That is well known.

The honourable gentleman then interjected: what about the event buses? We allocate \$49 million to those buses. This is on the basis of the school bus fleet being used to help to bring people to and from. Why an extra \$49 million? Because we will be upgrading the school bus fleet to make them disability-compliant. The whole cost of putting the school bus fleet into a disability compliance situation is all visited on the stadium. No benefit to school kids who will use it day after day after day, but using these buses on the weekend or evenings for the events that might take place on an ad hoc basis, the full cost is going to be visited. This is the sort of gobbledygook economics that the Greens engage in, with a false narrative. Yes, upgrading the bus fleet will cost \$49 million to make them disability-compliant, but to visit the whole cost for transport to and from the stadium is just disingenuous writ large.

We then go to the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra compensation of \$4.45 million. It is fully included in the \$1.13 billion figure. Yet this motion falsely asserts that this is an additional element not included. It is included and yet we are being told the exact opposite by the Greens in their desperation to make out a case against the stadium.

We have the Davey, Collins and Hunter streets path-widening. Not required. Might be desirable, might be nice, but not required. What the Greens are disingenuously doing is just stacking up every possible cost, inflating the cost to make the situation look as though it's going to cost a lot, lot more.

Can I also indicate to the Chamber - and this is a case that needs to be made time and time again: the expenditure on the stadium will be a one-off. Sure, you mightn't like the stadium and the cost, and I accept that as an argument. They are trying to assert that this money should be used, for example, for the public service wage request. That might be okay for the forward Estimates. What are you going to do after you've cancelled the stadium for this lot of forward Estimates? There won't be another stadium in three years' time to cancel, but you have baked in an extra \$1 billion of public service wages. Similarly, if you say this money should be spent on any other operational expense, it can only be spent within that forward Estimates period. You cannot make it continue forever. This is a one-off for the stadium which will provide us with an asset for some number of decades.

**Dr Woodruff** - That's dishonest. Guess who's paying the interest? That is just straight dishonest, Treasurer. That's unfortunate.

**Mr ABETZ** - It is unfortunate, Leader of the Greens, that you don't have the capacity to understand that if you invest money in a capital venture such as the stadium, it is a one-off and you cannot spend that money year after year -

**Dr Woodruff** - Don't patronise me. I know about paying off interest.

**Mr ABETZ** - after year after year after year after year.

**The SPEAKER** - Dr Woodruff, you can have your chance to make your contribution on this.

**Dr Woodruff** - Yeah, just reign in the patronising Treasurer over here while you're at it, if you wouldn't mind, Speaker.

**The SPEAKER** - Thank you Dr Woodruff, you can make that point on your contribution.

**Mr ABETZ** - When the Leader of the Greens stops interjecting and inviting me to point out her errors, then she won't have to consider that correcting her errors is patronising. She just won't be interjecting, which might be helpful for all of us.

In relation to this stadium, I make the point again: It is not only the cost of the stadium. The question we have to consider is the cost of not pursuing the stadium. We will become the laughing stock of Australia, if not the world, when people see that we had this opportunity of grasping a stadium, a convention centre, a multipurpose facility and we squibbed it. Who would bother to say you can do things in Tasmania? The Tasmanian government is not even allowed to pursue this, courtesy of the parliament, so why would any private investor want to come along here? They would be concerned that even a sensible proposal like the stadium is being blocked.

Reference was made to certain 'independent', in inverted commas, experts. I remind this House that Dr Nicholas Gruen - I've spoken to him, and he is a favourite of the Australia Institute. Oh, is the Australia Institute the think tank for the Australian Greens? Yes, it is. Was Dr Gruen duchessed around the site by the 'No' campaign prior to his being accepted by the then-Jacqui Lambie Network to be recommended to the government?

**Mr George** - That's right, smear the reputation of someone outside parliament.

**Mr ABETZ** - When that became exposed, what did Dr Gruen do? He only changed his website. An ABC journalist - you know the ABC, Mr George, that is so good at investigative journalism, then asked the question of whether he had notified the Tasmanian government of this clear conflict of interest, and, of course, he hadn't. Dr Gruen is a good economist, but like all people, they have their flaws. He had allowed himself to be duchessed around the site by the 'No' campaign. When that became exposed, he put it up on his website but refused to tell the government that actually paid him for that report courtesy of the requirements of the Jacqui Lambie Network. Let's not pretend that some of these people enter these considerations with completely clean hands or with complete academic endeavour. They do carry a bit of baggage, and that was exposed in relation to Dr Gruen.

This government is committed. This is a transformative project. It will be an economic enabler, a cultural enabler, a sporting enabler. It will lift the profile of our capital city and provide a gateway to it second to none.

[5.22 p.m.]

**Mr WILLIE** (Clark - Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, I will only make a short contribution because it feels like Groundhog Day with some of this stuff. I will start with the Treasurer's contribution. When people are commissioned by the government as experts, that is a normal process. To have character assassinations and things like that makes it challenging for this government to attract experts from outside the state to come and do that work, so I would exercise caution around character assassinations. I don't like to see that. I don't like to see the government take people on the journey, that brinkmanship and the sorts of conduct happening prior to the election from the government on this particular matter.

Even things like 'builders and blockers' was unfortunate, and the Premier probably reflected that trying to divide people was not helpful in terms of advancing the government's position. What this government hasn't done on this project is tried to sell the benefits, and do that well. That's where they have failed. That sort of politics of assassinating people, the brinkmanship, and trying to divide the population by design wasn't helpful. I would exercise some caution around that and the comments just then.

In terms of the Greens, I will give them some credit. They have been consistent in saying that they want to do everything they can to stop this project. They've been very clear about that. They've told Tasmanians: 'We will do everything we can to stop this.' You have to view everything they do in this place through that lens. They try to claim they've come in here with a motion that's pure: 'We're just trying to establish the facts.' We've had commentary from the government about some of the itemised 'additional costs' which are actually included in the \$1.3 billion. There is also another flaw in this which demonstrates to me that the Greens don't understand the business case for the team, which is that there are 'penalty payments' to the AFL.

They're not penalty payments. They are make-good clauses for not having a venue to support the business case. You can call them 'penalty payments', but they're not. It is to underpin the operations of an AFL elite club in the national competition. When we don't have a venue to support the business case, that's what those payments are for until we get one.

You can come in here and say, 'This is a motion, we're just trying to establish the facts'. There are some errors in here which demonstrate your lack of understanding on the case that was made to the AFL for us to be a viable option, for them to put their faith in Tasmania after decades of resistance. They could go elsewhere. I've explained this today. They will not bat an eyelid. They will walk away from this if this project is not approved and they will go somewhere else: the Northern Territory, Western Australia is talking about a third team. I'm sure there will be other regions that will be competing, and they will build a stadium.

There has been some comparison in the past about the Gold Coast not having to build a state. Guess what? Over the period since they've been established, they have built a new stadium for their football team at Carrara. It's called Metricon.

**Mr Bayley** - It wasn't a precondition.

**Mr WILLIE** - They did it to support an AFL team to be successful in the competition. It is exactly what we would have to do.

**Dr Woodruff** - We don't have to. It's such a shallow way of looking at things.

**Mr WILLIE** - We do. This is why we won't be supporting the motion because there are factual errors in here, the penalty clause being one. The other - and the Greens tend to hold on to this quite a lot - is the failure to acquit the federal funding grant for the urban renewal like that is going to be some disaster. The federal government supports the AFL teams. I've heard that very clearly from the Prime Minister. The federal government supports this project and the precinct. That's why they committed \$240 million to it. To try and paint that as a liability for the state, that the federal government won't work with the state government through the challenges is disingenuous at best. They have been clearly on the record that they support the AFL teams. They support the precinct. They have offered up the funding. They will work with the state government to deliver this. That's a fact. They have said it. You can hold onto that agreement and try and say that there's going to be some huge liability for the state. It doesn't exist, in my view. There's just a couple of things.

We've been through this debate over and over again. It's Groundhog Day. We have had some of it today with the previous motion but motion after motion on private members day, we seem to be talking about the stadium in the lead-up to what will be the important debate and decision next week. I look forward to that. I will leave some more contributions until next week because this is just repetition.

**Dr Woodruff** - Really? You have nothing to say about the biggest financial decision in Tasmania's history? That is very disappointing from Labor.

**Mr Willie** - I said plenty this morning, if you were listening.

**The SPEAKER** - Order. The only person who has the call at the moment is the honourable Deputy Speaker, so interjections will cease.

[5.28 p.m.]

**Ms BURNET** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to support Mr Bayley's motion. It's a really important motion that we are considering. It's the second important motion after Labor's on the TT-Line and that monumental overspend, the gift that just keeps on giving for Labor and that criticism of the government.

**Mr Willie** - Do we support that project? Yes, we do. Do we hold them to account? Yes, we do. How is it different?

**Ms BURNET** - Well, the -

**The SPEAKER** - Through the Chair, Deputy Speaker, please.

**Ms BURNET** - The difference, honourable Speaker, is that this is a trainwreck which is ongoing and unfolding as we speak. The Treasurer has painted a rosy picture of the stadium and the benefits it will bring. He is trying to package something that is a monumental problem and will be a millstone around individual Tasmanians necks for many years. It will be a burden on our budget for the costs that will be incurred in relation to this. The Greens have pointed out

and made it very clear that this is something that will continue to be a problem for this state. We can't get away from that, as much as Labor, in lockstep with the Liberal government, seems to want to tell us.

**Mr Willie** - You voted them back into power.

**Ms BURNET** - That is so trite -

**The SPEAKER** - Order. Leader of the Opposition will stop inciting you with interjections, please. Deputy Speaker, I encourage you to ignore the comments.

**Ms BURNET** - Thank you. I will try to ignore such petty, petulant, futile arguments.

**Mr Willie** - You might try to escape that fact. You voted to keep them in power.

**The SPEAKER** - Honourable Leader of the Opposition, you have had a warning today. I don't want to have to give you another one.

**Ms BURNET** - Honourable Speaker, this project is going to plunge Tasmania into further debt in the forlorn hope that the stadium and team will bring mysterious intangible benefits that stem the outward flow of young people from this state. There are many, many other things that are causing an exodus of young people from this state. It is about job insecurity. It is about public sector failings and an irresponsible approach by this government to fund community organisations, to fund properly wage agreements; and pay and conditions are something that the Greens are concerned about. We were in support of unions and workers from the public sector who rallied last week in all corners of the state. This stadium's not going to help that situation at all. We can't get away from that.

I will go to clause (2) in particular and point out some of those burdens associated with this. Mr Bayley has gone through in great detail, but let's just look at the Northern Access Road and Event Plaza and these things that haven't been funded. These are the hidden costs: the additional site works, the northern access road and event plaza, the car park, the event buses, and so forth. The Treasurer completely dismissed the path widening, which is pretty important when you're trying to get a lot of people away from the stadium. He seemed to dismiss that as a 'nice to have,' but if you have a disability - and I know that's an issue that you've championed many a time, Speaker, - if you can't design good pathways out of a stadium or you think it's secondary that is a huge problem for access issues and equal access for all.

When we look at the northern access road and event plaza now, it is costed at \$75.9 million, it is probably going to be more than that, but let's just work with the \$75.9 million. That hasn't been covered in the estimated stadium costs. It's an added extra, but an important road to have to the site and on to the port and the Australian Antarctic Division areas as well. Yet, this hasn't been costed and the rail line will be disrupted and I know that there's a lot of working railway now, but it's of concern for people who are accessing the bike track as well. Once it is done it won't allow for large, tall trucks, as I understand, to still get under and off the Tasman Highway, but it is still a huge expense which probably has a greater price tag than we see before us in this motion.

We have heard about adjustments to the car park, but this car park - and during my time in local government there were a number of car parks discussed and brought to us for planning

matters - this car park on a brownfield site with so many remediation issues is going to cost a motza - \$97 million. It's a significant amount. I calculated it to be about \$220,000 per car park, which doesn't stack up, it just doesn't add up. Even with the modification, it still doesn't stack up. This is going to be a legacy issue for repayments, should that car park be completed. With these brownfield sites, there are often pieces of infrastructure which need to be remediated - it can be a huge issue.

Mr Bayley talked a bit about the event buses and Mr Abetz countered those concerns. I suppose one of the concerns that the Greens have, however, is that we have an ageing bus fleet, according to Metro and their annual report, which was released late last week. We don't have enough buses to go around. The entire Metro fleet is valued at \$43.71 million in the annual report, so is it plausible that they are about to spend \$49 million on event buses? These unfunded components wouldn't be such a huge issue if the basic work had been done ahead of time, instead of scrambling to meet the AFL's wild demands.

We have a gold-plated stadium. It is a white elephant, but it's going to be gold-plated. When you look at the investment in basic infrastructure for everyday Tasmanians - catching buses, getting potholes fixed in roads, having infrastructure like new schools and roads, upgrades - let's think about the Tasman Bridge footpath and riding a bike across there and any adjustments that have been in the wings for a long time, still need to be done.

This motion is important to have before this House. I commend Mr Bayley's motion. We cannot have -

**Time expired.**

[5.38 p.m.]

**Mr GEORGE** (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to express my disgust and my strongest condemnation of the Treasurer in this debate, for engaging in, attacking and smearing the reputation of one of Australia's leading thinkers, a figure of real standing and a member of an outstanding family of economists of the highest debate.

When it comes down to the gutter, the Treasurer is in familiar territory. He disgraces himself, his party and those who have taken part in a civilised debate, including those who support the Macquarie Point stadium. We have been dignified up until that point. We have acted in a parliamentary manner and the Treasurer has shamed us all. He's shown what a shabby politician he is, by using parliamentary privilege to demean those who cannot answer for themselves in this place.

Nicholas Gruen has contributed more to thoughtful and constructive public debate in Australia in his lifetime, than the Treasurer ever has or ever will. I call on the Treasurer to withdraw and to apologise.

[5.39 p.m.]

**Ms BADGER** (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, it comes down to what has been laid bare. This is a huge amount of debt and, whether the Treasurer wants to get into a debate about what is or is not in the substantial capital expenditure, at the end of the day, the amount of intergenerational debt that this is going to bring to Tasmanians and future Tasmanians, is not something we can grow our way out of.

I want to bring the House's attention to an exchange in this place from 9 September this year, when member for Clark, Mr Bayley, asked the Premier questions about the stadium and part of the Premier's response was that we had to continue to grow the economy to continue to invest in enabling infrastructure. As I just said, and as Mr Bayley pointed out at the time, we cannot grow our way out of this much debt.

The Premier also said that,

If governments of all persuasions over the last 100 years had the belief not to invest in key enabling infrastructure because it doesn't come back and benefit the community more broadly, we'd be living in paddocks and caves.

Perhaps the Premier is blissfully unaware that Tasmanians are living in paddocks and caves. They are living in our parks and even without trying to build a stadium, this state cannot build enough houses or houses that are an appropriate size for people who need them. Anglicare's report for housing, the Housing Connect Front Door Service, a quarterly snapshot for September 2025, came out yesterday. Recommendation 2 of that report is about funds for delivery for more crisis accommodation and transition houses and social homes, and that includes an increase in crisis accommodation that is safe and suitable for women and children fleeing domestic and family violence. It particularly looked at the needs of women in regional and rural areas, such as my electorate in Lyons.

It is incredibly concerning to hear the ongoing stories of people who are not having their basic and essential needs met. Again, it goes back to this being a political choice of where we invest money, where we concentrate the management of these different projects - be it major or absolutely basic that people deserve to have a home, a roof over their heads.

It was concerning to have a constituent come into my office who was leaving an abusive relationship. She'd been going through the court system, dealing with the police, and someone from the court system had been accompanying her to her hearings as a support system. As we know, there are various programs that run for different court hearings, depending on what people are going through and what sort of trauma-informed support they need. At her latest court date she was told that the person who would normally come in to support her through that service could no longer come because that service needed to be cut back. This is an example of an essential service - a really basic, humane service that we should have in Tasmania in 2025 - that has been cut. Yet, we are more than happy to spend \$49 million on event buses. If they should be upgraded anyway, why isn't that being done now? as member for Clark Ms Burnet pointed out, it's pretty stark in Metro's report what we need to be doing now.

TAFE course subsidies have been cut and numerous members from across this place have spoken about that and last night so did I as well. Something I didn't get to in that speech was specifically on the arts in the screen and media courses that have been cut. In the 2022 report, 'Creative Value: Results for the National Participation in the Arts Survey,' which is produced by the Australian Government and Creative Australia, the section on Tasmania showed that 78 per cent of people who participated in that survey believed that creative activities should be an important part of our education system because of the social benefits that the arts brings to us, the cultural inclusion. Yet, we are seeing subsidies for those courses and that critical training being cut across Tasmania. That is not good enough. The arts are incredibly inclusive and it is



something that we can have to bring everybody together, yet here we are cutting the courses from the TasTAFE education system.

A doctor from the north of the state contacted my office, and I believe other members as well, and he had a child who was planning to enrol in the Certificate III in Music at TasTAFE next year - one of the courses that is going to be cut. That doctor is one of the only specialists of his kind on the north-west coast and he bulk bills. For him to support his son studying the course that his son desires to do, he has to leave Tasmania. We are losing a specialist in the field as we are cutting education opportunities for young Tasmanians. For what? Just so they can play football? There is so much more to it. We can do it another way without the debt as well.

It's not a unique story; it's something that we're all hearing. All members are getting stories like this sent to them. Is anyone listening?

What about funding for the SES volunteer service? We are living in an age of climate change, a climate crisis. It is being driven by extreme weather events that are only going to keep getting worse because we're not properly taking the action that we need to. The SES is chronically underfunded. We had an SES member who reached out to my office because the funding arrangements that they have in place aren't actually feasible for them to be working to undertake what is expected of them in a timely manner when they get called out. They have 20-year-old packs and equipment for regional and rural searches for people who might be lost, and helping recover people in car accidents in really remote and isolated locations. They have ageing vehicles and poor communications equipment. Additionally, we keep hearing and we heard it again at the Central Highlands on the weekend - or those of us who actually showed up - and I note the members of the Labor Party who also came along and a member for Mr Di Falco's office - the lack of communication and the digital divide in this state, the lack of connectivity, that needs serious investment as an essential service.

However, no, let's just pop some lights up down at the stadium. Let's seriously sort out our priorities and invest in what is essential instead of what is not. If we're going to go into intergenerational debt, it has to be for something that is actually going to benefit everyone in Tasmania, not just here and now but into the future as well. It is a political choice to be spending the money, as this government is, to facilitate exclusively the stadium. It is simply not good enough and we have to see them do better.

[5.46 p.m.]

**Mr VERMEY (Clark)** - Honourable Speaker, here we go again. The Greens oppose the stadium. They won't change their minds. That's why they continue to come to this place and seek to undermine this generational investment in whatever way they can.

This motion is no different. It lists what it claims are additional elements required to build or operate the stadium, knowing that they are not. As my colleague, minister Abetz, said earlier, the Northern Access Road is a requirement of the Hobart City Deal and predates the stadium. The carpark is not required for the operation of the stadium. The TSO funding is within the scope of the project budget and already included.

Unlike the Greens, we are committed to both delivering our AFL and AFLW teams and delivering transformative infrastructure at Macquarie Point. Macquarie Point was strategically chosen as the preferred location due to its location adjacent to the CBD. This will enliven the

city, resounding businesses and experience. It is an enabling piece of infrastructure that will bring the waterfront to life. We need that flow, the injection into the surrounding economy.

In addition to hosting AFL and AFLW games, our multi-purpose stadium will host cricket, conventions, major concerts and events. I was at the MCG early in the year, 80 000 British Lions and Australian fans there. Not just there but travelling around the country and travelling into Tasmania. That's the sort of thing it can bring.

As someone who has spent many years mentoring young people through sports and community work, I believe the stadium is about more than footy. Its investment in our youth, giving them new industries, state-of-the-art facilities to enjoy a sense of identity and pride in their state. The stadium anchors a revitalised precinct, transforming Macquarie Point into a hub of activity. Not just on game day, but throughout the year. We know when the stadium gets the green light it will unlock a flurry of private sector activity. It is disingenuous to talk about the costs without acknowledging the undoubtable boost this will bring to Tasmania.

Hobart City Council's own analysis found that the stadium would bring \$143 million per year in benefits to the city during the construction and \$179 million per year when operational and that the stadium would undeniably have a transformative economic impact on the CBD and broader LGA.

The federal government is committing \$240 million to the stadium, the AFL are committing \$15 million to the stadium, and a further \$360 million in payments to the club are its first 10 years alone. That's over \$600 million in direct investment that we would forgo in the first 10 years alone.

During construction, the stadium is expected to create thousands of jobs, and 200 jobs on an ongoing basis once operational. All of that adds social and economic value to our state.

The stadium has received support from across the business community, including the Civil Contractors Federation Tasmania, the Tasmanian Small Business Council, Business Events Tasmania, the Tourism Council of Tasmania, Hospitality Tasmania and the National Electrical and Communications Association. These peak bodies represent thousands of Tasmanian businesses and employers, and their message is clear: business and industry want this project approved.

We're getting on with the delivery of the stadium. We have decided to prioritise delivery through a design-and-construct pathway that provides certainty and confidence to Macquarie Point and the Tasmania Devils AFL Club.

The final order for the urban renewal of the Macquarie Point precinct has been made in accordance with the Project of State Significance process. All members of parliament were consulted in the development of the final order.

Following feedback from members of parliament, a priority auditor will be engaged to oversee the report on whether the regulator has followed an appropriate process in relation to approval of plans. Regulators will be accountable to parliament for the use of these powers, and should parliament be concerned about the execution of these powers, parliament can examine the regulators.

The final order seeks to ensure the functions and roles of decision-makers informed by complementary specialist expertise and their appropriate legal advice. We've been working closely with the AFL and other stadium users to process this project. The stadium will be an all-weather roofed stadium that reflects the character and history of the site and Tasmanian brand. The stadium project comprises of the following core elements:

- the multipurpose stadium and surrounding concourse and arrival plaza area;
- relocation of the historic goods shed to be integrated into the northern section of the multipurpose stadium while remaining configurable as a stand-alone structure and facility; and
- practice cricket wickets required to service the multipurpose functionality of the facility.

Design work on this stadium is now at 70 per cent and if planning approval is provided by the parliament, the project will proceed under design and construction methodology.

The government through Stadiums Tasmania and Macquarie Point Development Corporation will continue working with all stadium users to ensure the stadium is a true multi-purpose venue. We will ensure the stadium can host a broad range of sports, events and conferences to maximise the value to Tasmanians and to operate sustainably.

Let me be clear: no stadium means no team. We have bipartisan support for the project. State Labor support it, federal Labor support it, the Greens oppose it, and yet previously proposed a 50-metre high Eden -

**Mr Bayley** - Don't even go there. Don't embarrass yourself, you're only new. What a joke.

**Mr VERMEY** - That's alright, I've had a look, thanks Vica. Have you been to the MCG in your proud Tasmanian top?

**Dr Woodruff** - You clearly didn't write that speech, then, if you're saying that. There's no way you could remember that.

**The SPEAKER** -I encourage the honourable member for Clark to make his contribution through the Speaker.

**Mr VERMEY** - Here we are again, seeing hypocrisy from the Greens in this motion and debate. They bundled together all the precinct's costs, including precinct's costs committed, irrespective of the proposed stadium. They compared it to what? Doing nothing and not spending another cent. There is no do-nothing option at the Macquarie Point.

We know the Greens have a different vision for the site. They don't want it left as a wasteland. Alternative visions come with a big price tag and like far less ongoing economic benefits. However, we never hear from the Greens about those inconvenient considerations.

Tasmanians have wanted an AFL team for well over 20 years and we've seen 200 000 people sign up for the foundation membership of the Tasmania Devils. The deal we have with

the AFL is crystal clear in relation to the imperative needed for the stadium. I hear a lot of criticism -

**The SPEAKER** - The member's time has expired.

[5.56 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Honourable Speaker, it was very disappointing to hear that contribution from the honourable Mr Vermey. I think it's beneath him to come up with some of that dishonesty, essentially, and hyperbolic spin, which has obviously been prepared for him by somebody else.

We came here in good faith trying to establish some of the facts. Some of the facts have been disputed. I note that really the only fact that's been disputed that we've presented in our motion is about the additional expenditure elements.

There's been a minor brouhaha from the Treasurer and the Leader of the Opposition about whether or not we should include the cost of the Northern Access Road, the car park, the event buses. The Planning Commission says that we should. We know we should, but let's even leave those to a side.

No one else has actually addressed any of the other points that we've made in this motion. They are all statements of fact, and it is convenient to try to pretend that the things that we have on this page are not true or will not come to pass. However, all the evidence is that they will, and they have not been disputed by any of the Liberal or Labor members who have spoken.

This state will spend a minimum of \$1.13 billion. Of that \$865.7 million will be funded by the state government. The Treasurer says we don't understand operational borrowings, infrastructure; that's just all designed to kind of muddy the waters.

The bottom line is Tasmanians will be paying for this project. Whether it comes from the capital infrastructure bucket or whether it comes from operational funding doesn't really make a difference. At the end of the day, year on year, according to the government's own Coordinator-General, there will be at the moment looking at \$70 million coming from the Treasurer's operational budget to pay for the interest on all that money.

Tasmanians understand what interest is; they're not stupid. They know that when you borrow money for a house you have to stump up every fortnight and pay the money back with interest. That's what will be happening. The estimate we have on the table at the moment is \$70 million a year.

Why do we care about that being a big number? I know why I care, as the member for Franklin. It's because in the last week I spoke personally with two different neighbourhood centre general managers, and I'm not going to say which ones they are, in my electorate because they may not be comfortable being named. They're waiting to hear if they have the budget. What I heard is they still did not have the money last week for their community connectors. These are the people who are on the ground in our electorates at Neighbourhood Houses, organising for food to be handed out to people who are desperate, organising to help older people, people with language difficulties or difficulties accessing the internet, being able to get onto Centrelink, being able to get onto aged care. These are the people who organise breakfast,

keep the doors open and keep the community running. Those people weren't being paid for their work. This is how penny-pinching the Treasurer already is.

The budget submissions he gave to community services asked them, not 'What do you need?', but 'What can you cut, what can you do less of?' What an absolute injustice to be saying that to organisations that have been receiving the same base funding, I believe, for over 10 years without CPI. They have been ground into the ground. It is such a disgrace.

What is even more disappointing is the Labor opposition not raising a peep about this, not at all concerned about the \$70 million, at the baseline, that we'll be spending paying the interest year on year for the loan to build the stadium. At the same time, they are outraged at the government's mismanagement of the *Spirits*, rightfully outraged that there will have to be another loan sought of \$75 million to bail out that whole big mess. That is a reasonable concern, but why isn't Labor concerned about that amount of money every single year for decades to come being eaten out of Neighbourhood Houses, being eaten out of public sector wages?

The situation we are in now where public sector workers want a pay rise, it's fair, it's not surprising. Labor is talking about that as an issue. However, do they understand the money will not be there if they support the stadium? The money will not be there for the 26Ten literacy support, which the government is looking at winding up. This is an appalling situation where Tasmania still has one of the lowest levels of functional literacy in the country. We haven't shifted the dial there. We are certainly not shifting the dial in schools when we're hearing from 300 educators, principals and teachers, in the latest survey that they don't have the money to support the wellbeing of students in nine out of 10 schools in Tasmania.

The Premier said this morning, 'Oh, but we've been been investing so much money.' Yes, and it's not meeting the need or the complexity that's in the community now. What does a government do that really cares about those people? It doesn't go and spend money on stuff on eBay that we can't afford. It puts the money into paying the bills. The bills are the food that people need to eat, the 81,000 Tasmanians who don't have enough food, who are skipping meals every day, who are hungry. We don't know what that's like in this room, but they are hungry for days at a time. That's what the latest survey told us.

The Neighbourhood Houses are the people at the front line. Anglicare is at the front line for all those people, the people who are sleeping rough. Regarding their latest survey, yes, we should be shocked to the core. We expect the Labor Party to be fighting for these people. To fund a stadium for decades to come, with the interest we'll be paying off, beggars belief. We are hoping that Labor will really listen to the people in the community.

The honourable Mr Vermey said, 'The Greens are at it again.' Yes, we are at it again, and we are proud of the fact that we are coming in to speak for the majority of Tasmanians who have said, poll after poll, that they don't want this stadium to be built because we have two already -

**A member** - You still voted for them to be on that side of the Chamber.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - because we know there are other ways to support the Devils and fund them. Of course, there are. Of course, we supported the idea of putting the money out there to support our team. Of course, we will do that. That is what we will do.

**A member** - You're the one that teamed up with them all the time.

**The SPEAKER** - Order. The honourable member for Franklin can make a contribution soon.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - We supported the alternative. We support a Plan B because we want the Devils team to be there, instead of spending \$70 million a year on keeping the interest rate going to build a stadium that would be an excrescence in the middle of Hobart, an outrage for our returned veterans, another blight for Aboriginal people, for palawa people, at the place that should be a reconciliation space, instead of a stadium we can't afford and don't need.

The Liberals are looking after business and industry leaders who Mr Vermey says want it built. Actually, they don't all want it built. That's not even true. The TCCI certainly weren't happy when they spoke out about it. There are many other businesspeople who don't believe the bumph that the Liberals are trying to sell. Treasury was crystal clear. If only the Liberals and the Labor Party listened to Treasury in its pre-election statement. We cannot pretend that we can grow ourselves out of the debt burden the Liberals have piled onto us. It is going up from \$4.2 billion to \$13 billion. That is an appalling situation for somebody who cares about business. We care about that because that's money that's not going to people who are homeless, money not going to neighbourhood centres, money not going to schools and teachers. That is why we will do everything we can to stop this stadium being built.

[6.06 p.m.]

**Ms JOHNSTON** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable deputy leader of the Greens, Mr Bayley, for bringing this important motion forward today. Ahead of what we might be debating next week, it is an opportunity to put the facts on the table. And they are facts, as agreed by many experts. I join with my colleagues on the crossbench in condemning the Treasurer's derogatory comments about Dr Gruen and his expertise. I call on the Treasurer to apologise to Dr Gruen for those remarks on the record. Experts have agreed that this is fact. The TPC was emphatic about the situation with the stadium and, in particular, the impact on the budget. These are facts that are understood by many Tasmanians. They are not fooled by the spin from the government and the AFL. They understand the cold, hard reality of what this stadium will do to our budget and what it will do to our future as a state.

I can somewhat understand, although I don't agree, with the government's position. They ignore the facts, they ignore the expert reports time and time again, and they have been drinking the Kool-Aid for such a long time now that they are completely stuck in the essence of the vibe of the team that they can't see the clear evidence before them. However, what really upsets and disturbs me is Labor's position on the stadium. They have had many different positions on the stadium, but their latest position is a complete abrogation of their responsibility as an opposition party.

They must be seeing the emails flooding our inboxes at the moment about the distress in our community caused by cuts, by a lack of funding, by the fact that we don't have enough homes to house Tasmanians, people waiting on hospital waiting lists, people going hungry and without medication. They know full well what this stadium will do to the budget, what the impact will be not just this year, but the year after that and the year after that for years to come because there is no plan to pay back the principal amount of this debt. We will be making the interest repayments forever at this rate.

They know full well and they hear the stories, because my inbox is flooded. I see the emails that are copied to every member of this parliament or into the Labor members' inboxes. They must know, yet they come into this place and all they will do is some hand-wringing and say, 'We'll ask a few tough questions but in the day it's the vibe. We'll just pass it through.'

We just had a debate in this place that the Labor members proposed, Mr Willie proposed, regarding the *Spirits* debacle, and I support that particular motion. However, I flag now that in one year - maybe not even one year's time - we will be able to move exactly the same motion in this place, but instead of the *Spirits*, we will replace it with the word 'stadium'. It will read:

- (1) Notes that the Rockliff government is responsible for the biggest infrastructure stuff-up in Tasmania's history, the stadium fiasco which has plunged Tasmania into financial crisis and left Tasmania's taxpayers footing the bill.
- (2) Recognises that
  - (a) unplanned costs associated with the stadium replacement project have now exceeded half a billion dollars.

I think we can probably add a bit more to that half a billion dollars now because the costs are continuing to blow out.

- (b) these cost blowouts have pushed Tasmania to the brink of insolvency.

The Labor Party have done a great job in calling out the *Spirits* fiasco, but that's after the fact. The ship had sailed - excuse the pun - but they can't claim in a year's time that they didn't know what they were doing with the stadium because the stadium facts are on the table now. The TPC report is on the table now. They can see expert after expert, paper after paper, evidence to show that this is a disaster waiting to happen. If they vote through this particular order, they will be complicit in the disaster that's going to happen. We could perhaps then replace 'Rockliff government' with the 'Rockliff-Willie government' in that particular motion, the Liberal-Labor government. Because that's what's going to happen. They will be complicit in this.

I beg and plead with them, accept the facts, recognise them as facts. Tasmanians want an opposition. They want someone to stand up like the crossbench are doing and put a stop to this misery. We deserve a team but not a blank cheque to get a team. Not at the cost of Tasmanians going hungry, or without medication, or without getting urgent medical care, or without having a roof over their heads, because that's what it's going to mean, and Tasmanians understand that.

I plead with them. Recognise what you're doing here. Support this motion. Recognise the facts before you, because if you don't you are putting your heads in the sand and you will be complicit in the absolute fiasco that will happen, and you will be complicit in the next notice of motion that will come forward, just like your *Spirits* one, in a major disaster for Tasmania.

[6.13 p.m.]

**Mr BAYLEY** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I thank members for their contribution. I thank the member for Clark, who just resumed her seat, for that contribution because

I completely agree: the Labor Party will be complicit in this white elephant - and you know what? I think they know it. They know it here and now and they know what they're doing is actually the wrong thing.

Just to respond to some of the comments that were made as part of that debate, I just want to overall make the observation that I found the retort to our motion and the rejection of our motion utterly pathetic from both sides of this Chamber. To start with, the Treasurer, I hardly want to dignify the claim - and unfortunately Mr Vermey demeaned himself by starting to go there - but for the Treasurer to keep pointing to the Eden Project as some kind of wedge against us is just utterly pathetic. That was a project that could have brought a whole range of benefits to the state that the Greens looked at. To think that it was going to be a 50 metre dome exactly as was proposed in Cornwall is just utterly ridiculous. Even if the *Mercury* may have photoshopped it like that, Mr Ellis, I would have thought that that project would go through a proper planning process, it would be moderated and designed to fit with the landscape and the planning scheme and indeed, I would have thought that the Eden Project would be a good corporate citizen that respected stakeholders and neighbours such as the RSL. Utterly pathetic.

For the Treasurer to say that we are simply making stuff up and talking gobbledygook is utterly disrespectful, including to his own Treasury because he pointed at things like the Northern Access Road, but that's exactly what his own Treasury has identified in the PEFO.

Back in June, barely four or five months ago, the Treasury wrote a range of issues could further impact on the cost of the stadium, including the cost of related projects to support the stadium not included in the \$945 million including the northern access road. These costs were not included in the revised estimate report, and they represent unfunded budget risks.

We are the laughingstock. The Treasurer talked about us being the laughingstock if this project doesn't go ahead, but in fact, we are the laughingstock. Where the laughingstock because of the *Spirits* fiasco, and everybody is laughing at you over there on the government benches. They're laughing at us as well because we commissioned a bunch of experts and paid them hundreds of thousands of dollars to spend a year looking at a major project, and when they say, 'You should not do this,' we throw it out. The Premier throws it out within half an hour and says, 'We're going to do it come what may'.

The joke's on you, government, and the joke's on you, the Labor Party, because people genuinely are looking at us and wondering how the hell can we get into this situation.

The Treasurer talked about the TSO's \$4.45 million. I remind him that the Planning Commission identified that the panel does note that the agreement with the TSO adds to the cost of the project and is not taken into account in this topic - the net social benefit.

If the Treasurer wants to accuse us of adding a figure in that is already part of the \$1.13 billion, I call on him to release a very detailed cost estimate of this project that tells us exactly what is in it and what isn't in it, because at the moment the public don't have that before them.

One of the most telling things about the Treasurer and Mr Willie's contribution here is that neither of them spoke about the debt-servicing expense of this borrowing. Neither of them went to try to undermine whether it's the Coordinator-General's figures of \$45-75 million



a year, or it's the Treasury's figures of \$30 million to service only the Macquarie Point borrowing.

That to me tells us everything we need to know because that debt servicing is what does come out of what we pay every single year and that is what is driving the cuts to our services, to the Neighbourhood Houses, to the Chigwell Garden and Play Group, to the Arts funding and all to pay for a third stadium. A stadium that Tasmanians don't want. A stadium that Tasmanians don't need, and a stadium that Tasmanians clearly can't afford.

I do want to finish by echoing Mr George's call on the Treasurer to come in here and apologise for besmirching the name of Dr Nicholas Gruen, engaged by his government to do this report, and tarnished his name, his credibility tarnished simply because he gave them an answer they didn't want to hear.

**Time expired.**

**Motion agreed to.**

### **MOTION**

#### **Recreational Hunting and Invasive Deer Management in Tasmania**

[6.18 a.m.]

**Mr Di FALCO** (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, a vote will be required. I move -

That the House:-

(1) Recognises:-

- (a) the crucial role recreational hunting plays in deer management; and
- (b) the cultural and historical significance of hunting in Tasmania.

(2) Acknowledges:—

- (a) recreational hunting generates over \$80 million to the Tasmanian economy; and
- (b) several regional Tasmanians rely on harvested meat to provide for their families.

(3) Calls on the Government to:-

- (a) expand Sustainable Timber Tasmania land access to recreational hunting;
- (b) support recreational hunters as the primary method of deer management;

- (c) maintain deer status as partially protected;
- (d) explore amending legislation that prohibits the donation of game meat to charitable organisations to combat food insecurity; and
- (e) maintain the ban on 1080 poison to target deer populations.

**The SPEAKER** - Mr Defalco, have you got a copy of your amendment, and have you socialised it amongst other members?

**Mr Di FALCO** - No. My apologies.

**The SPEAKER** - If you can just provide a copy to the Clerk. Just for the future, you do need to make copies and provide to all of us because we need to circulate it.

**Mr Di FALCO** - No worries.

**The SPEAKER** - You can speak to your motion first and then move an amendment if you want to, otherwise - you're going speak straight to your amendment, are you? Or to the substantive motion then to your amendment?

**Mr Di FALCO** - Yes.

**The SPEAKER** - Okay. You're speaking to your amendment to the motion.

**Mr Di FALCO** - Honourable Speaker, this motion is not about politics; it's about practical land management, common sense, respect, and the people who live on, work on and care for Tasmania's landscape. For too long, the discussion about deer management has been framed as 'hunters versus farmers and conservationists.' That's a false divide. The truth is, hunters are conservationists. They have a vested interest in healthy ecosystems, sustainable populations and ethical harvesting. They want Tasmania's unique environment protected just as much as anybody else, but they also believe that management should be based on facts and practical experience.

The recent 2024 aerial survey of fallow deer told us that the numbers were lower than some alarmist predictions. The Invasive Species Council and others have been warning of a population explosion, but the data doesn't match the rhetoric. That matters, because policy should be driven by evidence, not emotion. A comparison of the population estimates for 2019 and 2024, calculated within the same area, showed an increase from 55,660 deer in 2019 to 71,655 deer in 2024.

Deer numbers must be managed, no question, but the question is how? When you look at Victoria and New South Wales, where hunters work alongside land managers and park authorities, you see programs that save taxpayers millions. Recreational shooters on targeted permits do work for free, and do it ethically.

Hunting has a long and deep connection to Tasmanian life. Generations of families have been hunting the landscape using skills passed down through their fathers and grandfathers. It's not just the sport; it is a culture, a tradition and a way of life. In rural Tasmania, it's part of how people put food on the table and connect with Country. You won't see that in Hobart

boardrooms, but you will see it in the Central Highlands, in the Midlands and in the north-east. It's a tradition that teaches patience, respect for nature, and responsibility for harvest.

When you hear people saying, 'Deer are nothing but a pest', it misses a point entirely. Yes, deer must be managed, but they are also part of Tasmania's cultural heritage and have been around for 200 years. The men and women who manage them through responsible hunting deserve respect and not ridicule.

Maintaining the classification of 'partly-protected' is crucial to sustainable deer management and ensures the revenue through permits and tourism is maintained, while also acting as a deterrent to illegal poaching.

Let's talk numbers: recreational hunting is estimated to generate roundabout \$80 million annually for our economy. That's more than some entire primary industries receive in state support. Hunters spend money on gear, fuel, accommodation, local food and supplies. They keep regional service stations and small businesses alive. If you visit the Bothwell pub you will quickly see the walls are adorned with trophies from both deer and trout. Hunters don't ask for a cent from the government. They pay for the privilege of helping control a partly-protected species.

Compare that to aerial culling: helicopter hours cost thousands of dollars each in cartridges, fuel, pilot time and logistics. It's tens of thousands for a single operation and the meat is left to rot. There's no benefit to local communities, no benefit to wildlife and no benefit to those who are doing it tough in a cost of living crisis.

Let's talk about meat. Tasmanians know how to make the most of what we harvest. For many families, venison and wallaby is not a luxury; it is a necessity. It is lean, sustainable and free range - but under current law, if you harvest a perfectly good animal, you cannot donate that meat to a food charity to feed the disadvantaged. According to Foodbank's 2025 Hunger Report released today, 20 per cent of Australian households experience severe food insecurity. We have Tasmanians skipping meals or going hungry and a state where thousands people are lining up for food relief. That's not just illogical; it's immoral.

I spoke recently with an organisation in New Zealand called Hunters4Hope, who are on track to donate 100,000 meals to food charities this year from harvested venison. They have a blueprint for us to follow. We throw away tonnes of meat each year from Coles and management programs, while families struggle to buy mince and basic meat products.

Let's be clear, there are times when aerial control may be necessary for specific remote or sensitive areas, but it should never be the primary method of management. Aerial culling is expensive, inefficient, and often inhumane. When conducted over dense forests, animals are frequently wounded and not retrieved. There is no follow-up inspection, no meat recovery, and no local economic benefit. Recreational hunters, on the other hand, operate on the ground. They target animals ethically, ensure clean shots, and often retrieve the carcass for use. In doing so, they monitor animal health and report disease risk to authorities - services a government helicopter can't provide. We should see aerial culling as a backup tool, not a blank cheque for contractors, while thousands of licensed hunters stand ready to help for free.

Modern hunting is a regulated activity based on training, ethics and science. If professional contractors in helicopters can use thermal scopes and suppressors, why can't

anybody on foot use the same tools, especially in private land or sensitive areas where noise and disturbance must be minimised, such as in Cygnet?

Now to the issue of 1080 poison. No-one who has seen what 1080 does to an animal could possibly call it humane. It causes a slow, painful death over hours and days, and animals foam from the mouth, convulse, and die in agony. It is indiscriminate. It kills deer, wallaby, birds, non-target species, and sometimes working dogs. Yet, it is still used on Tasmanian soil in 2025. We are modern state with modern alternatives. The continued use of poison belongs to a different era. If we are serious about animal welfare, 1080 must go. End of story.

A key part of this motion is about public land access. Tasmania has millions of hectares of public land - parks, reserves and forestry zones - yet hunters are locked out of most of it. If you remember the figure of 71,655 deer in Tasmania, 88 per cent of them are located within management zone one, which to nobody's surprise, is mainly sustainable timberland. We have created a sanctuary for deer to populate with restricted public access for hunters, and then we throw our hands up in surprise when numbers have increased. That's a missed opportunity for management, recreation and tourism. It is also a missed opportunity for education and community-building. When hunters are in the bush, they look after tracks, they report fires, they remove rubbish, they respect boundaries, they become stewards of that country.

Victoria has a model for public land hunting that works. Why shouldn't Tasmania follow suit? With permits and codes of conduct, it can be done safely and responsibly. Opening some areas will also relieve pressure on private landowners who currently shoulder the burden alone.

I want to acknowledge the Tasmanian farmers, especially those in the Midlands and Central Highlands, who have been dealing with deer impacts for years. Many have formed partnerships with local hunters to reduce numbers without resorting to poison or wasteful culls.

Many farmers use their land for commercial gain, charging hunters for the privilege of hunting. That's a privilege that I often pay for and I am happy to continue to do so. I strongly support landowners' rights to make that decision. The collaboration works, it is based on trust, local knowledge and results. The state should support more of that, not imposing top-down solutions from Hobart offices.

Some people say hunters don't care about the environment; that's nonsense. In fact, hunters are often the first to notice changes in the habitat, disease in wildlife, or illegal dumping in forests. They report these things because they're out there regularly, not from behind a desk, but with boots on the ground.

The Shooters, Fishes and Farmers Party believes in balanced environmental policy. One that protects our nature and wildlife, but also respects the people who use and manage the land. When we involve recreational hunters in management plans, we reduce waste, we reduce costs and improve outcomes for both farmers and landowners. The 2024 survey showed the deer populations are stable with marginal growth, largely thanks to hunting pressure, that's a success story. It should be acknowledged as such.

Ethical harvesting is central to this debate. Every hunter I know takes pride in clean shots and using as much of the animal as possible. They follow strict codes of conduct. They teach young hunters' safety, respect and discipline. These values should be encouraged, not eroded

by bureaucratic rules that ignore the reality of what ethical management looks like on the ground.

We can bring together hunters, farmers, scientists and government to build a smarter deer management framework. Let's have joint management areas, public access schemes, and educational programs that educate responsible participation. This is not about opening the floodgates. It's about recognising that Tasmanian hunters are already doing the heavy lifting and should be treated as partners, not problems.

This motion is about fairness, respect, and practicality. We can manage deer populations and preserve Tasmania's hunting heritage. We can protect native species and allow sustainable harvesting. We can save taxpayer money and strengthen regional economies, but we must stop demonising the people doing the work. Tasmania's hunters are conservationists, providers and community members. They deserve to be heard. I want to acknowledge the minister's office and staff and the opposition for their willingness to explore alternative solutions and progressing these into the near future.

I hope to work closely with them to ensure sustainable wildlife management. Let's replace poison with professionalism, let's replace waste with opportunity and let's finally give recreational hunters the respect, access and recognition they deserve as the state's primary managers of deer. Thank you, honourable Speaker.

**The SPEAKER** - Thank you, Mr Di Falco. Just to clarify for the House that the question is around the amendment to the motion.

So you can speak to both the amendment and the formal motion. Is everybody clear of what the amendment is?

**Mr Di FALCO** - The amendment is to leave out paragraph 3(c).

[6.34 p.m.]

**Mr PEARCE** (Braddon - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Honourable Speaker, I thank the Independent member for Lyons for tabling this motion. Deer management is a priority for both of us and I know that this has been welcomed in our talks in recent times. Like the member for Lyons, I too recognise the importance of hunting deer as a management tool to ensure that we have sustainable hunting resource for deer and recreational hunters.

I am also aware of the growing number of deer that are impacting many Tasmanians and the environment, including in peri-urban areas. Maintaining this resource needs to be balanced with reducing numbers where deer should not be. I have made that my mission to get those numbers down where deer should not be.

That is why we have the Tasmanian Wild Fallow Deer Management Plan. It is the Tasmanian government's balanced blueprint for managing wild fallow deer across the state. Essentially, it outlines how and where deer are to be sustainably managed as hunting resources and where they should be eradicated from Tasmania. The plan balances the interests of farmers, foresters, hunters, community, and the environment. Importantly, much of the work the member is asking for is already being progressed.

The trial has already undergone significant stages in commercially wild-shot deer, which includes the consideration of primary produced safety requirements. I met recently with John Kelly from Lenah Game Meats, who has a business set up that is sponsored by the department in ensuring that that meat is fit for human consumption and I look forward to that progressing.

We have also instigated a program to increase recreational hunting programs on Crown land and GBE land, including Sustainable Timber Tasmania. This action supports clauses 3(a), (b) and (d) of the member's motion.

The member discussed 1080 poison. The Commonwealth Government's Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicines Authority's (APVMA) approval to Tasmania to mix or provide 1080 baits to landholders does not include fallow deer. It is, therefore, currently unlawful for NRE Tasmania to provide 1080 to landholders for the intended purpose and I can confirm that no permits have been issued to this date, supporting clause 3(e) of this motion.

We have committed to develop a new deer plan prior to the current plan expiring in 2027. This will be informed by the aerial survey, the results of which I released some weeks ago. It took into account the needs of stakeholders, with the important aim of the reduction of deer numbers and identifying where those deer numbers should be reduced. The information from the aerial deer survey and the balance of the needs of stakeholders, with the important aim of reducing those numbers, has been made clear in that report.

Simplifying or reclassifying 'deer,' is the next point I want to raise. I want to state that just simply recategorising the terminology around deer will not reduce the deer numbers. What we need to see is a concentrated, technical, scientifically based reduction of those numbers. We are going to need sporting shooters, landholders and land managers, and we need a concerted effort to get those numbers where we need them, so they are not doing damage, as I detailed earlier.

We have invested over \$7 million to implement the plan to date, and our election commitment of an additional \$2.25 million will ensure that this important work continues to be done.

The Tasmanian Liberal government has done more to manage deer in Tasmania than any government before it. I now stand at the front of that push to reduce those numbers, particularly in zones that currently exist, determined by zone two and zone three. We will continue, and I will continue to make it my priority to get on with the job and to implement our plan, to build on our plan, and to encourage that collaborative approach as we reduce these numbers in Tasmania.

[6.40 p.m.]

**Ms BADGER** (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I thank my fellow member for Lyons, Mr Di Falco, for bringing this on. I believe this is your first private member's time, so well done on bringing something that is close to your heart and, indeed, close to everybody's heart in this Chamber. I believe everybody concurs that we have to do more to control the invasive deer population in Tasmania. What the minister said is correct: this government has done a lot in terms of investing in various programs on controlling invasive deer. However, obviously, there is more we need to do.

Something of note this government has achieved, which it hasn't done on other programs, is achieve the social buy-in for the deer program. It has worked across a variety of sectors, from professional and recreational hunters through to your land managers, the Tasmanian Land Conservancy, big farm owners through the Midlands, the Invasive Species Council, the Bob Brown Foundation. The government found a middle ground that everybody was happy to continue working forward.

There is still much more the state government has to do and an awful lot more the federal government has to do in terms of helping fund the programs in the Tasmanian Wild Fallow Deer Management Plan, but also particularly in the World Heritage Area. That is not exclusively a state responsibility. The Australian Government is the state body, under UNESCO, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), to be protecting the cultural and heritage values of that land.

That social buy-in achieved in the past few years by the Liberal government - and that's a statement you'd rarely hear from me, is incredibly important and not something that is easy to build. However, it is something that is very easy to erode if you do not bring everybody in the community along with you when making changes and decisions, and having debates on something that has such a significant buy-in.

I acknowledge in the motion that Mr Di Falco has put forward that, in terms of 2(a), the economic income hunting generates for Tasmania, that figure there is not exclusive for deer hunting. That's more broadly recreational activities as well. I'm not 100 per cent sure what 2(b) is attempting to say. I believe there might be more than several regional Tasmanians relying on harvest meat, but I get the point that people do rely on it for their families.

In terms of how we are dealing with deer and comparing volunteer recreational hunters to the professionals, there was a study in Australia that compared ground-based volunteer hunters to contract shooters. It found that the contracted shooters killed four times more Sambar deer per hour than volunteers did, noting that is not a Tasmanian-based study. In the Gum Lagoon Conservation Park in South Australia, 65 recreational hunters over four days were only able to kill 44 deer. One professional shooter in a helicopter was able to kill 182 deer in four hours. A study in New Zealand found that environmental recovery times were up to twice as long when recreational hunting was used to control deer versus the aerial shooting. In Tasmania, a single professional shooter was able to cull as many wallabies as four recreational shooters. That's the facts, that's the science on the matter. That is what we have seen has happened elsewhere.

There is a role for recreational hunting in management, and it is as an assistant to the broader control programs we have. It is noted from various organisations that recreational hunting does support those programs. In smaller and inaccessible areas, we still need skilled recreational hunters to help on the ground, but we need the professional shooters, we need concentrated programs. That is what we need to be putting investment into in this state.

In the motion, 3(b) says:

To support recreational hunters as the primary method for deer management.

There is no precedent for that anywhere. The studies aren't there to support that, so we can't support the motion for that reason.

I note that Mr Di Falco has removed in his amendment 3(c), which was to maintain the deer status as partially protected. I congratulate Mr Di Falco for removing that because we know we had to. That was a recommendation in the Tasmanian State of the Environment report. It is important not just for the natural values. I have spoken about the TWWH, and the same applies for the national parks in terms of the damage we are seeing, not just in the Walls of Jerusalem and the Central Highlands area but also on the east coast. We are seeing increasing issues in the Douglas Apsley National Park, and we need a program set up there to help mitigate those issues.

I note the Seymour community group which had been restoring the wetlands down there, a restoration project that was volunteer-run. They did such a good job that the area had been reclassified and protected as a conservation area 18 to 24 months ago. That area was trampled and partially destroyed by invasive deer.

What is incredibly concerning is 3(a):

To expand Sustainable Timber Tasmania land access to recreational hunting.

It is not lost on anyone here that the zone some of the Sustainable Timbers Tasmania land is in is problematic. There are big deer populations there. However, as the science and the studies from everywhere else show, just permitting more access for recreational hunting isn't going to solve the issue. Where is the program for those areas? Where can we upscale it?

Sustainable Timbers has professional shooters. They employ people to do that kind of thing. What does opening that area up to recreational hunting mean? How does that impinge on the programs Sustainable Timbers already has in place? Also, what land specifically for Sustainable Timbers? It isn't mentioned in this motion, and it's not as simple as just saying open it up, because some of that area is for recreation, it is for bushwalking.

If we negotiated this motion last week holistically and in good faith, we wouldn't be in this situation today where the community is scared. We are losing that social buy-in that the government has brought because people are not sure what is happening and what it means. I will read part of an email from Janet Gatehouse, the Mayor of Sorell, a municipality in Lyons. I don't have the original email on me, so I'm not sure if she has written this in her capacity as Mayor or if it is personal.

**Mr Bayley** - Professionally.

**Ms BADGER** - Professionally, as Mayor, thank you, Mr Bayley. She says:

The science is clear: recreational hunting does not remove enough deer to see meaningful reductions in populations. To reduce deer populations, more than 35-40 per cent of animals must be removed each year. Recreational hunting typically does not achieve these rates the landscape scale. Professional, coordinated and targeted control programs have proven to be far more effective and humane. Policies that prioritise hunting have failed to stem



population growth and have allowed deer to spread into high-conservation areas, including the Wilderness World Heritage Area.

She goes on:

Tasmania needs a well-resourced, coordinated professional program with clear population targets, removal of legal protection of feral deer and strong leadership to protect farms, native species and regional communities.

She said:

Please stand with the science, primary industries, local communities and conservation experts by opposing this motion. [tbc]

That is what the Greens are going to have to do because it is not bringing the community along with us. We have to bring everybody along. This has raised the fear that, by stealth, it is going to open up public land for recreational hunting. If we want to have that conversation, it has to be with the community. There has to be community consultation. That all has to happen first. This is more about promoting hunting than it is about the removal of deer.

We need to consider carefully about that social buy-in because, as I said, there isn't any other issue, to be honest, on which this government has managed to achieve that. We should not be willing to erode that for something that isn't fully scientifically based. It has had landholders reaching out to members today. It has had environmental groups reaching out. It has had mayors reaching out, and not just in that open letter either. Other mayors across the state, people who are recreational hunters themselves that have a stake in this, say it's simply not enough.

I believe we can work collaboratively, and I acknowledge Mr Pearce's work thus far. He is new in the role. He has been incredibly genuine. His office has been open if we want to collaborate on different things, and also if we want information. I think into the future there is an opportunity for all members to work collaboratively and to bring our communities along with us so that we can get a good outcome, get on top of invasive deer and protect what is special to Tasmania.

[6.50 p.m.]

**Ms FINLAY** (Bass - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, I rise this afternoon to give contributions on behalf of Tasmanian Labor to Motion 31, raised today by Mr Di Falco, and acknowledging that his first motion to private members time and has definitely started a conversation not only through the Chamber, but through the state in proposing this, for this week.

I want to start in my contributions by recognising I stand here today as a member of the Tasmanian Labor Party, as a shadow minister for Primary Industries, also the shadow minister for Environment and as the member for Bass. As is the case right across Tasmania, in my great electorate of Bass, we have a very diverse community. In my community this issue is raised often and it's raised deeply. When I say this issue, I'm talking about deer. There are many incredible recreational hunters, there are commercial shooters, there are farmers, there are foresters, there are passionate community members in our electorate that raise this from different perspectives all the time.

Mr Di Falco has raised a perspective about deer here for the parliament to consider. I did note the comments of the previous speaker, where things in this might not go far enough, or they're not perfect enough, or they don't consider every element of something that's required. In this private members time, this is an opportunity for people to raise things and for us to take steps.

Mr Di Falco has asked the House today to recognise a crucial role of recreational hunting and the role that that plays in deer management. Our response to that would be in hearing the minister speak and others speak today, that everyone in Tasmania has a collective responsibility to do what they can to manage deer populations in Tasmania. I know that recreational hunters, commercial shooters, farmers, foresters and community members all recognise from the recent survey results there is an escalation in the population happening. Current controls aren't containing the populations of deer has been stated already today.

There are concerning public issues around public safety in peri-urban areas as well, that's bringing it to the attention of a new range of people in Tasmania. Where recreational hunters have a role to play in management, we all have a role in that. I think we all have a role in being as informed as we can, and as active as we can in the different things that we bring to this conversation.

Mr Di Falco also asks that the House acknowledge the cultural and historical significance of hunting in Tasmania. Like many others here, I've received a flood of emails. There's been a lot of correspondence and a lot of activity around this motion today. Also from some of my closest mates, who love to go out and hunt, and they wanted to reinforce with me what hunting meant to them. That sometimes there are people in the community that it might not be their activity of choice, they might not like it, so they may diminish how others feel about it. But, for many in our community, it's not just a hobby, it's not just something they do, but it's their passion, it's their life. For them, it is the Tasmanian way of life, and I think that's important for that to be recognised today.

There are other elements in this motion that I will touch on as well, but for many, it's a way of providing protein to their family. For many, it is a way of sustaining themselves and that is also important to acknowledge. For many, it is a masterful craft, where they work regularly to hone their skill and they see it as a real development of them as a person. All those things need to be recognised, not only in the cultural and historical significance of hunting, but also in the personal position of and the personal development of individuals across our community.

Mr Di Falco also asks that we acknowledge the economic contribution of hunting in Tasmania. Over \$80 million from a recent economic study provided. I know that having seen that work when it was released, understanding the direct and indirect benefits of recreational activities in Tasmania. I have equally had emails and correspondence from people talking about the need to balance out economic benefit from one sector of the community, to where people see a net detriment in other areas, in terms of the impact on our landholders and on crops and other things across Tasmania. There's a balance in that, but recognising there's a local retail store in our electorate where many people hunting in Tasmania invest all their excess funds into having the best gear and the best equipment, and that generates a lot of economic activity across our community.

I spoke previously, but Mr Di Falco asks that we recognise that some Tasmanians rely on the meat that they harvest to feed their families. Speaking out of order, but Mr Di Falco also asks that we look to explore amending legislation - so it's not an absolute; that process would go through consultation - explore amending legislation that currently prohibits the donation of game meat to charitable organisations to combat food insecurity. That is a massive resource in Tasmania which, if we are able to capture and then share across many different organisations and individuals that are supporting people in our community - what an incredible prime protein for people in our community to be able to access. I commend Mr Di Falco for that. There is also a comment here that Mr Di Falco asks the House to maintain the ban on 1080 poison that targets the deer population.

This has stimulated a lot of conversation. Our position is to support hunters, to support commercial shooters, to support farmers, foresters and people right across our community, but doing so in a way that ensures that we maintain the population that at the moment, with the last survey, now at almost over 70,000 animals in our state - in the last couple of years, I'm going to say it's escalated. Despite the management and despite the recognition that the member for the Greens mentioned in terms of the current strength of the government's position, it's still not enough.

The minister and I have had many exchanges in this Chamber, but I am hearing good things about your approach to this in this place and in the community about your proposals with deer management. I would say today that I positively and respectfully put you on notice to be able to actually implement that and do that, because we can't let this get out of control.

I have some pretty tricky conversations with people in the community, where they challenge the idea of - there are people in the community who look for the quality of the animal and that's what they're trying to protect and preserve in Tasmania. I personally say: 'We're never going to run out of deer, and there will always be deer to hunt. There will always be opportunities for hunters and shooters in Tasmania.' What we need to be doing is making sure that it is not eroding the economic advantage of our primary producers, that it's not putting at risk our local communities in the peri-urban areas, that it is not harming our World Heritage areas and our reserves in Tasmania, and that we do all we can to manage and provide for the range of activities in Tasmania.

Somewhere in here, I must have skipped over the other piece that had been spoken to, which was about expanding the Sustainable Timber Tasmania land and making that available to recreational hunting. I hear the comment by the previous member of the Greens in terms of how there might be some conflicts with some professional programs that are happening as well. However, if Sustainable Timbers Tasmania was to expand, there would be consultation. There would be a sophisticated program to that.

We know that the lands managed by Sustainable Timber Tasmania have become safe havens for deer. Deer are smart, right? Not only are they good to eat, but they're smart. They're finding protection in those lands, and then with the increase of irrigation and others in the farming areas, they're going out to enjoy the plethora, the abundance provided now with our new farming practices. We support the expansion into the sustainable timber areas.

Overall, thank you for tabling a motion today that has not reignited - because it's a constant conversation - but continues to hold at the forefront the conversation around deer in Tasmania. I know there are many passionate hunters in Tasmania who see this as a way of life,

and it's important to ensure that that can continue, but I don't think that's at odds with strong deer management. I don't think that's at odds with implementing whatever we can to ensure that that population decreases. I look forward to hearing what the minister looks to progress across his term as minister. I hope and trust that with all of the efforts of all people in Tasmania - whether they be landowners, whether they be primary producers, whether they be recreational hunters or commercial shooters - we've all got a role to play, and we all need to bring this back under management.

[7.00 p.m.]

**Mr RAZAY** (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I also acknowledge the honourable member Mr Di Falco about his motion number 31, and I would like to make some contribution here.

Tasmania's rising numbers of wild deer, now at more than 70,000, demand action. But we need to tread carefully with conservationists, farmers and hunters working together. Expanding the reach of recreational shooters makes sense. But it must be done in a tightly regulated way. Opening up land managed by Sustainable Timbers Tasmania for recreation hunting raises many questions, the most important being of public safety.

We must also ensure that culling follows animal welfare standards, ensuring quick and humane deaths, and under no circumstances should the use of 1080 poison be considered. This is restricted a pesticide because of the risk it poses in the environment, to wildlife and to domestic animals. It's one of the most toxic substances that has no antidote.

I applaud the idea of supplying game meat to charities. It makes sense to use this resource as the cost-of-living crisis continues to strangle households. We should follow perhaps the example of New Zealand, where hunting clubs harvest and donate meat to those in need. In 2023 they had more than a few tonnes of venison mincemeat which was distributed in their program. This type of program demands exploration. Surely, we should be using this resource rather than leaving carcasses to rot on the ground as has happened in the past with the aerial culls.

According to the Tasmanian Government Area Survey in 2024, the wild deer population has been growing at a rate of 6 per cent a year over the last five years and it's occupying 27 per cent of the state, including part of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. This demands action. Estimates place the economic losses for farmers of at \$87 million annually in lost productivity while the damage to sensitive native habitat is also causing great concern. With the Tasmanian Wild Deer Management Plan now in its third year of a five-year blueprint, maybe it's time to go back to key stakeholders including Tasmanian Game Council, Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, hunting groups, conservationists, foresters and general community to forge a path forward.

I have some concerns, especially regarding the paragraph to expand the Sustainable Timbers Tasmania land access to recreation hunting, mainly for public safety. However, I feel this is our role in parliament that we should monitor the situation and that we should always revisit and review how it is practiced.

[7.04 p.m.]

**Mr SHELTON** (Lyons) - Deputy Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to participate in this debate. As has just been mentioned, three members from Lyons. You can understand that, when Lyons is around 60 per cent of Tasmania and a significant area of that has

a significant deer population, basically grown out of the middle from the Southern Northern Midlands and the Central Highlands and the deer population has expanded out from that area over a number of years and particularly over my lifetime, which is probably longer than most people in the Chamber.

In my early days there was hardly a deer around and you had to manage for the shooters and so forth, and there was a management program put in place.

Post that era, the Deer Management Committee, chaired by previous MLC Greg Hall, was put together. As the previous speaker said, there needs to be some discussion going on. Well, that is the discussion point, they have been pulled together over the last five or six years with farmers and the TFGA and other interested groups to come up with the deer management plan, which I would like to talk about now.

Before I do, in acknowledging what we should be doing, I have a son who is a deer shooter and when I talk to him, he supplies us with a little bit of venison. My wife doesn't necessarily like cooking it. Her father - and this is where Marilyn would say, 'Get off your soapbox' - grew up in Connorville, basically has deer and wallaby all the time. They used to eat a lot of game meat, so she would prefer not to eat that nowadays or even cook it. Nevertheless it was a part of our upbringing, all our life to have some venison there. My son and his wife both have firearms and always get a deer licence. It is somewhat annoying the first weekend in March when you want to do something, but they are dedicated deer shooters and that weekend is deer season opening so you can't get them to do anything other than head out in the bush. When I was younger and went deer shooting, I spent all weekend in the bush one opening season, never shot anything, and that was the end of my deer hunting process. It wasn't very productive back then.

However, as a landowner, it is important to manage this process to make sure that with the population does not get out of control. Some people out there would suggest it's out of control at the rate it is expanding now. That is why the government put the Tasmanian Wild Fallow Deer Management Plan in place. It outlines how and where deer are to be sustainably managed as a hunting resource and where they should be eradicated. The plan was released just over three years ago and outlines the Tasmanian government's policy position on deer management until 2027. The plan is already having an impact, we have established three deer management zones for wild fallow deer, to maintain a traditional hunting resource and balance those needs.

The *Nature Conservation (Deer Farming) Regulations 2022* addresses the risk of farm deer escapes establishing satellite populations. The plan has also introduced new permits that increase landowners' ability to reduce numbers and manage deer-related impacts, including zone-one special purpose wildlife permits and emergency property protection permits. The plan also highlights the fact that we employed a property-based wildlife management planning officer to support landowners to develop and implement property-based wildlife management plans; continued spotlight surveys, deer scans and camera traps, monitor the activities of deer across Tasmania; completed a study into the economic contribution of recreational hunting and shooting for the Tasmanian economy. Implemented three aerial culling programmes for deer in the Walls of Jerusalem National Park and the Central Plateau Conservation Area; conducted an annual public land ballot to reserve access whereby 10 reserves, including some on Hydro Tasmania managed land, are available to deer hunters. Over 400 hunting parties were

provided access to hunt deer in reserve land through a ballot and ticketed booking system to hunt male and antlerless deer during the season.

We are also undertaking the commercial wild shot deer trial through the through to April 2026 as well as the peri-urban deer control pilot program in areas of the Tasman Peninsula, New Norfolk, Bruny Island, Meander Valley, West Tamar and other local government areas. We are also developing a new deer plan prior to the current plan expiring in 2027, using the aerial survey results.

The Tasmanian Liberal government has done more to manage wild fallow deer in Tasmania than any government before it and we will continue to act to get on top of the job of implementing our plan and will be pleased to support the motion today.

As well as that, a couple of stories. It has been mentioned today the actual danger of deer on the road. As an automotive mechanic teacher at the TAFE college signing all the apprentices in one Monday morning, as they come in for training, one person was missing, and I started to worry about where he was at 8 a.m. when they arrived. He arrived at around 11.00 a.m. and indicated that he'd run into a deer. The issue for drivers when you hit a deer, is that you take the legs out from under them and they have a big body and that comes through the windscreen. It's not like hitting a wallaby that goes under the car. If you hit a deer - and generally speaking, they're jumping anyway - it's very dangerous for the drivers of those motor vehicles, so management is crucial.

A big fence will hold them in, but water won't and there's a fairly big population of deer either side of the Bass Highway heading to Launceston, at Rutherglen, or at the South Esk River and deer have been known to jump across the highway. Only a couple of weeks ago my brother-in-law said he nearly hit one going across the highway. They've also been known to swim the river and the river there wouldn't be quite 100 metres wide, but as you look off the Hadsphen bridge it's a pretty wide river and deer have swum across that river. It is a problem wherever you go, and they are expanding.

All that said, they are a beautiful creature. If you've been going along the road and seen a couple of deer in front of you and the way that they prance to the fence and just go 'ploop' and they're over it -

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr Pearce** - How do they go?

**Mr SHELTON** - 'Ploop.' It is sheer elegance and anybody who hasn't seen that is missing out on something. Next time you see some deer and they're heading towards the fence, just stop and have a look because they are a magnificent creature. The strength in that leap is amazing.

Just a few other points on forested land. All private landowners who back up to forestry, can shoot all the deer they like on their land, but as the member for Bass has mentioned, deer shooters know that the deer know that they will be shot on this side of the fence and not shot at on the other side of the fence. They will stay in the forested land until it's night or until they get hungry enough, then they will come out. For any landowner backed up to or bordering forestry land, it is a real problem. Under a balloted system where we allow limited access to

people to shoot in there and have the ability to shoot in there, I can see that as a great thing. That is a trial that we've been going through.

In balancing that - there's been a lot of politics in deer, and we mustn't forget that there are farmed deer out there and to throw a heap of deer onto the market would devastate -

**Time expired.**

[7.14 p.m.]

**Mr GARLAND** (Braddon) - Deputy Speaker, I thank Mr Di Falco for bringing this on. It's a very important motion and I am in almost complete agreement with him. I support deer hunting. I acknowledge its cultural and historical significance. I know there are many Tasmanians who rely on harvested meat to feed their families, just as I have with fishing. Where we differ is on the effectiveness of the government's current management strategies and the real economic cost of Tasmania's feral deer problem.

We know from the government's own survey last year that we have a serious problem with deer. Those results show deer numbers are increasing, and we aren't talking small numbers. In four years, while the government was aiming to reduce their population, they have increased by about 20 per cent, and are getting closer and denser in areas in, or bordering, World Heritage areas. It's clear proof that the government's current management strategy is an abject failure.

This outcome was utterly predictable. In 2021, a federal senate report on the impact of feral deer, pigs and goats recommended that all Australian jurisdictions treat wild deer as environmental pests, and make any necessary legislative or regulatory changes to enable effective control on both private land and in national parks and World Heritage areas. Yet, the Tasmanian government has refused to act. You go to the department's website and you will find a list of declared invasive animals that makes no mention of deer. Despite all the evidence and recommendations supporting reform, deer remain partly protected. You have to ask why.

This government continues to prioritise a small group of elite landowners and hunters who want to preserve deer as a game species as if we're in 18th-century England. This is not the 18th-century and we're certainly not in England.

Deer are a massive and growing problem in Tasmania. It's going to take a coordinated, large-scale effort using every available tool to get this under control. That means removing their partly protected status, and declaring them a pest and invasive species. Doing so would give landholders, hunters and public land managers the freedom to manage them effectively. This is exactly what environmental scientists are calling for and what farmers are demanding. I believe recreational hunters have a vital role to play in controlling deer numbers and I want to see them supported and empowered to do that. That's why I will be supporting this motion.

I also want to see the removal of the restriction under the *Wildlife (General) Regulations 2010* that prevents the sale or trade of wild shot deer, it's ridiculous. The meat is outstanding and it is valuable. If we put a price on it, we will create incentives to solve the problem, just like everything else with a price on it on this earth, we will get rid of it. At the moment, we're actually importing venison into Tasmania and that's madness. It's like importing electricity to Tasmania.

I also agree with Mr Di Falco on the use of 1080. I do not want to see 1080 poison used as a control measure for any animal. I urge the government to act on the petition tabled yesterday by the Greens, signed by more than 1000 Tasmanians, calling for a permanent prohibition on 1080 use.

The economic cost. I'm not sure where the figure of \$80 million comes from, in terms of recreational hunting's contribution to the Tasmanian economy. Mr Di Falco can provide a reference or his source when he sums up, but even if it's accurate, it needs to be seen in context.

The Invasive Species Council's briefing paper, 'Tackling Invasive Species: Priorities for the next Tasmanian government, June 2024,' estimated that feral deer cost Tasmania up to \$100 million a year, with at least \$80 million of that borne by the farming sector alone. That ongoing cost is unsustainable and far outweighs any economic benefit to the state, or to the landed gentry that hunting might bring.

This out-of-control problem is costing our economy dearly and damaging our environment. Deer are destroying native vegetation in our fragile, internationally significant World Heritage areas and degrading productive farmland through overgrazing, over-browsing and trampling. The impacts on biodiversity and Aboriginal cultural landscapes are serious and ongoing. Deer also target new green growth after bushfires, preventing regeneration and recovery, which is a major issue as climate change increases fire frequency and intensity.

We cannot let this continue. The government must immediately commence a full review of its deer management plan. We cannot afford to wait another two years while the population surges toward 100,000 animals. When the minister introduced the plan back in 2021 or 2022, promised regular reviews to ensure its goals are being achieved, so, let's get on with it. It's time for the minister and the departments to come to the table to develop a management plan that protects our environment, empowers hunters and creates sensible, commercial opportunities from harvesting per species, just as we've done with sea urchins. That is what I will be pushing for and I look forward to working with Mr Di Falco to achieve it.

Helicopter shooting - I have been assured by people who have been hunting deer for a long time that it will only be effective for a short period. I have been told, the deer are already hiding down in the sags whenever they hear helicopters and wait there till the noise and the threat is gone. They're a very smart animal. Like I said before, we have to use every tool. We have a lot of recreational hunters in this state, that are prepared to do the job. Let's empower them and let them get on with it. I support the motion and the amendment. Thank you, Mr Di Falco.

[7.20 p.m.]

**Mr GEORGE** (Franklin) - Honourable Deputy Speaker, I rise with some reluctance. First of all, I'd like to congratulate my colleague Mr Di Falco in joining this elite band of where we've been able to explore private members time. I sit with him on what Labor now likes to call the 'protest party' side of the House. While I think we respect each other's views, we nevertheless often find ourselves voting on different sides of the House. I'm afraid that I will find myself on the opposite side again today, and that is very reluctant, if I may say so.

I have spent much of my life around guns used as weapons of war, so I recognise that what I have witnessed over the years predisposes me to be wary of them, if not downright afraid



and afraid of people bearing arms. Since I became aware of this motion, I've been working hard to put aside my prejudice, to consider the motion on its merits, and to do as much research as I can into the issue in the short amount of time that I've had.

I would like to support the motion, but I feel that it is so broad and lacking in detail that it would mean moving amendment after amendment until it probably was no longer recognisable to Mr Di Falco and no longer acceptable to him. He is right to say that Tasmania has a long history and culture of hunting, which goes back to 60,000 years, I guess - but, of course, we're talking here about a different form of hunting and a different animal.

I know that there are many cohorts of Tasmanians who love their guns, respect gun laws, behave in a responsible manner, and do help in reducing fallow deer. However, I am not convinced on the evidence that recreational hunting can play the primary role that Mr Di Falco refers to in deer management, or that the benefits of recreational hunting outweigh the problems of recreational hunting when it comes to tourism and bringing income into the state.

I do understand that fallow deer make wonderful eating, and I can see no reason why, with caution and care, we should not be able to change the laws to make sure that deer shot by professional or by recreational hunters should not be allowed to go onto the market as well as to actually feed the hunters and the families themselves.

However, fallow deer are, of course, an introduced species, and they are feral - 'wild' may be a better word. While it's legal to hunt and eat them, they obviously remain a major and damaging issue and a destructive pest that needs to be heavily reduced, if not eradicated. While I believe that recreational hunters can certainly play a role, there can be no reason for the partial protection of feral deer that can continue to procreate just for the pleasure of recreational hunters or just for hunting.

The research that I've done indicates to me that professional shooting from a helicopter or from the ground, according to some research papers that were published this year, would likely provide faster and greater reductions in fallow deer populations than recreational hunting.

I have been reading some background from the Tasmanian Land Conservancy, who has been in contact with me and others today, who say that:

While we respect and appreciate the connection that hunters have to these places, and value working with them wherever their interests in hunting align with our goals to protect natural values, we cannot support the idea that the primary way of reducing fallow deer is through recreational hunting.

However, promisingly that the last two years of monitoring have shown a fall in spread and number of detections of deer across various different areas coinciding with aerial control plans delivered by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment. This program demonstrated what can be possible when professional deer control is sufficiently resourced and coordinated. Such programs can be delivered in tandem with recreational hunting for the best outcomes for nature and land managers.

The use of baits - I believe it's the 1080 baits. It is so out of date, so damaging to all forms of wildlife that banning it is clearly something that should have been implemented years ago.

May I suggest, with some hesitation, because I know that this is an urgent problem, I would be more than happy to see Mr di Falco and this parliament put the whole question of the eradication or reduction of fallow deer in Tasmania back again before a committee of this parliament which can examine the evidence of park rangers, farmers, deer hunters, shooters, conservationists, government departments and people whose job it is to manage threatened species that are under threat from fallow deer.

I realise that may delay implementation and I'm looking forward to hearing from the minister for primary industries about any action this government is prepared to take because it is well overdue.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER** - If there are no further speakers, Mr di Falco, in accordance with Sessional Orders, I call on you to speak in reply. Do you wish to speak in reply?

[7.26 p.m.]

**Mr Di FALCO** (Lyons) - Deputy Speaker, shooting from the helicopters is not a silver bullet, and it's really expensive. We're talking about \$1100 per deer, whereas many farmers have a regular crew of recreational shooters who will do the job free of charge. As for the allegedly high success rate allegedly of aerial culling, they also have access to thermal scopes and suppressors. Also, I'd like to remind members that they're using semi-automatic firearms as well. If you want hunters to have the same level of success but [inaudible] that needs to be considered.

**Mr Bayley** - They're professionals. They're licensed. It's a completely different kettle of fish, mate. We've moved beyond on that.

**Ms Badger** - We've really stayed away from that in this debate.

**Mr Di FALCO** - You can licence ordinary shooters - anyway, I won't get into it now.

**Mr Shelton** - You can't use the argument and compare if you're not comparing the same -

**Mr Di FALCO** - As far as damage to farmland and the like, fallow deer aren't the only ones that have been subject to a count. Currently, there are three million wallabies in Tasmania. As a biomass, they far outstrip deer, so for any group to say we're losing \$41 million in production needs to factor in that there are so many wallabies around and at the end of the day, it's a bigger biomass, they are causing more damage. The sins of the deer are because they are introduced whereas native animals can go for broke.

A number of years ago the Tasmanian Farmers and Growers Association (TFGA) did a survey amongst all their members and asked what the most destructive pests were. Deer came in at number seven. Obviously, that's going to be higher now and the reason will be because nowadays there are far more pivots around and far more irrigated land and far more food. Where are the deer going to go? Where the food is.

We also need to realise that all those deer were in sustainable timberland where we were excluded from. Obviously, the numbers are going to increase because they were forced out by

two years of drought. Therefore, they are going out into the paddocks because that's where the food is, that's where the moisture is, that's where the nutrition is.

I believe the honourable member Ms Finlay mentioned that you can shoot deer all year round, but the government's introduced a quality deer management number of years ago, which means you shoot as many days as you want, but you keep the stag season to six-week window. That way there's a chance for trophy deer or antlers to develop. Not everybody is a meat shooter. Most of them are, but there would be quite a few overseas hunters who would come, when they were allowed to, to shoot fallow deer.

If we're talking about professional shooters compared with providers with the same tools that they have, suppressors and we could do a better job at maintaining the numbers. Don't hamstring us by keeping us out of the nurseries. Allow us in there.

New Zealand allows hunters to public lands. Bushwalkers often hear gunfire as they're walking along the tracks in New Zealand. There's never been an issue. I don't suspect that there's going to be an issue in production forest either.

**The SPEAKER** - The honourable member's time has expired.

The question is that the amendment be agreed.

**Amendment agreed to.**

**The SPEAKER** (Mrs Petrusma) - The question is that the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

**The House divided -**

**AYES 27**

Mr Abetz  
Mrs Archer  
Mr Barnett  
Dr Broad  
Ms Brown  
Ms Butler  
Mr Di Falco  
Ms Dow  
Mr Ellis  
Mr Fairs  
Mr Ferguson  
Ms Finlay  
Mr Garland  
Mrs Greene  
Ms Haddad  
Ms Howlett  
Mr Jaensch  
Mr Mitchell  
Mr O'Byrne (Teller)

**NOES 7**

Ms Badger  
Mr Bayley  
Ms Burnet  
Mr George  
Ms Johnston (Teller)  
Ms Rosol  
Dr Woodruff

Ms Ogilvie  
Mr Pearce  
Prof Razay  
Mr Rockliff  
Mr Shelton  
Mr Vermey  
Mr Willie  
Mr Winter

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

**MOTION**

**Bell Bay Aluminium Smelter**

[7.38 p.m.]

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House -

(1) Notes that -

- (a) Bell Bay Aluminium in Northern Tasmania is Australia's only aluminium smelter powered entirely by renewable energy, directly employing more than 550 Tasmanians and supporting nearly 300 local businesses in the supply chain;
- (b) the Tasmanian Liberal government has worked tirelessly alongside industry, local government, and community stakeholders to secure the smelter's future - including advocacy to the Commonwealth to ensure Tasmania receives its fair and appropriate share of national industry support;
- (c) the Australian Government has offered substantial support packages to mainland smelters (including to Tomago Aluminium in New South Wales) while withholding confirmation that Bell Bay Aluminium will be eligible for assistance under the Green Aluminium Production Credit Scheme;
- (d) Hydro Tasmania is engaged in good faith negotiations, offering Bell Bay Aluminium a competitive, commercial energy price (consistent with its Charter and Australia's competition law obligations) to put Tasmanian jobs and the economy first; and
- (e) despite repeated requests since the start of 2025, the Australian Government has failed to provide any assurance that Bell Bay

Aluminium will be treated equitably under the national scheme.

- (2) Acknowledges that maintaining Bell Bay Aluminium is in both the State's interest and the national interest in that it is critical to Australia's sovereign industrial capability and the long-term future of Tasmanian jobs, exports, and economic activity.
- (3) Calls on the Australian Government to immediately -
  - (a) confirm that Bell Bay Aluminium is entitled to access the Green Aluminium Production Credit Scheme; and
  - (b) work with the Tasmanian government to deliver a fair and equitable outcome that recognises Tasmania's renewable energy advantage.

Today the House has an opportunity on a very important matter, and that is to send a clear and, I hope, united message to Canberra. Tasmania stands behind Bell Bay Aluminium and we expect the Australian Government to do the same.

Bell Bay Aluminium is not just a smelter. It is certainly not just another ordinary smelter. It is one of the great pillars of our economy, it is a cornerstone of our industrial base and a symbol of our state's contribution to the nation's sovereign manufacturing capability, which we have heard so much about over the last decade. This is Australia's only aluminium smelter entirely powered by renewable energy. It truly is a green smelter, and it was even before that phrase was coined. It has been producing low-carbon aluminium since 1955, when it commenced after the Second World War with that great industrial policy of the government of that era.

Despite these clean credentials, which I know we are all proud of, this workforce of more than 550 Tasmanians and a supply chain of almost 300 local businesses, the Australian Government continues to leave Bell Bay out in the cold. While the Australian Government bends over backwards, as we have seen in the press, to prop up smelters on the mainland, in South Australia and New South Wales, it refuses to confirm whether Tasmania's own facility, the cleanest in the country, will even be eligible for support under the Green Aluminium Production Credit Scheme. That is not just unfair; it is perverse and it is bad policy. If implemented this way, it will be bad for our state. It would also betray a fundamental misunderstanding of how the national economy works: that is, that a strong Tasmania makes for a strong country.

While Canberra is giving the impression that Bell Bay won't be eligible, on this side of the House we believe it is worth fighting for. The Tasmanian Liberal government, in the current scenario, with the uncertainty around Rio Tinto Bell Bay Aluminium, has been doing the heavy lifting.

Just today, the government has announced a 12-month power agreement with Bell Bay Aluminium and Hydro Tasmania to secure the smelter's immediate future while work continues on a long-term agreement. I know that every member of this House wants to see that long-term agreement achieved. Today's announcement was not a simple task. It required good

faith, commercial discipline and leadership from all sides, including from the company itself, Hydro Tasmania, the state-owned company, and the state government, working together to keep the potlines running and the jobs in the Tamar Valley secure. As the Premier said this morning, the smelter is a cornerstone of Tasmania's economy. We are doing all we can to make sure that business continues to have a strong future in the state.

Bell Bay Aluminium general manager Richard Curtis said today:

Our discussions with the Tasmanian government over the past two months have been constructive and collaborative, and this extension will ensure continued safe and stable production at Bell Bay Aluminium beyond December.

That is what responsible government looks like, and that is what working constructively between government and industry looks like.

That stands in stark contrast to the grandstanding and finger-pointing we have seen from members opposite me in this Chamber, who have been demanding that instead, the state just sort out an energy deal, as if Hydro Tasmania were a fund open to political whim, to just get a deal done at any price. If Hydro Tasmania were a political slush fund of that nature, rather than a commercial enterprise, it would not be acting within the bounds of law and competition policy, and probably good economic policy for our state. What would be the impact on the state budget? Does Labor believe that Tasmanian politicians should be dictating the commercial detail of contracts between Hydro and its major industrial customers? I have listened to the public statements. Is that how members of the opposition would govern? It's not how Labor governed when it was last in government. It recognised the same facts this government recognises: that Hydro must act commercially, in line with its charter. It should offer attractive energy deals to its customers, but it also must do so prudently, commercially and within the bounds of national competition law, or it will fall foul.

Hydro Tas is a state-owned enterprise and it does operate under those national laws, Australia's competition law, consistent with the Commonwealth *Competition and Consumer Act*, and its own charter of corporate governance. That means Hydro must provide power on a commercial basis. It is legally obliged to, in a way that is fair, transparent and compliant with national competition principles. Hydro Tasmania has been working with Bell Bay Aluminium on a new, ideally 10-year, contract arrangement that's a competitive and responsible offer, reflecting both its commercial obligations and its ministerial charter as a Tasmanian GBE. That charter states:[tbc]

Hydro is to perform its functions to support the lowest possible power prices for Tasmanians and to enable economic growth and job creation in Tasmania.

Extensive negotiations have been held with Rio for a new power supply contract over the past six years, with a particularly concentrated effort over the past 18 months. Hydro Tasmania put forward its most recent updated proposal in October in response to a counterproposal received from Rio in September. Despite concessions made, I'm advised Hydro and Rio Tinto have not been able to find a commercial solution that's mutually agreeable.

I will choose my words very carefully here when I say that I'm not willing to disclose information that is commercial in confidence, which I have been privy to, but I am willing to

say that I know that the price offered by Hydro would be seen in other states as a great bargain. That's as far as I will go about that, and it's important to make that point. Hydro must also meet its obligations, and it is.

I'm very pleased tonight that the 12-month reprieve delivered by this government is a major contribution to a long-term solution. I dare to believe that every member of this House, in their heart of hearts, would agree with that statement. I also say that the great value of Hydro Tasmania being in Tasmanian hands - and it always will be - is that it can support the state's broader economic interests. It does do that, and it has been doing that. Even with the best will in the world, however, Hydro on its own cannot bridge the kind of price gap that global aluminium markets are now facing. I do spare a thought for the poor people of Tomago who must be wondering what their future looks like, but tonight my focus of course remains on our state and on Bell Bay.

That is why Rio and the Tasmanian state government have been advocating for federal government assistance to close what we understand to be that remaining gap between the commercial acceptabilities of each counterparty.

Those concessions already made by Hydro - I say it again, they're commercial in confidence, we can all appreciate that - have made the value of this clear to the federal government, and it does have a real value. It would be ignorant of any Australian government, Labor or Liberal, to overlook the value of those concessions, which have a real commercial value, and to overlook them in considering an appropriate support arrangement for major industrials like Bell Bay Aluminium (BBA) here in Tasmania. It is a very significant amount, and we call on the Australian Government to recognise the value of BBA itself as a major industry to our economy and to our energy system.

This may not be entirely on the public record, but I would also like to advise the House that the government arranged for Hydro to travel to Canberra to speak to the Australian Government about its own pricing structures and cost base, and demonstrate how competitive Hydro's positioning was going to be in its offers that it was making to BBA and why we can't be in a position, or be forced, through politics, into a position where the Tasmanian taxpayer is further on the hook in bridging that gap. I suppose I don't have to articulate why that would be the case. As a GBE, as a state-owned entity, any impact on the Hydro's bottom line for a 10-year contract would inevitably show up as a negative on the state budget. We know who pays that; it's the Tasmanian taxpayer.

I am very pleased to say tonight that a real pathway does exist for a commercially sound outcome, but it depends on the federal government also playing a major role. After all, our Australian Government, regardless of whether it's Labor or Liberal right now, has a major say, as it should, on major industries right across the country, and in particular with a special focus and belief on those that are critical for our manufacturing sovereign capability - especially in the metals sector when we've heard so much about that in the last couple of months.

I want to see the Australian Government play its part. Some members of this House or some people listening to this webcast might be wondering, if the shoe were on the other foot, if the federal government was Liberal, would I be saying these same things tonight? Yes, I absolutely would. Any self-respecting politician in this House with any longevity of service to our state will have a record of standing up to a national government regardless of its political colour. In the last 11 years we have taken issue with the Liberal-National government in

Canberra many times, publicly and privately. At the moment, it's Labor. That should not stand in the way of this House standing up for our state. This is one of those times, just like we did last year on infrastructure funding. This is another instance where we are obligated as Tasmanian MPs to represent our state's interests, our families' interests, our economy's interests at a critical juncture. If we fail the test - and I don't believe we will - but I want to make the warning that if we would fail that test, our duty and obligation to Tasmanians, we will indeed in the end be far poorer as a result and put at risk an industry that's close to my heart.

That's where the federal government's Green Aluminium Production Credit scheme comes in and where that level of the government's failure to act, to date, becomes incomprehensible. I do not understand it. Let me say why. We have seen the reports - including published journals, including the *AFR* - that the Australian Government has been considering billion-dollar-plus bailouts for Tomago Aluminium in New South Wales, which is not renewably powered. Meanwhile, Bell Bay, the only renewably powered smelter in the country gets nothing but radio silence or told to wait for a future opportunity.

I want to make the point, and I'll provide the source material if I'm challenged. I believe it was 20 January this year. We're in an election-eve phase. The Australian Government under Mr Albanese published a document committing to this scheme, and it specifically named Tomago and Bell Bay. The contrast now is stark and it's unacceptable. The only renewably powered aluminium smelter in the country should be the 'great jewel' - the great example of what other smelters across the country, across the world, could indeed aspire to be.

Our state - I am so proud of my grandparents' generation, I think the greatest generation of this country - that generation created these assets, created this remarkable renewable energy network. Nobody called it renewable back then because that wasn't the context, the cultural context. It was about what is our natural advantage. Let's use that to power our cities and towns. In our state, that generation and subsequent generations, have done the right thing.

We invested heavily - including in recent decades - in what we now know to be renewable energy, zero-carbon technologies, and it has supported industry. In fact, it's created industry, and it has engaged constructively with all parties. I mentioned earlier Rio Tinto's Bell Bay Aluminium started operations in 1955. Of course, that was after those dams were built, after that transmission network was built and during the time of the Labor government of the Second World War and the Menzies government that replaced it, the industry policy - actually, the original name of Bell Bay Aluminium was Comalco, the Commonwealth Aluminium Corporation. Those visionary men and women believed that we could have sovereign capability here. In a less well-known place called Bell Bay in Australia, servicing our country, creating jobs, creating so many jobs. People came from everywhere to build those plants and then to work in them. Something, again, to that great generation's credit.

As the state submission to the Green Aluminium Production Credit scheme said, it would be a perverse outcome if an existing green aluminium facility were to be retired, while Australian Government support is offered to improve the position of other much more carbon intensive sites. This submission outlines exactly what we as a government, at least speaking for this party that I belong to, what we want to see, what we expect is fair treatment, proportionate support and recognition that Bell Bay Aluminium is already meeting the green threshold that other smelters are still trying to reach and may never. We're not alone in saying this; TMEC agrees as does the company itself.



In closing, I want to focus this House's attention on what's really important and what's really at stake here. I have deliberately drafted this motion to minimise any accusations, which I know will still come, that it's political. That would be a distraction and I have made such an effort to make sure that every member could support this, vote for it and not lose any face because I represent Bass. Someone else will represent Clark, another will represent Lyons, Franklin, Braddon - we all have this responsibility.

Bell Bay Aluminium injects more than \$700 million into our economy every year. It underpins hundreds of businesses, which I've already described - around 550 direct - hundreds, difficult to quantify, perhaps 1000 indirect jobs. It's not just about Georgetown, either. It certainly used to be very heavily based on a Georgetown employment, but now it's being distributed around West Tamar, East Tamar and Greater Launceston. It is a community anchor. It's also a very good business. It does wonderful things in the community. The loss of that smelter, and I have to accept that it's a real possibility that we must avoid, would devastate our northern economy. I'm not prepared to sit idly by and just wait and hope for the Australian Government to one day decide that it wants to act.

I don't want to hear any mealy-mouthed platitudes about how nice it is that we got a 12-month extension, because that's what I have been hearing today in the media.

**Ms Finlay** - You didn't hear it from me.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Oh, I've been hearing it. Ms Finlay, if you feel that that's an accusation against you, it isn't. I've heard those statements from others. It's not helpful. We need deliberate steps and proper representation and a focus on getting a great result.

Tonight my belief is that while we can't control everything, we can control what our position is as a House of Assembly. Tasmania's position is so important. I want to also make it clear that we are not asking for any special treatment; we are asking for fair treatment, proportionate response and something that is strongly aligned with the Albanese government's Future Made in Australia policy platform. How exciting for that government if it would recognise that that policy could start here in this state and in my northern Tasmanian electorate of Bass. I call for unity. There is every good reason for this motion to be supported without amendments or petty point scoring, and I've avoided that myself.

Every member of this House has a choice to stand with Tasmanian workers or to stand with Canberra's excuses. I commend the motion to the House.

**The SPEAKER** - The member's time has expired.

[7.58 p.m.]

**Mrs ARCHER** (Bass - Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing) - Honourable Speaker, as a government we have always backed our industries, including our major industrials and will continue to do so. As we've heard, they support over 5000 jobs across our state and are a key driver for the broader economy. Bell Bay Aluminium is just one of those that supports hundreds of direct jobs and hundreds more indirect jobs, injecting more than \$240 million each year into local supply chains and generating an estimated \$550 million in broader economic activity across the state. It is an important contributor to the state's economy and the government remains committed to working with our industries to support sustainable growth.

One way we have consistently supported our industries is through energy. We are fortunate in Tasmania to already have a net-renewable electricity grid ahead of any other jurisdiction in Australia and our clean, green hydropower has been the backbone of our energy grid for over a 100 years and will continue to power the state for years to come. We know that this sustainable and reliable electricity has been a key driver in bringing industry to Tasmania and keeping it here.

We recognise, however, that energy costs are a significant input for Bell Bay Aluminium. It is an energy intensive process. It is vital for aluminium smelters to have access to reliable and competitively priced electricity. Our energy businesses have a long history of supporting Tasmania's economic growth and industries, particularly with wholesale energy. Providing safe, clean energy at competitive prices is something Hydro Tasmania offers to all our major industrial customers.

The government and our energy businesses are committed to working with all our industries, ensuring that the state's energy supply remains secure, affordable and primarily sourced from renewable generation.

Knowing that Rio Tinto's existing contract was due to expire this year, extensive negotiations have been held over the past six years between Hydro Tasmania and Rio Tinto for a new power supply agreement. This has not been left to the last minute. Although I have not been here very long, as a local to George Town and a former mayor there, I have had close and ongoing relationships with Bell Bay Aluminium and I know that this has been an ongoing discussion over many years. Options have been explored extensively between Hydro Tasmania and Rio Tinto with a concentrated effort over the past 18 months as we get closer to the existing contract end date.

In line with its charter obligations to put Tasmanian jobs and the economy first, it is the government's expectation that Hydro Tasmania puts forward competitive and commercial energy price offers. This is what's happened with the companies engaging in good faith negotiations over this time. As we have heard, however, there are many headwinds facing BBA and it has become clear that the Tasmanian taxpayer cannot bridge the gap alone.

This is why the Tasmanian government has been engaging with the federal government on this issue. To be clear, BBA is not the only smelter experiencing challenges. The broader issues and market conditions it's facing are being faced by many other production facilities both around Australia and internationally. It is a national issue that requires national input. That's why we will continue to engage with the federal government on this issue and ask them to come to the table and play their part to ensure that Tasmanian jobs and Tasmanian industry get the same level of support that they have offered to others.

We've been very clear in that engagement that it would be a perverse outcome for the federal government to support other smelters at the expense of BBA, Australia's only aluminium smelter powered by renewable energy. We do believe that there's a pathway for a commercially sound outcome and that depends on the federal government playing its part.

We recognise that a national solution may take some time, and the federal Green Aluminium Production Credit scheme is still being designed. That is another reason to create

some time to settle Bell Bay Aluminium's eligibility or for the federal government to identify an alternative funding pathway.

We also recognise that that action needs to happen now, and we need to take that action to secure the jobs and the communities involved with BBA while those long-term solutions are being worked through.

At the heart of this, that is why we do any of the things that we do. It's about our communities. This has been a foundational industry for the George Town community, acknowledging that that extends outside of the George Town region now as well. It is a really important industry, not only for its economic activity, but because it is a part of the community. It is drawn from that community and, in fact, I often hear that if there is uncertainty around the industries at Bell Bay, Tamar Cakes might sell a few more sausage rolls that week as well.

We will provide the space and time necessary to work on a solution in partnership with the federal government, just as it is doing in other parts of the country on this national challenge facing smelters. There is again evidence that Hydro Tasmania is meeting its new and improved charter and meeting government expectations to put Tasmania first. The government has been putting in the work and we have remained committed to our major industries over the long-term and this is no different.

If Australia wants to keep its industries like aluminium smelters, it is necessary for the federal government to partner with us. Otherwise, we cannot compete with the billions being poured into mainland smelters. We need a solution that doesn't go beyond what the Tasmanian taxpayer can bear. That's what the Tasmanian government will continue to work with the federal government on, and we encourage them to continue to work with us.

[8.05 p.m.]

**Ms ROSOL** (Bass) - Deputy Speaker, I want to thank the member for Bass for bringing this motion today. The situation at Bell Bay Aluminium is very serious. It is placing 550 jobs at risk, and we know that it has implications more broadly that will flow on throughout Bass and throughout Tasmania. I believe that most of the members for Bass are in the Chamber as we debate this motion this evening is a reflection of how seriously we all take this situation.

The Greens have been following the major industrial situation in Bass closely and we are aware that both Bell Bay Aluminium and Liberty Bell Bay are facing significant difficulty. This is creating incredible uncertainty for workers in Bass as financial forces and decisions far outside their control play out. Let's be clear about this motion today and the debate around it. This is a motion that is clearly designed to wedge state Labor around the lack of action from federal Labor when it comes to supporting aluminium production in Tasmania.

I am aware that Labor plan to move amendments today and to me that is game-playing as well. This isn't really a game, what we're doing here today. We're discussing a really serious situation. Political games sell short the workers who rely on Bell Bay Aluminium for employment and the income that they need to live. This isn't a time for wedges; it's not a time for games. Real people's lives are being impacted.

Political games aside, the Greens have looked carefully at this motion and we will be supporting it, recognising the importance of Bell Bay Aluminium, recognising that it is critical that industry transitions to clean energy for our future, and recognising the role that the

Australian government does have in helping to maintain the viability of Bell Bay Aluminium in the face of significant global pressures. We will support this motion, but we want to note some aspects of it in the wording.

In relation to clause (1)(a), the motion states that Bell Bay Aluminium is Tasmania's only aluminium smelter powered entirely by renewable energy. While renewable energy does form the backbone of Tasmania's electricity supply, it's well known that we import power from the mainland and that power is polluting and coal-fired. We also have to use fossil fuels in the form of gas.

Clause (1)(b) possibly over eggs the government's work, but I will come back to that later in some of the wording there.

In clause (1)(c), it's been interesting to watch the Australian Government's actions around major industrials across this country. They have indeed offered support to mainland smelters. They have stepped in and placed Whyalla Steelworks into administration - a different situation to that faced by Bell Bay Aluminium, but it is notable the support that has been offered to industries in other states while Tasmania has not received similar offers of support.

It remains unclear if Bell Bay Aluminium will be able to access assistance through the Green Aluminium Production Credit Scheme. The Greens would posit that it should be able to. As I noted earlier, Tasmania has a reputation for being solely powered by renewable energy. However, that reputation is not reflective of reality. Transition is important in Tasmania, too.

More than important, transitioning to renewable energy is critical. We are in a climate crisis. Carbon emissions continuing to increase and carbon dioxide in the atmosphere continues to go up and up. We have already smashed through a global average temperature increase of 1.5°Celsius and we are on track to reach 3°Celsius of warming. The implications of this are significant. Life on our planet is under threat, and we need to decarbonise energy production, so access to the Green Aluminium Production Credit Scheme is crucial and has huge implications for our future.

Bell Bay Aluminium needs to and should have access to this scheme, and the sooner the federal government formally confirms this, the better it will be for both climate action as well as for this industry's certainty.

Moving on to Clause 1D, Mr Ferguson in his motion states that Hydro Tasmania has engaged in good faith negotiations. The Greens don't know this for sure. We only have the government's word to go on here, but we haven't been provided with evidence that negotiations have not been conducted in good faith. We would be interested in further details of these negotiations.

In relation to clause (1)(e), I want to comment on the motion's reference to repeated requests since the start of 2025 for assurances about Bell Bay from the Australian Government.

In March, when the federal and state government in South Australia stepped in and placed the Whyalla Steelworks into administration, we wrote to the Premier and asked what the Tasmanian government were doing in response to this situation and how they were working for workers in Bass to protect their future at Liberty Bell Bay. We received no response to our letter.

I know that Liberty Bell Bay is not Bell Bay Aluminium. They're two different corporations running two different heavy industrial facilities in the Tamar Valley. However, when we asked the government what they were doing to support workers at Liberty Bell Bay we received no response. It was only later in the year that the Rockliff government stepped in with public support.

We aren't sure what repeated requests the Liberal government may have made to the Australian government about Bell Bay Aluminium since the start of the year. We would be very interested to hear more about what the government has done. The Greens are yet to hear that the Australian government will treat Bell Bay Aluminium equitably and we would welcome information about that. Perhaps Ms Finlay may have some insight into the Australian Government and their approach to this. We all agree that maintaining Bell Bay Aluminium in its use with renewable energy is in the state's interests, the national interests and ultimately our whole planetary future's interest.

In relation to clause (3), it's appropriate to call on the Australian government to do what they can to provide certainty to workers in Bass by confirming that Bell Bay Aluminium is entitled to access the Green Aluminium Production Credit Scheme for all the reasons I outlined above.

How good would it be if the Tasmanian government and the Australian government did work together on this instead of throwing accusations back and forth, blaming each other and calling on the other government to do more rather than working together? Tasmanian jobs and our climate and future are at stake, and the Greens hope the Australian Government will step up and do what they can through the Green Aluminium Production Credit Scheme to support Bell Bay Aluminium.

As I said earlier, we will be supporting this motion, recognising that there are some aspects of it we have questions about, but we support the spirit of this because this is an important industry; it's important to jobs in Bass and we believe that the Australian government should be doing more in this situation.

[8.13 p.m.]

**Mr RAZAY** (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I would like to thank the honourable member of Bass for bringing motion number 28. According to the Australian Government Department of Industry, Science and Resources, \$2 billion are being invested in a Green Aluminium Production Credit Fund to support Australian aluminium smelters transition to renewable electricity. This Green Aluminium Production Credit Fund will be available to Australian smelters from 2028-29. The federal government unveiled its \$2 billion Green Metals Fund in January this year and offered a funding package to the New South Wales Tomago Aluminium Smelter.

It is interesting to hear from honourable minister, Mr Ferguson, that it was offered in January as well to Bell Bay. The fund is a tax credit for aluminium and steel produced with renewable energy at a smelter that can show a new significant decarbonisation before 2036. The fund enables a negotiation of an emission-linked credit contract payable per tonne of green aluminium produced for up to 10 years. The federal government announced that this credit fund scheme would secure the future of the Australian smelters. The Tomago smelter welcomed the

scheme to assist its transition to green aluminium production when its current coal energy contract ends in 2028.

Bell Bay is already using renewable energy. It should likewise receive some federal government support under the fund. It was announced recently that the Bell Bay Aluminium smelter is now facing a real risk of foreclosure, despite its existing commitment to use green energy. It's not fair that Bell Bay Aluminium has not yet been offered a similar federal funding package as Tomago. It should not be penalised for already being green. It should instead be congratulated and supported.

The Bell Bay smelter has recently been offered a temporary 12-month reprieve via an in-principle power agreement. This is not a solution to the smelter long-term operation. Action must be taken as soon as possible to secure the long-term operation of Bell Bay. The funding must be offered under the scheme. The federal government should be using Bell Bay as a renewable energy model to encourage other Australian smelters to transition to renewable energy. However, it's currently unclear whether it's qualified for support under the federal government Production Credit Fund.

Bell Bay employs more than 550 people directly and supports hundreds of more jobs through a supply chain of local businesses. In the Premier's own words, it's a cornerstone of the Tasmanian economy. The company, the state and federal government should urgently work together to ensure the survival of Bell Bay Aluminium smelter. I therefore support the motion.

[8.16 p.m.]

**Ms FINLAY** (Bass - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, I rise this evening to speak to Motion 28, put forward by Mr Ferguson, fellow member for Bass. I believe now we've had all members from Bass in the chamber for this issue.

I rise tonight to give a focus of the contributions around the workers on site. I've taken the opportunity multiple times to be out on site, to meet with both workers and with management to understand the issues that are being faced in these current negotiations. As others have mentioned, including Mr Ferguson himself, as fellow communities and community members in Bass, it is only with the people at the centre of this conversation that it needs to be the focus.

I note that Ms Rosol, from the Greens, talked about the politics that was presented in this motion and how it's not helpful to anyone. It's not helpful to be political when we have over 550 workers on site who are not clear about their future and the work coming into Christmas, only today, being given a 12-month reprieve. It's not just about the 550 workers on site; it's about their families and the people that they support. It's about the other indirect jobs that are supported by this incredible organisation, this company. Also by the communities, not just around the Tamar Valley region, and not just around northern Tasmania, but in fact across the entire Tasmanian state.

Bell Bay Aluminium is one of the most significant enterprises in Tasmania. That is not only generating significant economic benefit to the state, but it plays a critical role, that's not yet been mentioned, but it plays a critical role in the energy system in Tasmania. It actually plays a role for Hydro, in terms of maintaining and balancing out the energy system in Tasmania. That's something that we rely on, and in something that is unique to that site.

With my contributions this evening, I want to frame it as a way of speaking directly to workers. In doing that, it's important that this issue has made it to the parliament. It is important that the people on site recognise that we are determined collectively to see the best outcome for the site. In doing that, determination needs also to be met with accuracy, needs to be met with facts and it doesn't need to be undermined by politics.

In the motion that we have this afternoon, there are two clauses, two paragraphs in this motion that I determine are statements of fact and absolutely should be supported this evening. Tasmanian Labor seek to support two paragraphs in this motion, which is that this House -

(1) Notes that -

(a) Bell Bay Aluminium in Northern Tasmania is Australia's only aluminium smelter powered entirely -

I take note of 'entirely' -

by renewable energy, directly employing more than 550 Tasmanians and supporting nearly 300 local businesses in the supply chain;

Further, paragraph 2 says that the House -

(2) Acknowledges that maintaining Bell Bay Aluminium is in both the State's interest and the national interest in that it is critical to Australia's sovereign industrial capability and the long-term future of Tasmanian jobs, exports, and economic activity.

If this motion, with the workers at the heart of the intention, making these two statements of fact, was what was presented by Mr Ferguson, then with those statements alone, Tasmanian Labor would support this motion. However, as the motion continues, it is tainted with political commentary, and comments that are useful to share with other members across the Chamber to give some context to the statements made.

Mr Ferguson, in his motion, has indicated that the Tasmanian Liberal government has worked tirelessly alongside industry, local government and the community stakeholders. As I mentioned, I have met on site with company management and with workers. I am in regular contact with the local governments in the local government areas with businesses that work to the site, and with workers themselves. I believe that is a poor characterisation of the efforts of this government. Not even the members of the government can get their story straight in terms of the effort they have provided for this site.

Just this morning, the Energy minister said that it has been six years in active engagement around this issue, stating that the 'cadence', I think was the word he used, has increased over the last 18 months. People inside the Chamber have talked about the last six months. However, Mr Ferguson himself quoted the CEO of the site saying he was pleased with the engagement over the last two months, respectfully implying that it has only been since the drop-dead date of negotiations at the end of September that this government woke up and went, 'Holy -' the word you can't use in this place, 'We better get our act together here because we're not going to have a power deal for Bell Bay Aluminium.' It has only been under pressure, when they

haven't been able to do their job, that this government scrambles for an outcome and then seeks to blame somebody else. That is not okay.

When you are dealing with the lives of workers, their families and communities right across Tasmania, it is not okay to have been unable to deliver on your job and then seek to blame somebody else. When you have a bin fire in your backyard, it's the easiest thing to distract and try to blame somebody else, but it's not the right thing to do. The right thing to do here would have been for the Energy minister and the Industry minister to work with the company and Hydro Tasmania to get an outcome.

There has been a lot said tonight about the power deal, and there's been a lot said about the green aluminium production credits. However, there is a big gap in the middle in terms of the work that this state says it has done in terms of seeking to work cooperatively with the federal government for support for the site. It is clear that the state has a responsibility to bring together a power deal for Bell Bay Aluminium. There has been references to TMEC this evening, but TMEC are on the record of saying that the position of Hydro is still inflated.

On ABC radio this morning, the Energy minister, when challenged by Leon Compton about the position of Hydro, and whether Hydro maintained its commitment to providing good power deals in Tasmania, the minister indicated that he and the Hydro CEO are at odds with each other in terms of what their expectations are. In fact, I was at a community forum a couple of weeks ago in Launceston, at the Tamar Estuary and Esk Rivers (TEER) report, where the CEO of Hydro was talking to community members about river environments. When asked from the floor what the role of Hydro was, the answer was to make profit. Despite the fact that there have been amendments to the ministerial charters, the message hasn't got through. It is not true to say that Hydro is acting aligned with the ministerial charter and putting Tasmanian jobs and the economy first. If that was the case, an outcome would be achieved on the power deal, and Bell Bay Aluminium workers and the organisation would not be under pressure now, without a power deal, coming up to the end of the year.

It is only this morning - this morning the front page of the *Mercury* said something like: 'Saved by the Bell'. It is the government that has been saved; not Bell Bay Aluminium, because if these ministers don't continue to act in good faith and with urgency to secure a long-term power deal, then we will find ourselves in this situation in 12 months' time.

There are three things happening here: there is a power deal; there's the future which doesn't exist yet, Green Aluminium Production Credits; and there's a space in between where the state government, the company and the federal government can work together to support Bell Bay Aluminium. The federal government has indicated quite openly that it is willing to work with the state government if a professional and sensible proposal is put forward.

In order to set right what is being said in the motion, I propose an amendment. I will circulate the amendment, as I have already done by email. I move -

That paragraphs 1(b), 1(c), 1(d), 1(e), 3(a) and 3(b) be omitted.

I will speak on each of those paragraphs and why they should be omitted. When Ms Rosol spoke about the Greens' position on this motion, I noted that although the Greens have indicated that they will support the motion, they had concerns on each of the paragraphs I am seeking to remove. A suggestion that the government had 'over-egged' its position in paragraph 1(b): yes,



that description is colourful but correct. It is not fair to characterise the work of the Liberal government as being 'tireless' working alongside industry and the community. In fact, they had to be dragged kicking and screaming to come to a position where they would even start to act, let alone be able to complete their power deal.

What happened today is not an outcome; it is a step in the process. It is an extension of a deal that already exists, rolling over for 12 months, with an idea that the federal government will provide a solution with a program that is not yet designed, that does not yet exist. People have been referring to the announcement at the beginning of the year of the Green Aluminium Production Credits, and that's correct. Throughout this year, work has commenced. Just recently, the consultation opened for the design phase of that program. That hasn't even concluded yet. That concludes tomorrow. Yes, the state government have put in a submission to that, a politically motivated submission, to call on the Australian Government to participate.

However, this government know that where they have been able to secure a 12-month deal, a minimum extension on their power agreement, even when the Green Aluminium Production Credits are in play, they won't commence until the 2028-29 year. Therefore, there is still a gap between the solution that this state government have sought to provide the Tasmanians at Bell Bay Aluminium from a 12-month extension, waiting for a solution which is not due to commence until 2028-29.

I have been trying to figure out how to paint the picture of what this actually means for people who perhaps haven't had as close a journey with this project over time. It's like when I first stood for election for the state parliament and Mr Ferguson announced that he would like to see a bridge across the Tamar River. The earliest I was involved with that, hearing him, was 2021, when he said there would be a bridge across the river. Asking for the Green Aluminium Credits program to provide a solution to something now is like someone on the East Tamar being told that there was a problem on the West Tamar and you just have to get across the bridge to get there. However, the bridge doesn't exist. It has been announced but it's not physically there.

The Green Aluminium Production Credits don't physically exist. If this government wants the state and federal government to work collectively with Bell Bay Aluminium on this piece in the middle between the power contract and the Green Aluminium Production Credits, then that's what they need to call for. I had a conversation with the Energy minister about seeking to get support from the federal government on this, and he was asking me to back the state's position in calling for that support. I will always back Tasmania. I will always stand for Tasmanian jobs and Tasmanian industry if I understand what I'm being asked for. At that stage, the energy minister couldn't present anything credible or give any details on what they were asking.

As recently as today, the energy minister on the radio when asked about the support that they were seeking from the feds: again, not crystal clear. If this state government had done the work and they were very clear what they were asking the federal government to support them with, then they would be able to articulate that, particularly in radio interviews when there's actually work going on. The energy minister this morning said, 'Well, maybe there are other mechanisms within which there could be support for Bell Bay Aluminium.' We're not really hooked on which arm of the federal government desires to support, we just need support.

I know that minister Ayres is on the record as recently as today to say that he is open to working with the state government, open to working with Bell Bay Aluminium to see where they can provide support. They can't provide support unless they're asked for something specifically. In this motion there are a number of things that overcook the position of the government, that indicate that the saviour of the day will be the green aluminium production credits, which doesn't come into play. I know that the other member for Bass, Mrs Archer, said that she knows that that doesn't come into play until 2028. Therefore, those things can't be called for now; it's not an immediate solution to the issues here.

The amendments that I propose, remove the politics, as noted by the Greens. It's not a useful time for politics. This is a time to keep people at the centre. It leaves the two statements of fact which are true about Bell Bay Aluminium and recognises that what's important here is the workers, their jobs, the local community, the Tasmanian economy, the balance of the energy system in Tasmania, and that people work together professionally, sensibly, make sophisticated approaches for support so people can back them in. I could back in a position, Tasmanian Labour can back in a position, the federal government can receive a position, so that the long-term future of Bell Bay Aluminium is supported.

I propose the amendment now, and if there are any other speakers, I'd like to hear their comments about the amendment and then I'm happy to come back with my balance of time previously to wrap up.

**The SPEAKER** - There's about 30 seconds to speak on the amendment. Then we have to do the vote on the amendment and then Mr Ferguson will have five minutes to sum up the whole debate.

[8.32 p.m.]

**Mr ELLIS** (Braddon - Minister for Business, Industry and Resources) - Just to note that we won't be supporting the amendment. It's important because it would remove the piece of this motion that actually calls on the federal government to include the Tasmanian smelter just as they are including the three other smelters. The three smelters that are far dirtier than the clean Tasmanian renewable-powered smelter. To remove that entirely defeats the purpose -

**Time expired.**

**The SPEAKER** - We will first vote on the amendment before Mr Ferguson has a five-minute reply. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

**The House divided -**

**AYES 12**

Dr Broad  
Ms Brown  
Ms Butler (Teller)  
Mr Di Falco  
Ms Dow  
Ms Finlay  
Mrs Greene  
Ms Haddad  
Ms Johnston

**NOES 22**

Mr Abetz  
Mrs Archer  
Ms Badger  
Mr Barnett  
Mr Bayley  
Ms Burnet  
Mr Ellis  
Mr Fairs  
Mr Ferguson

Mr Mitchell  
Mr Willie  
Mr Winter

Mr Garland (Teller)  
Mr George  
Ms Howlett  
Mr Jaensch  
Mr O'Byrne  
Ms Ogilvie  
Mr Pearce  
Prof Razay  
Mr Rockliff  
Ms Rosol  
Mr Shelton  
Mr Vermey  
Dr Woodruff

[OK]

**Amendment negatived.**

[8.40 p.m.]

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to sum up the debate. The people of Tasmania and the workers of Bell Bay Aluminium deserve our entire support. Our full support here, and part of a genuine long-term support arrangement is remembering that the Australian government has an important role to play. I thank the House for agreeing with that sentiment when challenged just now.

The problem is that the scheme that is the subject of this motion, it now seems, was designed for smelters that still need to decarbonise, even though the media release and the election policy of 20 January this year from the Prime Minister and the minister specifically named at Bell Bay to expect to be included. This is the puzzle that must be solved in the interests of the workers in my electorate.

**Government members** - Hear, hear.

**Mr FERGUSON** - This side of the House and those members who care to I ask to stand in unity. Stand behind those workers, the men and women of Bell Bay Aluminium. Stand behind those families. Stand behind the towns, suburbs and the city of Launceston and George Town in particular, as we stand behind those jobs. I will not run away from the equal fact that this government and this parliament has a role to play as well in long-term security arrangements for that incredible business, just like it did 10 years ago when the expiring agreement was negotiated in the favour of the workers and families of my community.

I thank members who I've spoken with in the lead up to tonight's debate. I'm enormously grateful for the support that's been stated.

I just conclude - our message to the Australian government, should the motion pass, is very clear. Tasmania, our grandparent's generation and subsequent, has done its share. We now call on the Australian government to step up and deliver its share of a solution for the major industries of our state, in particular Bell Bay Aluminium, formerly known as Comalco.

**Motion agreed to.**

**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS (SALE REFORMS) BILL 2025 (No. 42)**

**Consideration of Legislative Council Amendments in Committee**

[8.44 p.m.]

**Mr ABETZ** (Franklin - Treasurer) - Chair, I move -

That the amendments be agreed to.

I think the arguments are well-rehearsed and we look forward to the one minute I've been promised of gloating by the Deputy Leader of the Greens.

**Mr BAYLEY** (Clark) - I will be quick, Leader of Government Business. I want to flag and thank the government for amending this in the Legislative Council. This is an anomaly in the legislation that we noted pretty late in the piece, in fact, during the Committee stage here where we saw that the disallowable instrument that the bill created actually allowed for that disallowable instrument to be refused with just 50 per cent of the vote, which obviously undermined the entire premise of the bill, which was to create a 75 per cent threshold for the parliament to pass any attempt to sell a government business.

While we didn't deal with it in the House here, we did raise it in the upper House and to the government's credit, they accepted and acknowledged the illogicality of this particular aspect of the bill and amended it themselves in the upper House. We acknowledge that, thank our member Cassy O'Connor in the upper House for raising it and debating it up there and certainly support the amendments that have come back down.

**Legislative Council amendments agreed to.**

**Resolution reported with amendment.**

**Resolution agreed to.**

**ADJOURNMENT**

[8.47 p.m.]

**Ms OGILVIE** (Clark - Minister for Community and Multicultural Affairs) - Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

**Bucaan Community House**

**Ms OGILVIE** (Clark - Minister for Community and Multicultural Affairs) - Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to speak on the future of the garden at the Bucaan Community House at Chigwell. I'd like to start by saying all our Neighbourhood Houses do a great job within their communities, providing a range of activities to suit the needs of their local communities. I want

to thank all of those who manage the houses, the staff and the many, many volunteers who keep the facilities open and operating right around the state, they do a wonderful job.

Our government recognises that Neighbourhood Houses are key pillars of healthy, supportive and inclusive communities and that for many in our community they provide a place to meet, a place to make friends, learn a skill, grow and share food. It was very sad to hear of the Bucaan Community House decision to temporarily halt the programs they run at the community garden, including the Grow and Play playgroup. To be clear though, the garden will remain open to the public and it would be sad for people to genuinely think it was closing when it is not.

As members would know, Neighbourhood Houses are incorporated entities with the power to determine their own budget and the number and type of programs they choose to offer their communities. Historically, houses have not specifically been funded for community gardens, with the gardens established and funded from diverted core funds or donations and volunteer hours, so the government has had no visibility of actual garden costs.

In 2025-26, Bucaan Community House will receive \$366,124 which is made up of core-funding indexation and a \$50,000 boost to the government is provided to each house for three consecutive years and expected approximate \$54,200 for the Community Connector program. Further to this, I want to note that Bucaan Community House has also been very successful in a number of competitive time-limited grant funding rounds securing \$232,108 since 2021.

To provide some understanding to the Chamber and the wider community who might be listening in tonight, both me and my office have been in consistent contact with those at Bucaan Community House since this matter was raised. Given the haste of the emerging matter, I spoke with the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and senior representatives then visited the house to further understand their situation on 29 October. Further to this, I personally met with the manager, Mary-Anne, and Graham from the house - it was good to see them - last Friday morning, 31 October. It was a very positive meeting, and I committed to working with Bucaan Community House to find a solution.

It should be noted that the Glenorchy City Council owns the land where the garden is situated and I have also reached out to the Council to see what could be done to help Bucaan House. We will now work through this process and what it looks like. I visited Bucaan House many, many times over the years, I actually donated an olive tree, which is doing very well in their garden. It is a beautiful garden and the staff and volunteers have really developed such a special and great space for the Chigwell community.

I am very focused on finding a solution that provides surety and sustainability. This is about working together to continue delivering for not just the local community but for all Tasmania. I thank all of those passionate staff and volunteers at Neighbourhood Houses for the work that they do, all the supporters of the Neighbourhood Houses - and I know there are many in this room. I want to underscore that I remain committed to working with Bucaan Community House, Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania and all Neighbourhood Houses, to help them as required.

## Native Forest Logging

[8.51 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to speak about the destructive reality of native forest logging in Tasmania. Nothing shows it more grimly than the actions of Ta Ann, a multinational timber and palm oil corporation. I seek leave to table a series of images that I circulated to all members previously and I will discuss these later.

**Leave granted.**

Ta Ann's litany of offences against people and the environment is long, too long to capture in this speech, which says a lot. I will share some highlights. Ta Ann is responsible for catastrophic deforestation of Sarawak's ancient forests for timber profits and palm oil. They've decimated the traditional lands of indigenous people, violated their human rights, turned carbon-storing rainforests into palm plantation monocultures, and are driving the extinction of orangutan and other threatened species. Ta Ann were found guilty in a Malaysian court for an illegal land grab that destroyed native customary rights, including graveyards.

In Tasmania, Ta Ann have continued their business model of looting precious native forests for veneer and plywood to export to China, Japan and elsewhere. It's well known that Ta Ann launders its illegally cleared timber from Malaysia through the timber it plunders from Tasmania's forests. They package it as sustainably sourced to greenwash their products and trick customers into thinking there is anything sustainable about their operations on our island.

For decades, Forestry Tasmania has rolled out the red carpet to Ta Ann to log our irreplaceable forests. Despite the company being previously owned by a multibillionaire Malaysian crime family, and still having deep ties with them, Australian taxpayers have handed Ta Ann more than \$60 million over the years in subsidies, grants and bailouts. It is a disgrace.

Regarding the images I tabled and have circulated, they were provided to us by the Bob Brown Foundation. I acknowledge Jenny Weber and Colette Harmsen, here today in the Chamber, who are staunch and caring defenders of our wild forests. Thanks to the tireless work of Jenny and Colette and others in the Bob Brown Foundation over many years, the destructive practices, history and human rights abuses perpetrated by Ta Ann, have come to light.

The images I have tabled showed the disturbing reality of Tasmania's forestry industry. It is a corrupted, shocking and sad reality. It shows 7000 cubic metres of timber taken from our native forests, left to rot in the yards at their Smithton mill over years. These photos are taken from 2023, but they have been there, as we understand it, since at least 2019. These are Tasmania's precious native forests, home to threatened species like the masked owl. They're now effectively rubbish and they're so rotten they're unusable and unsaleable.

I want to be clear: the Greens do not think it would be better for this veneer to be shipped to international markets. It wouldn't be. The veneer was once ancient forests, it should be left standing and protected into perpetuity for their incredibly significant natural values, not clear-felled for export and certainly not left to rot. This is the waste and the reality of Tasmania's native forest logging industry. All the destruction, the burnt forests of endangered species habitat. The public-funded subsidies over years have led to piles of rotten timber.

People in this place may try to deny it, but the rest of the world knows the truth. Native forest logging is a dying industry because there is no market for extinction timber. Ta Ann wrote the rotting timber off at a value of \$3.2 million due to, 'Declining demand from Japan and a sharp escalation of freight charges.' The company has tried to pretend shipping costs and challenges from COVID justify their disgusting waste, but the veneer was in the yard well before COVID started. In truth, there is no longer a commercial market for products that are stolen from ancient native forests. Of course, Ta Ann doesn't need to worry so much about the commercial markets when they have friends in the Liberal government to bail them out when times are tough.

The Treasurer, Mr Abetz, has a long history with Ta Ann. He went to Malaysia on the taxpayers' dime as a federal senator to tour Ta Ann's facilities and try to convince the indigenous Penang people to let Ta Ann log forests on their native lands. Concerningly, Ta Ann appears to have been awarded a contract by the government, and we are seriously concerned and we want to end native forest logging right now.

**Time expired.**

### **TasTAFE - Course Cuts**

[8.56 p.m.]

**Mr MITCHELL** (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I received a letter today from Angela Pelizzari, who is a designer and director, about the TasTAFE course cuts and rather than me use my own words, I will use her words:

Reversing the TasTAFE creative course fee hikes.

I'm writing in response to my deep concern about the Liberal government's recent de-subsidising of several design and screen courses at TasTAFE. I'm asking Premier Rockliff and Minister Ellis to immediately reverse this short-sighted decision.

Everything around us is design and creativity. What we wear, how we travel, wayfinding in airports and bus terminals, cities, universities, freeways, the music that helps us unwind, the books that inspire us to do better, be better, live better. Design and creativity are so deeply intertwined with everything we do, we often fail to notice their vital streamlined presence in our everyday lives.

Design is innovation. It is creativity combined with analytical thinking in its best form.

With the recent price hikes of TasTAFE courses, it will be impossible for students to enroll, sabotaging the dreams and ambitions of young Tasmanians, while reducing the likelihood of innovation on our island home.

These changes do not reflect the values of a creative, inclusive and forward-thinking Tasmania. They are not reform. They are exclusion. They threaten to dismantle pathways for young Tasmanians, especially those from regional,

low-income and culturally diverse backgrounds who seek careers in the arts, screen and design industries.

These are not fringe vocations. They are vital contributors to our economy, our identity and our global reputation. Tasmania deserves better than austerity disguised as strategy.

To have Minister Ellis argue these courses do not show a return on investment demonstrates the ignorance of this decision. I understand the government's \$20 million investment in the local screen industry over the past 10 years via Screen Tasmania has leveraged in excess of \$80 million in expenditure in the local economy, providing employment for thousands of Tasmanian cast and crew.

Beyond the immediate economic benefits the soft power of Tasmanian stories like the feature film *Lion*, television series such as Netflix's *Survivors*, Amazon Prime's *Deadlock* and the ABC's *Bay of Fires* and *Rosehaven* being screened around the globe has been immeasurable.

I have worked in film and branding for over 30 years. My role includes lecturing at the University of Tasmania's School of Creative Arts and Media, teaching branding and visual identity. My recent role with the Demon Awards, celebrating Tasmania's best and brightest and commercial creativity, has enabled me to become a conduit between students and industry, including TasTAFE. We've had many successful placements that simply could not happen without the skills and preparation TasTAFE offers. The creative industry is hungry for students. I hear it constantly. Companies ask for student recommendations, knowing they are our future if we are to move forward with rigorous longevity, innovation, ideas and technological advancements. Instead, the government's decision is simply encouraging our best and brightest creatives to leave for the mainland in search of a career.

TasTAFE provides essential training, from technical proficiency to creative confidence that allows students to move from nothing to something. Without accessible education, many of these practitioners will never reach the starting line.

The loss of that pathway is not just a blow to individuals, it's a structural failure for the entire industry. To stop the evolution of our creative skill set is to stall the very industries that make Tasmania visible, viable and vibrant. It's not just about saving money or redirecting resources. It's about what we lose when we devalue creativity: we lose innovation, we lose identity, we lose opportunity, and the cost is not linear after all

I thank Angela for sending me that letter. I believe it articulates, better than anything I could have written, the importance of the creative sector to our state and the importance of the creative sector to our TasTAFE.

The Skills minister has a very narrow idea of what TasTAFE is meant to be. Very important are construction, automotive, plumbing, all those sorts of things, but also the creative



sector: the arts, the media, the screen - these are well-regarded courses, employers like them, they're vital for Tasmania's future, and they should stay.

**The SPEAKER** - The honourable member's time has expired.

### COTA Tasmania - Seniors Week 2025

[9.01 p.m.]

**Mrs ARCHER** (Bass - Minister for Ageing) - Honourable Speaker, I rise tonight as Tasmania's first Minister for Ageing to speak about a powerful celebration of connection, inclusion, and shared experience.

At the outset, I want to thank the Council on the Ageing (COTA) Tasmania for their outstanding leadership in celebrating and supporting older Tasmanians across our state. Seniors Week 2025, held from Monday 13 to Sunday 19 October, marked its 27th year as the peak celebration of the contribution that older Tasmanians make to our state, with the theme 'Connecting Generations Through Food'. It was a perfect reminder that stories are told, recipes passed on, and connections grow stronger through a simple shared meal or activity.

With over 460 events statewide, it was a true celebration. From shared meals to storytelling, it reminded us that recipes are more than instructions. They are memories, traditions and bridges between generations. I was proud to join Tasmanians across the state during the week to share in some of these celebrations and hear directly from older Tasmanians.

Events were delivered by a wide range of community groups statewide, including the University of the Third Age (U3A), Neighbourhood Houses, libraries, museums and local sporting clubs. Each of the events played a role in reminding us that ageing is not about slowing down, it's about staying involved and being valued. The energy and optimism throughout the week reflected exactly what Seniors Week is all about: celebrating the strengths of every generation and the bonds that unite us.

The true spirit of Seniors Week was beautifully captured on the eve of the celebrations at the *Generations Connect: Tech Together* film launch and panel celebration on Sunday 12 October in Kingston. The film showcased the warmth, laughter and genuine connection between students and older residents, and it was impossible not to be moved by the emotion in the room.

Generations Connect: Tech Together, an initiative of COTA Tasmania, trains Tasmanians as young digital mentors, equipping them with the skills to support older people in learning about technology while building friendships that go far beyond the screen. Over the eight-to-10-week cycle, students and older Tasmanians meet to explore digital devices, apps, and online tools - not just to learn, but to connect. Activities have included setting up a smartphone, sending a message, using e-mail, taking photos, or even trying new technology like virtual reality.

For older Tasmanians, it's about confidence and independence, staying connected with family and friends, and finding enjoyment through learning. For young Tasmanians, it's about empathy, leadership, and gaining real mentoring experience. Already, more than 120 young digital mentors have been trained in southern Tasmania during term three this year, and their

enthusiasm was infectious. They've helped residents reconnect with loved ones through messages and video calls, and many have formed friendships that will last well beyond the program.

This initiative is much more than a feel-good story; it's a practical investment in inclusion and connection. It supports our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future which commits to digital inclusion for older Tasmanians. The Tasmanian Government has provided \$150,000 a year for two years to continue peer education and digital literacy programs, and events like Seniors Week and programs like Generations Connect show what's possible when we invest in inclusion and respect. They remind us that older Tasmanians are not being left behind; they're being supported, encouraged and valued.

I thank COTA Tasmania for their leadership and advocacy for not only Seniors Week and Generations Connect, but for older Tasmanians across the state. In particular, I acknowledge CEO Bridgid Wilkinson, President Ingrid Harrison, the board and the Program Director of Generations Connect, Mel Knuckey, as well as the many community partners and sponsors who helped make Seniors Week such a success. I also acknowledge the students, schools, staff, families, community partners, sporting clubs and the older Tasmanians who have made these initiatives possible. Thank you.

### **Willow Court - Future**

[9.06 p.m.]

**Ms BADGER** (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I rise this evening to speak on Willow Court. I seek the leave of the House to table two documents that were circulated earlier today.

#### **Leave granted**

**Ms BADGER** - Thank you. The first of these documents is a summary from the Willow Court Workshop Proposal and includes the Statement of Remembrance for Willow Court, which was written at that community workshop. Although I don't have the time to recite it in full today, I want to note its significance and how we should always look and consider speaking about Willow Court and its future through the lens of the Statement of Remembrance. The Willow Court workshop was held in November 2023. It was a community-based workshop with over 50 participants, who were part of that workshop for a full weekend. Its intention was to collectively collaborate on finding an agreeable, respectful and prosperous way forward for the Willow Court precinct, including Frescati House.

The second document is a letter from Dr Linda Steele and Phillippa Carnemolla seeking to support the state government in any way that they can for a way forward in Willow Court. A means that is trauma-informed, led by the community, as aforementioned in the workshop that that provided the foundations for. A way forward that is led by those who resided at, worked for or were impacted by Willow Court. The timing for the tabling of these two documents is very important, last week marked the 25th year since the closure of Willow Court and it also marks beginning the beginning of the council led EOI process for the Frescati House.

In the 25 years since Willow Court's closure, various buildings that made-up the entire precinct have been lost to vandalism and privatisation, and in some cases some of the heritage and architectural values of these buildings have been altered, while in some cases they've been

preserved. To risk losing another building before a holistic site plan or any protection planning overlay to prevent the erosion of the vast values of this entire site. It will only hinder future efforts for preservation and it will gut the integrity that the site still has.

Willow Court tells a globally significant human rights story and that is what's highlighted in the letter from Dr Steele. It also has its 19th century buildings and that includes Frescati House. They have a significant aspect of the history to the convict history that Tasmania has. In fact, the barracks building actually predates Port Arthur. It is one of the only sites holistically in the nation that has buildings representative of institutional architecture from colonisation in every era right through to the 20th century.

In March this year, the Derwent Valley Council requested over \$2 million in funding assistance for the Willow Court site for a business plan, noting that this funding request excluded Frescati House. That funding was also for much-needed maintenance on buildings that are a part of the Willow Court precinct. It's a shame that neither the state nor the federal government have yet stepped up to actually help out and protect this site and all the values and work for a constructive way forward.

The case for preservation can't be put any better than what was in the Derwent Valley Council's request for funding on the 10 March 2025. I quote from that paper:

To lose Willow Court through continued neglect would create an irreparable gap in Australia's architectural and social history. Its preservation represents more than just the saving of historic buildings; it ensures the maintenance of a crucial link to our past that can inform our understanding of mental health care, institutional design, and social attitudes for generations to come.

If properly planned out and funded, the Willow Court precinct can have a prosperous future, and it can mediate a globally significant human rights story. It can have any number of private ventures, but it can also still retain its integrity.

It's time that all levels of government actually got together and sat down at the table and worked this out, that they collaborated. The community came together and did it at the workshop. It's time that everyone stepped up and got this done. We made a vision for the future, actually committed to it, to see it through, properly funded it before any further erosion of this site's integrity and values are lost in perpetuity.

### **Public Health Care - Funding**

**Ms ROSOL** (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I rise tonight to speak about the importance of public health services and the Greens' growing concerns about the Rockliff government's approach to funding health care in Tasmania.

I shouldn't have to say it, but apparently I do need to remind some members in this place of this basic fact: access to health care is not only a basic need for Tasmanians, it's a fundamental right. This basic fact goes right to the heart of why we have a public health system, because only with a strong public health system can we make sure everyone gets the health care they need when they need it.

The private sector will never do this. It doesn't want to. It shuts out people who can't pay, and it only delivers services where it can turn a profit. It should be uncontroversial for everyone here to agree with another basic principle that when it comes to public funds, public services should be the priority, not private ones.

But under the Liberals, we are seeing a move towards prioritising funding for private services while the public system continues to fall apart, and it's having a range of consequences.

At a time when we are seeing public healthcare services struggling more than ever, they need all the funding they can get. When the government looks at a service in the public system that is starved of funding and chooses to invest in a private alternative instead, they often argue it is taking pressure off the public system.

There are obviously examples where the private healthcare system is carrying part of the load, and I'm not arguing that. However, when we prioritise funding for a private alternative over the public service, it doesn't relieve pressure, it actually exacerbates the under-investment problem in the public system.

As the government prioritises the growth of private services over the strength of public ones, it also means it's harder and harder for the people who are struggling the most to access those services, because many Tasmanians simply can't afford private health insurance and can't afford the fees charged by private providers.

Another area of concern is the reliance we seem to have built on the private system to provide services where it is only through private providers that you can access a particular type of care or treatment.

We've seen the risks of this reliance. Privately run facilities can just shut up shop with little notice, as happened with the St Helens mental health facility in Hobart, a situation that had wide-ranging consequences and left the state scrambling to establish the critical mother and baby unit back in the public system.

I'm concerned that we are increasingly seeing our public health system reliant on private providers; the more taxpayer money that goes into private health instead of public, the more that reliance will grow.

Another effect of the move to more funding for private over public is the patchwork effect it creates. Rather than taking a strategic view and looking at the best bang for our buck and how things work together in a holistic system, we are seeing a bits-and-pieces approach, a fracturing. Fracturing means more cracks in the system, more gaps for people to fall through, more inefficiency and worse outcomes.

I'm not sure how much the government's approach has been driven by the so-called small government ideology the Liberal Party is known for, or whether this has been more politically motivated. After all, it's been awfully convenient for the Liberals to be able to make flashy announcements in election campaigns for private providers that are happy to sing their praises.

Regardless of motive, the effect is not good for the state or our public health system, a system that's already struggling so much.

I want to finish by saying the Greens are founded on four principles: ecological sustainability; grassroots democracy; peace and non-violence; and social justice. We know that health care is a critical social justice issue. That's why we will continue to fight for this government to invest in strong public health services, services that all Tasmanians can access and rely on.

## **Public Transport - Multiple Benefits of Improving Network**

[9.15 p.m.]

**Prof RAZAY** - Honourable Speaker, last week Launceston farewelled its Tiger Bus. It was the beloved service of the city, giving city workers a lift into town and tourists a fun and easy way to explore our wonderful sights. The hop-on, hop-off bus service operated from Monday to Friday, taking it to city stops and tourist destinations, most notably connecting visitors with the picturesque Cataract Gorge and the fabulous collection of the QVMAG.

During its more than 15 years of service, the Tiger Bus carried thousands of happy passengers. For young families, it was a great free activity that could fit in the entire morning for their children. For tourists, it provided a close-up view of the best and most beautiful parts of Launceston. It was an example of how public transport can add to the fabric of a community, weaving connections that build healthy and vibrant community.

While the Tiger Bus has regrettably made its last stop, I am determined that the journey of public transport will continue to grow in Tasmania. I commend the City of Launceston and Metro for their support of the Tiger Bus for 15 years. I urge Tasmania to be forward-thinking in how we can make our cities more accessible, where people can connect easily for work and connect with their families. We need to encourage the Tasmanian community to embrace public transport, making our city centres a place for people, not cars. Public transport brings people together. It connects community, allowing people of all backgrounds - students, workers, elderly and those with disabilities, to access opportunities. We must do more to make bus travel appealing. It needs to be convenient, comfortable and, most importantly, affordable.

It is time to review and overhaul the transit system, and the first step is to consult with the community about the transport services they need to stay connected. According to a McKell Institute report in 2024, fixing Tasmania's broken public transport system underscored the neglect of the state's public transport system for many years. The report found that Tasmania spent the second lowest proportion of its budget on public transport services, second to the Northern Territory. Only 0.94 per cent of the state budget was spent on public transport services, compared to 4.7 per cent in Victoria and 5.5 per cent in Western Australia.

We must also understand that the lack of use of public transport has an impact on our health, especially with increased congestion and air pollution. It is well recognised that air pollution can increase chronic health problems like chronic lung disease and asthma. However, we must also recognise that the Tasmanian love affair with cars is growing. There were more than half a million cars registered in 2021, an 80 per cent increase since 2010. Tasmania has the highest number of vehicles per 1000 people of any state, and also has the oldest cars.

Accessible public transport is a crucial part of modern life but Tasmania is missing out on the well-documented social, environmental and economic benefits of transit networks that

respond to and meet the needs of the community. We must do better. Let's commit to a future of improved public transport options that will support a vibrant and healthy community.

### Public Sector Wages

[9.19 p.m.]

**Mrs GREENE** (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, the government's relationship with Tasmania's public sector workers has reached a breaking point. Union members across the public service took action last week and pledged to continue to take action. It is likely we will see an escalation in coming weeks unless the government steps up, steps in and provides further instructions to the chief negotiator.

We have a number of ministers in this place dancing around the truth, promising that there will be no job cuts to frontline services. Yet those same ministers have ordered cuts in their departments through vacancy control. I would love to know what they mean by a frontline job. Who is an essential worker and who isn't? The government has been less than transparent about this. The Treasurer has been spinning and sidestepping in this place, pretending that these so-called savings won't hurt services. However, anyone that has ever worked in the public service or relied on public services knows the truth: that when you cut jobs you cut services. Departments have been ordered to freeze jobs, delay recruitment and quietly let vacancies build up, and then they claim that they have saved money. What they have actually done is push workloads higher, burn out staff who remain and let critical services grind under the weight of inaction. Make no mistake, vacancy control is job cuts by stealth.

Instead of being honest with Tasmanians about which roles will be axed, they are leaving desks empty and calling it a temporary measure. Tasmanians deserve to know which services are going to be hollowed out. We deserve transparent line-by-line accounting of which positions are frozen, how long they have been vacant and what impact that is going to have on service delivery. Right now, even senior managers in the State Service are in the dark. The Treasurer is counting on that confusion to get away with these cuts.

Let's talk about what under-investment and unfilled vacancies actually look like in our community. Ask parents in your community how long they have been waiting for autism assessments through the Tasmanian Autism Diagnostic Service (TADS). Some have been waiting not just months but years. My own family was in that situation. That means years of frustration, stress and lost opportunities for early support for your child.

Ask workers in the Family Violence Counselling and Support Service when their adult or children's programs were last at full staffing levels. Ask their after-hours workers when the last time was that they had two workers on a shift, because most nights they only have one. These are the people that are holding victims' hands through the darkest times of their lives.

Ask the dog handlers in biosecurity at our airports and at Devonport port how it feels to be chronically short-staffed while trying to protect Tasmania's borders and industries from diseases that will decimate our agricultural sector. They have been short-staffed for years as well.

Ask Child Safety officers how it feels to carry often double the caseload of what they should, knowing that every file represents a child who needs safety and stability and care.

Ask the pathology team at the LGH how they are coping, running flat-out, with vacancies unfilled, a business case presented last year that showed there was a need for additional scientists which has been ignored and that statewide review still over their heads.

Ask the seed laboratory staff at Mount Pleasant how old their equipment is, how far they are behind on their testing because the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania won't provide the staff they need to support our farmers and agricultural industry. Ask them about their last audit. Ask them about their last three.

Ask the liquor and gaming inspectors in Treasury how they are keeping up because there just aren't enough of them to cover the state. Yet I noticed today some people sitting opposite were blaming them, saying that they were red tape when there just aren't enough of them to process those licences quickly enough.

Ask school social workers who are stretched between four or five schools each how they are trying to build a rapport with students when they are sometimes trying to support them in the darkest times of their life sometimes. They might have had a mum or a dad who has been diagnosed with cancer, they might have lost a sibling, they might be experiencing bullying in schools, they might be struggling with their mental health and that is impacting on their ability to attend school. It is simply not good enough. Ask school social workers how long they wait on the phone each week to get through to the Advice and Referral Line because they are underfunded, too.

Ask the Tasmania Fire Service administration staff in Launceston, Cambridge and Burnie how they are feeling right now. They have been waiting about two years for the review of their positions. They are being told that it is coming soon, but they are still waiting. They provide a critical role to support career and volunteer fires in this state.

**Time expired**

### **Tasmanian Craft Fair**

[9.24 p.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Attorney-General) - Honourable Speaker, I am delighted to stand here tonight and pay tribute to all those involved in the Tasmanian Craft Fair held last weekend over three days. It was an outstanding success with more than 18,000 visitors. To all those involved, I say congratulations and well done. The craft fair commenced in 1981 just as a very small local exhibition, it's grown now to the largest working craft fair in the Southern Hemisphere. It's an incredible achievement. Some 250 talented artists, mostly from Tasmania, some 70 per cent from Tasmania, but from the mainland and also overseas. We're very proud of everything that they've done and achieved. There's so much creativity, colour and community spirit.

I had the honour of being on the gate for a few hours on Saturday. The Governor, Her Excellency the Honourable Barbara Baker AC and Prof Don Chalmers were present and really enjoyed a couple of hours at the Tasmanian Craft Fair. They were hosted by Michael and Gail Plunkett. Michael Plunkett was the director this year and for the last several years of the craft fair and I have been able to catch up with them and Her Excellency and others and they absolutely thoroughly enjoyed it.

I want pay a tribute to the to the Rotary Club of Deloraine for the incredible work that they put in to support the craft fair, to all of the volunteers; Michael Plunkett and all the team; Gail and the team; to the event manager, Kristen Finnigan; to the president of the Rotary Club, Greg Burgess; and along with there so many hard-working volunteers, it's just a brilliant job.

The energy and the pride in the community. It was a beautiful day on Saturday. It was quite warm, but the atmosphere was so positive. Everyone was so excited to be there, and they wanted to get out and about and enjoy it and they absolutely did. To the volunteers, the 250 exhibitors, as I said, to the sponsors, to the partners.

Since its beginning, it's raised over \$3 million for community projects, supporting scholarships for local students to learn to swim programs. It has rural mental health programs as well, and I know the Minister for Health and Mental Health and Wellbeing would be pleased about that. It's even supporting eye clinics in Nepal. It's incredible.

The legacy is to be proud of and as a government, I am very pleased to be part of the government that that does provide support of more than \$300,000 over the last several years and through to next year as well for this wonderful event through Events Tasmania Major Event Partnership Program, the Tasmanian Festival and Events Support Fund. I want to pay a tribute as well to the internationally renowned artists with the sand sculptor Dennis Massoud, known as 'The Sandman' and the speed painter, Brad Blaze, who was there performing as well.

To the Premier's Arts Awards, that was great to be there Saturday night with my wife Kate to celebrate so many awards but the Premier's Arts Award, one of Australia's most valuable craft prizes, recognised excellence and creativity of the highest standard. That went to Gemma Haynes and her partner, Adam, at the Nature Matrix for their innovative and creative use of new technology and materials and techniques for her piece entitled Cinderis. Congratulations! The enthusiasm and pleasure in their faces as I presented that award on behalf of Premier Jeremy Rockliff was absolutely palpable.

The craft fair is a brilliant example of Team Tasmania at work and absolutely brilliant. I just wanted to acknowledge that. In terms of the Premier's Arts Award, there was a Highly Commended to Helen Hayes' ceramics. She was delighted to receive that award. The Best Working Exhibit to Phoenix Creations. Stan Presentation Award was the Naturopathic Alchemy. First Time Exhibitor award to the Blue Gum Bush. Farm Providores Award to Persia's Pantry, and they were there in full flight on Saturday night. Wonderful people behind that, Persia's Pantry. The Allan Alvador Memorial Award went to Simon Rootes Kilburn Inc. Simon shared the story of Allan Alvador and how he's (9:29:11) from the mainland and he's passed away, but he so enjoyed coming back to the craft fair each and every year and his family is now donating at \$1000 award each year to somebody who's providing such encouragement as an exhibitor. It was great to hear Simon's story on the night.

I congratulate and acknowledge everybody involved with the Tasmanian Craft Fair.



## Benjafield Park Community Barbecue

[9.29 p.m.]

**Ms BURNET** (Clark) - I want to talk about an event that I hosted with Senator Nick McKimm last Friday and we had our third community barbecue at Benjafield Park in Moonah. We had good weather and were amongst very good company, and what could be better than meeting people from many multicultural communities in the local park adjacent to the fabulous upgraded playground? At this barbie, there were locals who originally hailed from Africa, from Pakistan, from Nepal and other parts of the world. At least one-in-five residents in Glenorchy were born overseas, and there were people from 20-30 nationalities who call Glenorchy home.

I'd like to thank the staff from Senator McKim's office and my own, and the various networks through the Multicultural Council of Tasmania and the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) Tasmania, who helped make the event such a successful evening of networking.

By the way, what a fantastic result for MRC Tasmania, who raised a lot of awareness about racism in the various multicultural programs that they ran during the month of October, where there was the walk against racism. They raised between \$80,000 and \$90,000. It was a fantastic effort.

Both of these were really positive events, as was Diwali. The minister for multicultural communities was at the Diwali festival held at PW1 on the weekend.

Over the past few months, it's been tough on refugee and migrant communities. There have been organised marches that have made people from migrant backgrounds, particularly people of colour, scared because of neo-Nazi undertones. There's blatant racism occurring, there's casual racism, and there's systemic racism, and none of that is okay. We need to be fighting that at every turn in Tasmania.

On the ABC on Monday, there was a story about refugee and migrant women who, despite immigrating to Tasmania with teaching, nursing and other professional backgrounds, were unable to find work as their qualifications were not recognised in Australia. The brilliant organisation Be Hers - which you're probably aware of, honourable Speaker - was helping those women to develop other skills. Unfortunately, a twist of fate is that many of the avenues where they're developing those skills are threatened by cuts to TAFE courses, which is another terrible blow for those. That's another reason why it's so important to invest in TAFE.

I spoke to many interesting people, got to know new people, and made new friends last Friday. One of the constituents I spoke to, who wants to remain anonymous, is an enrolled nurse. She would love to work, but unfortunately can't find work, strangely enough. You know, there's a nursing shortage. She's looking at GP clinics, she's even willing to travel out to work in a country hospital for many kilometres per day of travel, but at the moment, she's turned back at every turn, which is a real travesty for her and our state, really.

I hope that the barbecue we had would achieve many things. It's important to make people feel welcome and also have positive action, so that's what we want to continue to do. Senator McKim is also looking at hosting Let's Talk about Racism in Tasmania. It's sponsored by the Tasmanian government among other people. It will be on the 11 November at 5.30pm, so get in touch if anybody's interested in coming along to that.

## Online Access Centres

[9.34 p.m.]

**Ms BUTLER** (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, over the last seven-and-a-half, eight years, many people in this Chamber would have heard me talk about our invaluable and vital community assets called Online Access Centres. I wrote this letter to the Minister for Education who looks after libraries and online access centres (OAC) fall under libraries. I am going read into the *Hansard* my letter and then also the pitiful response I received.

Over the last 10 years I have worked with various online access centres across Tasmania in the bid to ensure these vital community services maintained and adequately funded. The minimal funding provided by the state government to maintain the OAC network over the last decade has meant the closure of a number of online access centres. Those remaining are cost-neutral with volunteer contribution, local and federal government grants, quality publications, fundraising drives and donations keeping the network afloat. The fight by various communities to maintain online access centres is indicative of the importance of the services they provide.

The recent review conducted into OACs is without appropriate methodology or consultation. In two examples, local government OAC partners were not consulted in the review, despite owning the OAC sites themselves. Comparisons of the online access centre service were compared to similar sites in Wales, UK, with limited understanding of the unique services delivered to individual communities. It is clear the outcome of the review is to close OACs which are located near libraries, with OAC volunteers integrated into libraries. The expense of the private consultation review itself could have maintained the invaluable OAC network for another 12 months.

The process has been unsettling, haphazard and unprofessional. Feedback from various OAC committees has provided insight into the approach taken by the review. Consistently, OAC coordinators have reported feeling isolated and insecure as to whether they have job security. In some cases, six months have passed not knowing if they will have a job the next day. In others, such as the Derwent Valley, advice of closure has been given. Other OACs have been presented with an options model.

Many OACs are predominantly located in regional areas with poor internet services. A number of regular users do not have computers, whilst others are functionally illiterate or struggle with digital literacy. At a time when government services, banking, training, communication are switching to online platforms, the OAC network has addressed this gap. A number of OAC volunteers have reported concern for their local communities in the provision of digital assistance, access, training and connections.

On behalf of OACs across the state, I am therefore seeking clarity on the methodology to determine the future of each online access centre.

The perception of a cloak and dagger divide and conquer approach -

That was a quote that was provided to me by one of the coordinators because that's very much how this review has been undertaken.

- is a reality with one respondent stating, 'Now they are popping us off one by one like a sniper, it's rather unsettling,'.

I call on you, I call on the minister, to maintain the existing online access into network as a unique valuable community asset and provide security as to their future.

I have received a response from the minister and there won't be time in this Adjournment debate for me to read all of that into the *Hansard*, so I will do so tomorrow night.

However, one of the underlying issues of the closures of these online access centres is you can conduct a false review without the appropriate consultation, but to integrate these online access centres into Libraries Tasmania, you cannot provide the proper digital assistance that is provided by those online access centre coordinators and by those volunteers within those online access centres because there are so many gaps that they feel of missing services within their communities. That is one of their main functions. They are unique, each community has its own gaps.

The other thing is library staff are not permitted to actually hold phones or devices or laptops or computers. That was actually related to the person undertaking the review 12 months into the review and they didn't know that. That is the quality of this review.

I will return to the House tomorrow night and I will read the minister's pitiful response. We must save our online access centres.

### Housing Crisis

[9.40 p.m.]

**Mr BAYLEY** (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I rise tonight to again raise the crisis in housing here in Tasmania. This week the issue has been writ large with the latest Homes Tasmania dashboard figures sadly breaking new records and Anglicare releasing its quarterly snapshot, highlighting a shocking escalation in measures that speak to the neglect this government has shown for more than a decade.

Homes Tasmania, the state entity responsible for public housing and homelessness strategies, has again published its monthly report card. Another fail in a long litany of failures. In September, there were 5336 applicants on the housing register with priority applicants waiting an average of over 100 weeks to be provided a home. This is a record on both accounts. While there are over 5300 applications, we have to recognise that this is not representative of 5300 individuals seeking support. For many applications there are partners, children, grandchildren and other dependents, and so 5300 applications represent a sum total of thousands more needing to find a home. Homes Tasmania is failing.

We've long raised the fudging of figures, counting crisis accommodation and vacant land as achievements in the government's policy promise to build 10,000 new social and affordable homes by 2032. The issues run deeper. In budget week as we commit hundreds of millions of

dollars to build a third AFL stadium, the neglect and antipathy of the government for those struggling for a home should not be lost on anyone.

Shifting government's responsibility to house Tasmania's vulnerable from a government department to a public non-financial corporation has proven problematic and a way to shift cost and debt off the government sector books. The Crawford review highlighted challenges and recommended some ways forward. The ever-worsening dashboard statistics demonstrate that change is indeed necessary.

To amplify the alarm bells ringing through the Homes Tasmania statistics, Anglicare's report published today shocks the system through the sheer scale of escalating pain. Anglicare is reported in today's *Mercury* as describing living conditions in Tasmania as akin to those seen in developing countries. Shame. The report describes a shocking 88 per cent increase in the number of people sleeping rough in Tasmania compared to the same period last year. These are the people sleeping in tents and cars on the Domain, the Hobart Rivulet, under the Bridge of Remembrance on the approach to Hobart, and countless other parks and reserves and backyards all across Tasmania.

There's been a 54 per cent rise in people living in unsuitable dwellings. Dwellings freezing cold in winter, mouldy with rising damp, inadequate security or leaky roofs. Most distressingly, the number of children in families seeking support has grown by 60 per cent. These figures are truly heartbreaking. They are the figures that sit behind the people that the frontline services see every single day, day after day.

So many Tasmanians, including thousands of children, unable to find a home. Meanwhile, evidence-based actions that can make a real difference to people's lives go begging. Putting aside Homes Tasmania and its inability to meet the needs of Tasmanians, the Liberal government - all too often supported by Labor - have failed to take action to protect the rights of renters and rein in out of control short-stay accommodation. Each quarter, Consumer Building and Occupational Services reports on short-stay permits and the evidence of whole home rentals being converted to short-stay hotels is writ large. While the conversion of rentals to short-stay needs to be prohibited in residential zoned areas, even the Liberal's tokenistic 5 per cent levy on short-stay visitors, promised two elections ago has been kicked into the long grass.

Actions speak louder than words and on short-stay, the Liberals talk up action but take none. For renters, while it is welcome that there has finally been progress on the rights of tenants to keep pets in their homes, too many other critical reforms go completely begging. Ending unfair no-cause evictions, controlling rents, and introducing minimum standards for rental properties can make a real difference in a double-whammy housing and cost-of-living crisis. We look forward to the minor modifications bill being debated and we will move to amend it to ensure safety, security, disability access, and communications modifications can be made by tenants. It is the 21st century and housing is a human right, but Tasmanians still struggle under antiquated laws that prioritise the rights of landlords and investors.

We still underfund the community services sector, delivering services to those in need and so the needs are not met, and we still delude ourselves that we're doing enough to build the houses needed to keep up with the basic demands of Tasmanians doing it ever harder in a state of haves and have-nots. And in tomorrow's budget, Tasmania will prioritise a billion-dollar stadium over the many needs of some of our most vulnerable.

**The House adjourned at 9.45 p.m.**

DRAFT