



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Tuesday 15 October 2024

REVISED EDITION

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Tuesday 15 October 2024

The Speaker, **Ms O'Byrne**, took the Chair at 10.00 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People, and read Prayers.

STATEMENT BY PREMIER

Portfolio Arrangements

[10.01 a.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Premier) - Honourable Speaker, I inform the House that I will be taking questions for the ministerial portfolios of Treasurer and Small Business and Consumer Affairs as the interim minister.

QUESTIONS

***Spirit of Tasmania* - New Vessels Commencement Date**

Mr WINTER question to **PREMIER**, **Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.01 a.m.]

The new *Spirits*, when they are finally here, will be fantastic for our state, but tourism and hospitality businesses across Tasmania have already been let down by delays and your failure to tell them what is going on. Many have made investments they are paying for now but will not see any return on for at least a year. You are now the Minister for Infrastructure, the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality, the acting Treasurer, the acting Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs, and the Premier of Tasmania. Will you personally guarantee that the new *Spirits* will be in service at full capacity by January 2026?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question on what is a very important matter. I was at a tourism and hospitality event last night where I spoke about the importance of the hospitality industry. One in every eight Tasmanians is employed in the tourism and hospitality industry and the visitation economy. Over 40,000 people are gainfully employed in what is a fantastic industry for Tasmania. They have a great base from which to work: the finest of produce; a beautiful environment; the finest of beverages; and committed, hardworking and innovative people.

What is also important is the infrastructure that supports that industry, the infrastructure for our road network, telecommunications network, our airports infrastructure and also the vital infrastructure for our *Spirits of Tasmania*. We have been very well served by *Spirits I* and *II* and we look forward to *Spirits IV* and *V* coming online.

To the member's question, my focus is on delivery and solutions. I have never been one for politics. You have. The time for politics is over. We will sort the *Spirits*, fix the GBEs and back our tourism industry. That requires strong communication with the tourism and hospitality and visitation economy sector, which we will engage in.

Mr Winter - When?

Mr ROCKLIFF - As I have said publicly, I expect the Gemell-Moloney report on Friday. I commend Peter Gemell and Ben Moloney for the work they have been doing since we intervened a few months ago to sort this challenging matter out. I look forward to their report next week. I will be announcing the key direction, as we move forward, for the *Spirits of Tasmania* - regarding the berthing infrastructure - and we will sort out what has been an incredible challenge to delivery. We will deliver, we will be focused on solutions -

The SPEAKER - The Premier's time to answer the question has expired.

Supplementary Question

Mr WINTER - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Mr WINTER - Premier, will you personally guarantee the new *Spirits* will be in service at full capacity by January 2026, as you said they would be?

The SPEAKER - I draw the Premier to the question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I have answered the question with my previous answer. I expect the report on Friday by Peter Gemell and Ben Moloney, who have been working through these matters, and there we will have solutions moving forward. I will be announcing this next week, as I engage with Mr Gemell and Mr Moloney, to ensure that we deliver the *Spirits* as soon as possible, and the required berthing infrastructure.

My focus is on solutions. The member can play all the politics he likes but the time for politics is over. Tasmanians do not like the politics being played over there. The personal, nasty smear -

The SPEAKER - The Premier's time for answering the supplementary question has expired.

TasPorts - Ministerial Direction to Host TT-Line Ships

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.08 a.m.]

It is farcical that you are seriously considering putting our new *Spirits of Tasmania* in Singapore while you wait for the Devonport infrastructure to be upgraded. It is frankly un-Tasmanian. Worse, the reason you are considering this is because TasPorts, an organisation you have oversight over, is demanding \$8000 a day from another GBE, TT-Line, for which you also have some responsibility. This shows that the issues that caused this mess in the first place, a failure of TasPorts and TT-Line to work together in the best interest of Tasmania, has still not been resolved.

We have been calling on you to issue a ministerial direction requiring TasPorts to host the ships in Tasmania without charging \$8000 a day. Will you do it?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question. We will reform the GBEs. My strong expectation of government business enterprises and state-owned companies is that they put Tasmania first. I want to see at the top of every single government business enterprise and state-owned company, on the top of their organisational structure, the people of Tasmania, who they are accountable to, given the investments the Tasmanian people make in their government business enterprises and state-owned companies. The people of Tasmania, first and foremost, is my very clear expectation.

We are committed to review and rewrite the charters of expectations for our government business enterprises as part of the reform process, and we will continue the reform. We will fix the GBEs to ensure that they do put Tasmania, and most importantly, the owners of their assets - the people of Tasmania - first and foremost. That is my commitment to addressing the challenges we have become aware of as a result of, as an example, the berthing infrastructure and the new *Spirits of Tasmania*.

Again, my focus is on delivery and solutions. We will sort the *Spirits*, we will fix the GBEs, and we will back our tourism industry.

Supplementary Question

Mr WINTER - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Mr WINTER - Same question again: will the Premier require TasPorts to not charge TT-Line so that we can have our *Spirits of Tasmania* in the state instead of in Singapore?

The SPEAKER - I am not sure if the Premier wishes to add anything further, but I understand the answer of the reformation of GBEs would be your answer to that, or if you wish to add you may. Otherwise, I will -

Mr ROCKLIFF - No, I have covered it.

Ministerial Standards and Responsibility

Dr WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.10 a.m.]

The Tasmanian people elected a power-sharing parliament. The Liberal MO of riding roughshod over parliament and scoffing at scrutiny is over. This House will not let you get away with it. While holding Cabinet ministers to account is a fundamental responsibility of this parliament, it is your job too. The ministerial standards you set and uphold are critical for good government, good outcomes, and stability.

Yesterday, you referred to Michael Ferguson as the victim of a consistent smear campaign. Do you stand by that statement today or do you accept that your lacklustre ministerial standards have to lift to meet this new parliamentary dynamic and deliver for Tasmanians? Do you agree that, as Premier, you need to lift your game to make sure your ministers are transparent, accountable, competent, and that they take responsibility for their portfolios?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank Dr Woodruff for her question. I have spent some time in this place and always ensured that I kept politics and personal attacks out of public debate. For as long as I can remember, I have been told that once you start attacking people personally, you have lost the argument.

I am not sure how you would characterise the matters relating to Mr Ferguson's past that were raised last week as anything but a smear campaign, of which the Labor Party firmly attached themselves to through commentary in *The Australian* newspaper -

Members interjecting.

Mr ROCKLIFF - of which you attached yourself to, particularly you, in *The Australian* newspaper.

The SPEAKER - The Premier will direct his answer through the Chair.

Mr ROCKLIFF - That is what I would characterise as a smear campaign, Dr Woodruff.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - The Premier will direct his answer through the Chair to assist in quieting the interjections.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will have none of that. What I am focused on is ministerial accountability and I disagree with the way that you presented the question, because it is in my nature to be cooperative whether we are a majority government or not. I demonstrated that in opposition and in government, when we were in majority, and have reinforced the fact since our minority parliament was elected on 23 March this year.

That is the error of cooperation and a strong communication between the crossbench and any other member of parliament who is willing to be constructive on behalf of the Tasmanian people. I see constructive thought and communication on the crossbench. I often do not see it by those opposite, but that is the way this parliament must operate in challenging times.

We are still working our way through a Budget that is framed in a challenging economic environment, as all budgets are framed across the country, but one that does deliver when it comes to more investment in frontline services: more nurses, more police, more doctors, teachers in our schools, and infrastructure across Tasmania supporting those essential social services.

The SPEAKER - The Premier's time for answering the question has expired.

Supplementary Question

Dr WOODRUFF - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Dr WOODRUFF - I listened closely to your answer, Premier. Can you confirm that you do not think there is anything that needs to be adjusted in the standard that you set for your ministers in accountability, transparency, and taking responsibility for failures?

The SPEAKER - It does draw from the answer the Premier gave, so I call the Premier.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The Ministerial Code of Conduct is very clear and I expect all ministers to uphold that. You referenced, or characterised your question about the circumstances that I drew you to about the unfortunate smear demonstrated last week by those opposite.

Dr Woodruff - Just answer the question, please.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I have answered the question.

The SPEAKER - It is not time for a conversation across the Chamber. The Premier will answer the question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I have answered the question.

Dr Woodruff - You do not think anything needs to change?

The SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Greens.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I expect all our ministers to uphold the high standards of accountability and transparency

GBEs - Governance and Legislation Reviews

Mr O'BYRNE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.16 a.m.]

For a long time now, I have been publicly raising issues with you and your ministers about the behaviour of some of Tasmania's government business enterprises, including bungled major projects, failing public transport service, unfair treatment of workers, and outrageous golden handshakes. You have said GBEs need to work in the best interest of Tasmanians, but clearly they are not. In the wake of the *Spirits* and Devonport berth debacle, I am calling for the boards of TT-Line and TasPorts to be removed and senior management stood down and replaced with administrators, pending a governance review.

I am also calling for an immediate review of the legislation that governs state-owned companies and government business enterprises with a view to create sweeping reforms.

During state Budget Estimates recently, you acknowledged the need for a shake-up of GBEs. The question is: will you now act?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question and acknowledge his views about government business enterprises, which we spoke about throughout Estimates. The bottom line to your question is: yes, there needs to be reform. We will review legislation; we are rewriting the charters. The expectations of government business enterprises, from my point of view and our government's, is that they need to be held accountable to the Tasmanian people. It is my expectation that the people of Tasmania are clearly on top of every organisational chart of a government business enterprise or a state-owned company, so the CEOs, employees, and the boards that provide governance and direction of those GBEs know exactly to whom they are accountable.

I am more than willing to engage with members of parliament, including the crossbench and including you, member for Franklin, David O'Byrne, when it comes to review this legislation because, as I said in my answer to the Leader of the Opposition, we are going to sort the *Spirits* and fix the GBEs.

Members - Hear, hear.

***Spirit of Tasmania* - Berthing Costs in Singapore**

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.18 a.m.]

Can you confirm that it will cost more than \$3000 a day to berth our new *Spirits* in Singapore? That is over \$1 million a year to avoid the political embarrassment of having the ships sitting in Tasmania, unable to operate until you finish the Devonport berth. Why are you continuing to waste taxpayer money like this?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question. We will do all we can, with the advice presented to us on Friday by Gemell and Moloney, to minimise taxpayer investment and funds spent on developing the required berth infrastructure and finishing the transition from the existing *Spirits* to the new ones. Dr Broad, if you want to catch up on a few things -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Members on my left will cease to interject, but the Premier will cease to attempt to entice interjections as we try to get through a calmer Question Time than we had expected.

Mr ROCKLIFF - With respect, Dr Broad can wave his hands about and make silly noises about advice - what would you expect me to do?

Dr Broad - Not to stuff it up in the first place.

Mr ROCKLIFF - What would you expect me to do in terms of receiving considered advice by the experts who we intervened and appointed? I look forward to the Gemell-Moloney report, which I expect will be delivered on Friday. Making key announcements focusing on delivery and solutions, not politics, is the positive way forward.

Supplementary Question

Mr WINTER - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the Leader of the Opposition's supplementary.

Mr WINTER - Can the Premier confirm that it will cost more than \$3000 a day to berth our new *Spirits* in Singapore? Why will he not rule it out?

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

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, I am waiting for advice.

Mr Winter - On that? Is Gemell telling you how much it costs in Singapore?

The SPEAKER - The Leader of the Opposition had his question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am waiting for advice on a positive way forward with a focus on delivery and solutions. I have acknowledged in this place that the situation we find ourselves in is not good enough by any stretch of the imagination. That is why we intervened, and that is why we will find the solutions.

Mr Abetz - Comments About No-Confidence Motion

Dr WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

On Sunday, it became clear that the prospect of a successful no-confidence motion was very real. In response, one of your senior ministers made some stunning remarks. Eric Abetz said no-confidence motions were nothing more than a 'political stunt of no consequence'. He also said, 'Even if a motion of no confidence were to be passed in him, there will be no need for Mr Ferguson to resign and I would encourage him not to resign'.

This dripping disdain for parliament and our longstanding Westminster conventions prompted you to intervene at an emergency press conference the next day and you promised that Mr Ferguson would resign in such an event. Given Mr Abetz's palpable contempt for parliament, will you use your cabinet reshuffle to remove him as leader of government business? Given his clear disregard for our system of government and its foundational conventions, will you rule out making him the Attorney-General?

Mr Winter - Turns out you are the conservative one in this government.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Me?

Mr Winter - Looks like it.

The SPEAKER - The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting, as the Leader of the Greens, who has already asked her question, wishes to hear an answer.

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I look forward to consulting with my colleagues on a way forward for new positions within the Cabinet. I am very fortunate that I have such a capable team, whose lived experience across a range of areas I can draw on. I am not going to speculate in the Chamber today on those positions. I will say, however, what an outstanding job Mr Abetz is doing with his responsibilities. I receive very strong stakeholder endorsement -

Dr Woodruff - You had to step in and contradict him, did you not?

Mr ROCKLIFF - on Mr Abetz's application to the very important task that he has. I made my statement very clearly yesterday. I have said many times in this place since 23 March that the will of the parliament will and must be respected. We have debated legislation and motions in this place and the outcome has not always aligned with the view of members on this side of the Chamber, but it is the will of the parliament, and the people elected the parliament. Therefore, it is the will of the people.

Supplementary Question

Dr WOODRUFF - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Dr WOODRUFF - I listened closely. Premier, can you confirm how a person who has contempt for the will of the parliament should be the leader of government business?

The SPEAKER - It probably is a different question. It draws to the significant obligation of all members to be aware of their roles and responsibilities in this place. If the Premier wishes to add to his answer, I will allow him to do so.

I ask all members to reflect on the fact that the traditions and obligations of the forms of this House and the Westminster system do have a measure of being enforced. Premier, do you wish to add to your answer?

Dr Woodruff - I did contain all that information in my original question. It is a restatement of the original question, which the Premier did not respond to.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I answered the question.

The SPEAKER - I believe he said that he was not going to advise until he had finished his consultation on the new makeup. I am sure we will have ample opportunity to reflect upon who will be appointed to particular roles.

Dr Woodruff - I certainly hope he does.

TasPorts - Responsibility for *Spirits of Tasmania*

Mrs PENTLAND question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.26 a.m.]

The *Spirit* debacle has had major ramifications on the management of TT-Line and for your own Cabinet. For another major player, TasPorts, it appears to be smooth sailing. What conversations have you had with TasPorts leadership about accepting responsibility for its role in the sorry saga?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for her question. We find ourselves in this situation in no small part thanks to GBE governance and matters. I said very clearly, a number of times, that the blame game should stop here, however, and it must. I have made my views clear today on my expectations for government business enterprises and how they deliver for the Tasmanian people. That will be made very clear when I meet with the GBEs responsible, not only for the matters about the *Spirits of Tasmania*, but other matters of interest around our state as well. I guarantee that to you.

Today, Mrs Pentland, I have made it very clear to your question that we will sort the *Spirits* and we will fix the GBEs. We will also work with and back our tourism industry, which I know is an interest that you have, as we move forward to the new *Spirits*.

Bipartisan Support for New Government Business Constitution Act

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.28 a.m.]

You have clearly failed to ensure Tasmanian government businesses are working in the best interests of Tasmania. The debacle involving TasPorts and TT-Line is the latest and most damaging example. On the weekend I announced a plan to get our government businesses back on track. We see the need for a reform of the legislative framework they work under, and a new government business constitution act that increases transparency, oversight and introduces a requirement for them to act in Tasmania's best interest, not just their own. We want to bring in new leadership by limiting the number of boards people can sit on and introducing term limits, like we see across other sectors. We want to ensure that there are always two shareholder ministers, so that the lack of oversight we have seen on the *Spirits* project is not ever seen again.

You have my commitment to act in a bipartisan way on this. Will you accept our suggestions and adopt our ideas? Will you work with us to ensure these government businesses get back on track?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Does anybody actually want to hear the answer, or would you just like to have a chat between each other?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question. We will continue to roll out GBE reform. As late to the party as you are -

Members interjecting.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, fashionably late, really. We had some discussion in this House last time we sat about these matters. However, as late to the party as you are and as committed as we are to rolling out GBE reform, I welcome suggestions and a bipartisan approach to addressing these issues.

To the point that Dr Woodruff was making before about the will of the parliament, this is the place for ideas. This is the place where we need to bring forward positive ideas, not politics, which you have become known for - all politics. I welcome the bipartisan support for the reform the government is undertaking and which the member for Franklin has also raised.

Supplementary Question

Mr WINTER - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Mr WINTER - Following that answer, can the Premier outline what reform to government businesses he is actually talking about? He talks about government reform and I do not know what he is talking about.

Mr Barnett - It is a separate question.

The SPEAKER - The Premier talked about reform in his answer, but I can call him to it. I remind Mr Barnett I can hear him more now because he is sitting closer to me. He will cease interjecting. I call the Premier.

Mr ROCKLIFF - To a different question?

The SPEAKER - No. I have suggested - and you may dispute it if you wish - that it comes out of your answer, which talked about a reform agenda and a reform process.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I believe that I made it quite clear, but if I have not made it clear enough - we have spoken about the charters. I have spoken in this place today about legislation, and we have spoken today about -

Mr Winter - What legislation?

Ms White - That is not reform; they are just ideas you have not actually delivered on.

The SPEAKER - Thank you, member for Lyons.

Mr ROCKLIFF - and we have spoken about -

Mr Winter - What legislation are you talking about?

The SPEAKER - And the leader.

Mr ROCKLIFF - the importance of focusing our GBEs not only to work well and constructively together in the best interests of the Tasmanian people, but to put the Tasmanian people at the forefront of the organisational structure.

Public Trustee - Administration of Wills

Ms JOHNSTON question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Mr BARNETT

[10.33 a.m.]

You have announced a review into the business model of the Public Trustee, effectively privatising it. Already, it has been decided that all wills currently held by the Public Trustee will be transferred to the private sector, along with most of the other services that actually make money for the Public Trustee. This announcement has blindsided the Public Trustee and has caused great concern among many in the community.

Can you guarantee that Tasmanians who have chosen to have their wills with the Public Trustee will still be able to have them administered by the Public Trustee? Can you guarantee that no Tasmanian will have to pay, or pay more than they currently do, as a result of your changes?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I acknowledge her special interest in the Public Trustee and her advocacy for those that benefit from the services of the Public Trustee. This is a priority for our government and we take it very seriously. The whole focus of our reform is to ensure that those vulnerable Tasmanians are best served by an organisation that is fit for purpose. That is what we are on about.

We have had two reviews - the Damian Bugg review and the Economic Regulator's review - and it has been determined to restructure the Public Trustee within a government agency, with the commercial will, estate and trustee services to be transferred to the private sector. Those commercial services you have indicated are to be undertaken by the private sector, such as wills and the state and trust administration, but not the legislative functions of the Public Trustee.

This reform will ensure the focus is on the delivery of these services in an efficient and effective way, recognising a move to a supported decision-making framework. This is a reform that was introduced last year. I commend the Public Trustee and want to put on the record my thanks to the chair, the board, the CEO and the team at the Public Trustee. There have been many improvements made in recent years as a result of the previous reviews, and this reform needs to be ongoing. We are all about continuous improvement to provide better services to all Tasmanians who need it, particularly vulnerable Tasmanians.

We are seeking expert advice on the most sustainable governance model for the non-commercial services provided by the Public Trustee. The government has engaged Alicia Leis, a highly regarded partner at WLF Accounting and Advisory, to provide advice on

the structure of the Public Trustee, including an examination of an agency model for the provision of services. She will report to the government by the end of November this year. We appreciate the important work that needs to be undertaken.

In terms of those vulnerable Tasmanians that fall under the guardianship and administration legislative framework, which I think goes to part of your question, we will ensure these functions remain as a government service. Improvements to delivery already made by the Public Trustee will continue to be supported. I make the point that the community service obligation has increased. There is a suggestion in your question that perhaps it has not. In fact, for this year alone it has increased by some 75 per cent, to \$27.6 million over the four years of the forward Estimates -

The SPEAKER - The Attorney-General's time for answering the question has expired.

Supplementary Question

Ms JOHNSTON - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Ms JOHNSTON - Can the Attorney-General guarantee that the 23,000 Tasmanians who have chosen to have their wills with the Public Trustee will still be able to have them administered by the Public Trustee? Also, can the Attorney-General guarantee that no Tasmanian will have to pay, or pay more, than they currently do as a result of your changes?

Mr BARNETT - The community service obligation is \$27.6 million over four years. This is increasing taxpayer-funded support for those vulnerable Tasmanians that need it by 75 per cent. They have been seeking that surety. This will go over a four-year period. That is in the Budget this year.

In terms of getting the best response to support those vulnerable Tasmanians, that is exactly why those reports determined that we need to have a review. They talked about the high operating costs of the Public Trustee, that the Public Trustee may not be appropriately balancing its competing priorities under the GBE model, and there needs to be reform. That is why we have appointed the experts, so that we support the vulnerable Tasmanians who need that support -

The SPEAKER - The Attorney-General's time for addressing, not answering, the question has expired.

No-Confidence Motion - Opinion of Leader of the House

Dr WOODRUFF question to LEADER of the HOUSE, Mr ABETZ

[10.38 a.m.]

On Sunday, you said to the media, 'Even if a motion of no confidence were to be passed in him, there will be no need for Mr Ferguson to resign and I would encourage him not to resign'. This position runs counter to our longstanding Westminster convention. I think I heard

you interject in the Chamber before, saying that you stood by your comments. Can we clarify, for the record, if you stand by that statement?

The SPEAKER - Before I call the Leader of the House to the question, questions need to relate to a minister's portfolio responsibilities. However, there is a level of latitude about issues that may be of a broader community interest. If the Leader of the House can address that in its narrow form, I will call on him to do so.

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, here we have the Leader of the Greens telling us about the conventions of the Westminster system and gets it wrong in asking me, as Leader of the House, because Leader of the House is not a ministry. It is not something you are sworn into; it is a management role appointed by the Premier. The question from the member is technically out of order. Saying 'technically', it was interesting to note -

Dr WOODRUFF - Point of order, for clarification, honourable Speaker, I think you just ruled this is in order.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - First of all, everyone can stop talking until somebody has the call. There is no such thing as a point of clarification. If you have a point of order, I will hear that.

Dr WOODRUFF - I would like you to seek your guidance. I thought you ruled that question to be in order.

The SPEAKER - I have said that the leader can address it in a very narrow form on the matter of community and public interest, but it was outside of the Standing Orders in that questions are supposed to be directed related to ministerial portfolios, which he is commenting on. He is well within his rights in the answer. I have given a fair bit of latitude to this because of the public debate about it.

Mr ABETZ - I trust the Leader of the Greens heard that - technically in breach of the Standing Orders. A commentator in *The Australian* this morning disagreed with my particular view on it but agreed that, technically, I was correct. Technically, this a situation where, in a former place I have served, there were motions of no-confidence in a number of ministers and it changed nothing.

I hasten to add that that the Senate was kind enough to leave me alone in relation to those motions directed at other ministers. They were carried and they continued on. That was the experience to which I was referring.

However, in this place and on this side, when the Premier announces a position, guess what? I fall in line with the Premier's position.

Supplementary Question

Dr WOODRUFF - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear it, but I am not promising that I will take it, given that we are outside the Standing Order. I will hear the question so we get it on the record.

Dr WOODRUFF - I heard you say in the Chamber that you stood by your comments of last weekend. Do you stand with the Premier and walk away from the comments you made the other day?

The SPEAKER - I am not sure I am going to allow further debate on it. For the information of members, there is no legal enforcement of the conventions of the Westminster system. There are, however, parliamentary consequences that would come into play in this House. I think we can agree that, technically, you cannot force a minister to step down after a motion of no-confidence, but the consequences for a government that did not do so would be severe.

TasPorts - Responsibility for Port Infrastructure Delay

Mrs BESWICK question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.42.a.m.]

Following up on Mrs Pentland's question, what conversations have you had with TasPorts regarding their responsibility in this issue of the TT-Line and the delays in the port infrastructure?

The SPEAKER - I remind members that asking the same question again would normally not be appropriate. Mrs Pentland did have an opportunity to raise a supplementary question. I will allow the question, but we will monitor that a bit more closely in the future.

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon for her question and for supporting Mrs Pentland's question earlier. To be more specific, the CEO of TasPorts and I had a conversation about the Quaylink infrastructure in Devonport, the berthing infrastructure and TasPorts' responsibility in those matters. We have had regular dialogue with the Cabinet subcommittee of TT-Line, which also involves the TT-Line GBE and the TasPorts GBE, on our expectations of both GBEs and the way forward, with those conversations mostly solutions-focused. We have had a number of discussions pertaining to your question, as well as me setting clear expectations of the GBEs to work with government on behalf of the Tasmanian people to deliver and find solutions.

Recognition of Visitors

The SPEAKER - Honourable members, I welcome the grade 9-10 legal studies students from the Launceston Christian School to the gallery. Thank you very much for joining us today.

Members - Hear, hear.

Supermarket Competition - Cost-of-Living Pressures

Mr JENNER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.44 a.m.]

We know that people are struggling with the cost of living. This morning a new report has revealed that 3.4 million Australians are food-insecure, with two million of those experiencing severe food insecurity. This winter there was a record number of power disconnections, and people were at the point of choosing between heating their homes and putting food on the table. We also know that due to the lack of supermarket competition in this state, Tasmanians are missing out on grocery savings of up to 30 per cent. This is huge and could be the difference between having three or one meals a day.

Will your government take the initiative and help introduce supermarket competition into the state to help alleviate the cost-of-living pressure that so many Tasmanians are currently facing?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his interest in cost-of-living matters. I agree with the member about how tough it is for Australians and Tasmanians when it comes to cost-of-living challenges, energy prices, food prices, and interest rates for those who have mortgages. There are a range of areas, as you pointed out, that have impacted on people's ability to ensure that they can put food on the table.

I commend all the organisations, such as Foodbank and Loaves and Fishes, for the work they do in supporting Tasmanians when it comes to food relief and building food resilience. A number of members have had the responsibility of community services. I recall having the responsibility myself. We developed the food security strategy and involved a lot of stakeholder organisations such as the ones that I mentioned.

It is evident in the Budget, where we are investing some \$550 million in concessions and cost-of-living matters, as well as the renewable energy dividend, that we are supporting Tasmanians when it comes to their energy bill, therefore ensuring they have the required support to put food on the table. This is together with the work that people are doing with food relief and food resilience.

With regard to supermarket competition, we would welcome further competition if there was a market for that. We have the duopoly, as it is called, and we have other IGAs across Tasmania. If a third player were to come in that boosts that competition, we would welcome that initiative.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Members on my right, are you assisting the Premier or just chatting?

Mr ROCKLIFF - And Salamanca Fresh -

Mr O'Byrne - Declaring an interest?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am happy to engage with the member on his ideas. You have raised publicly before the idea of bringing more competition in -

The SPEAKER - The Premier's time for answering the question has expired.

Family Violence - Anglicare Report

Mr GARLAND question to MINISTER for PLANNING and HOUSING, Mr ELLIS

[10.49 a.m.]

According to an Anglicare report released last week called *Unsafe and Unhoused*, in 2024 the north-west of Tasmania recorded by far the highest number of reported family violence incidents per capita of any region in the state.

People in the north-west were twice as likely to cite domestic and family violence as a reason for seeking housing assistance from Anglicare compared with people in the north, and four times more likely when compared to those in the south. However, according to Anglicare's regional comparison of shelter crisis units, there are 1.3 crisis units for women and children per 10,000 population in the north-west compared with 1.9 in the north and 1.4 in the south.

Why is it that the north-west has the lowest number of crisis shelter units per capita? Why did your government not commit any funding in this recent Budget to increase the number of crisis accommodation units in the north-west?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank my colleague, Mr Garland, for this very important question. Our hearts go out to all victims of family violence. It is a heinous crime and something that our country needs to continue to respond to and build our capability to support women and children fleeing some of the most difficult circumstances.

You are right; Anglicare has produced an important report, and we are working through that. The first thing to say is that, in terms of a police response, it is absolutely vital that we continue to ensure that we can hold perpetrators to account. That is why we have had significant investment in police -

Ms Butler - That is not housing in the north-west.

Mr ELLIS - This is an important matter, Ms Butler - and enabling, through our new Family and Sexual Violence Command, the capacity to ensure that we are responding.

It is important to note that we want to ensure, as best as we can, that victim-survivors of family violence are actually able to stay in the family home, and that it is the perpetrator who needs to leave. That is an important part of our response.

In terms of the support that is available to families on the north-west coast, I pay tribute first to the team at Warrawee who do such exceptional work, and to a whole range of other important service providers in our community. We announced on Friday a very important next step in terms of our response to family violence, and that is the tripling of our rapid rehousing

program. This has been a vital service that has provided 50 homes for families fleeing family violence, particularly women and children. It enables us to find safe places for people in whatever community they live in.

As you know, Mr Garland, we have quite a spread out and regionalised community, and often shelters can be some way away. If you are able to find a safe home in which you can spend time with your family in the community that you live in, then that is a really good outcome.

We will be tripling our Family Violence Rapid Rehousing Program from 50 to 150 units. We put out the expression of interest on Friday last week, and I encourage all members of our community who might have a property available to please consider doing your part in the response to this most difficult challenge. You can look at the Homes Tasmania website and consider putting your home up. That may be the difference for a family in some of the most difficult circumstances that we can possibly imagine.

The government has put in significant new investment in terms of shelter and crisis accommodation, and we have a posture to continue doing more. We also need to ensure that we are meeting our target of 10,000 social and affordable homes -

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

Minister for Climate Change

Dr WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.53 a.m.]

Every day we hear more deeply disturbing stories about the pace of global climate heating. In lutruwita/Tasmania, we are logging and burning forests, destroying habitat and carbon stores, emitting tonnes and tonnes of greenhouse gases and burning animals alive.

This week you are undertaking a cabinet reshuffle. Will you commit to reinstating a Minister for Climate Change, and given the desperate state of climate and biodiversity and the massive impact this is having on future Tasmanians, will you take on this most important portfolio as Premier?

The SPEAKER - I will call the Premier as the question goes to the broader community interest on portfolios.

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the Dr Woodruff for her question and her great interest in the portfolio responsibilities of our team today, I must say. We will be working through this matter over the next few days and next week. I am blessed with the very capable team that we have assembled behind me, who are very diligent, hardworking and committed people. Irrespective of the roles that people have on our team, they work very, very hard for their electorates. They will continue to do so and the ministerial responsibilities, including naming of portfolios, will be announced within the week.

Supplementary Question

Dr WOODRUFF - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear it, but I am not sure -

Dr WOODRUFF - I did not hear the Premier mention the words climate change. Is climate change a matter that you will consider as worthy of a portfolio position?

The SPEAKER - I think the Premier has answered it in that they will be announcing it. I cannot really ask him to add any more to that question at the moment, Dr Woodruff.

TasPorts - Confidence in Board

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.55 am]

Do you have confidence in the board and senior leadership of TasPorts? Can you confirm that the only so-called reform you are proposing to our GBEs is new ministerial charters that do not appear to be doing anything at the moment?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, thank you, and yes, I have confidence. First and second, I point you to our fiscal strategy. Indeed, I will remind you of it. The fiscal strategy -

Mr Winter - There are 11 points, and you are breaching nine of them.

The SPEAKER - Members on my left. We are 15 seconds into the answer.

Mr ROCKLIFF - where it says:

... requiring government businesses to deliver outcomes consistent with Tasmanian Liberals' policy objectives, deliver services to Tasmanians at the lowest sustainable cost, while also growing our economy and engaging with business and community in a constructive manner.

Mr Winter - That is your reform?

Mr ROCKLIFF - That is part of our fiscal strategy. I have also spoken about charters before, my expectation of GBEs, my desire to reach in and make changes to legislation that are appropriate for modernising our government business enterprises, our state-owned companies and aligning them with the greater expectations of the Tasmanian people.

Mr Winter - Sounds like our policy.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you for your bipartisan support and coming onboard.

The SPEAKER - No more questions?

Mr WINTER - No, there is.

The SPEAKER - Yes, I can actually end Question Time - no, I cannot, you have three minutes.

Port of Devonport - Infrastructure Safety

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.57 a.m.]

Last week, the former chair of TT-Line stated that the cabinet subcommittee for the new *Spirits* project had advised the government of safety issues with the berth 1 proposal. He was clear that his advice was provided before your government issued a ministerial direction demanding the project go ahead in June.

Mr Grainger said there had already been two serious incidents involving *Spirits* at berth 1 and SeaRoad's vessels at Berth 2. Chas Kelly has been equally frank about the risks involved in the project that your ministers demanded go ahead. Were you aware of the safety concerns before you allowed your government to issue a direction that the project at berth 1 be undertaken and, if you were, why did you allow that to happen?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the member for his question. This is part of the work that Gemell and Moloney are undertaking, and why would you not want to reach in and find a possible solution -

Mr Winter - You already knew it was unsafe.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Possible solutions. I have met with - I believe you mentioned Mr Kelly. He also outlined some matters he was concerned about, which I believe he articulated on radio last week. I was away, I did not hear, but I understand that is the case. This is why we are doing our due diligence and looking at alternatives so we have everything clearly laid out on the table before us.

We want all the information about the options for berth 1 and berth 3 infrastructure on hand, to make informed decisions. Part of making an informed decision will be about timeframe, logistics, and ensuring that other ship operators in the Mersey River are a key part of the stakeholder engagement and impact on their business and, most importantly, safety concerns.

Mr Winter - You only need to talk to Chas to know this could not happen.

Mr Willie - Or read the integrator report.

The SPEAKER - Both members on my left, from Clark and Franklin, will cease interjecting.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Again, Friday.

Mr Winter - Good timing for you. Great timing for you.

Mr ROCKLIFF - It is probably going to be five media releases on Friday.

Mr Winter - At least. Probably more.

Mr ROCKLIFF - When is the report coming from the Labor Party? Where is it now? We will receive it on Friday. We will be taking into consideration the report and I will be making announcements next week on the way forward.

Supplementary Question

Mr WINTER - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Mr WINTER - The question was: were you aware of the safety concerns about berth 1 before you allowed your government to issue a direction that the project be undertaken anyway. I wonder if you could ask the Premier to answer the actual question.

The SPEAKER - That was the original question. The Premier has dealt with the forthcoming information, but that was the original question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The decision to use Berth 1 was made on the advice of the infrastructure expert Peter Gemell in consultation with Department of State Growth, TT-Line and TasPorts, as I understand it -

Mr Winter - They did not want to do it.

Mr ROCKLIFF - as the only viable option for an interim solution.

Mr Winter - If they wanted to do it you would not have had to direct them to do it.

The SPEAKER - Leader of the Opposition, because you sit so close to the microphone, Hansard has to struggle to hear the Premier over your interjections. I would rather you did not interject but if you are going to do it, and I do not notice, it will be because you are sitting back.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Work on the feasibility of this option is ongoing and I expect to have more to say next week; receiving the report Friday and announcing next week.

Mr Winter - Well timed on Friday. No questions about it for weeks.

Mr ROCKLIFF - To be clear about this, because it is a very important question, we will always put the safety of Tasmanians first.

Mr Winter - You have not.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We will always the safety of Tasmanians first.

The SPEAKER - The Premier's time for answering the question has expired.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The independent Harbour Master is assessing -

The SPEAKER - The Premier's time has expired.

Mr Rockliff - My apologies, Speaker.

***Spirit of Tasmania* - Delays for Tourism Industry**

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.03 a.m.]

Tourism operators around the state have been seriously let down by your failure to deliver the new *Spirits* when you said you would. Can you confirm that Tourism Tasmania found out about the massive delays to this project in the media? Can you also confirm that they are facing another two summers without the new ships and the extra capacity they should be able to expect?

ANSWER

It is critical that the tourism and hospitality industry receives regular communications about the circumstances and arrival of the new *Spirits*, the progress on the enabling infrastructure, and the initiatives to support the *Spirits* preparedness that are contained in the 2030 Strong Plan that we released last year, when it comes to the visitor economy moving forward.

I am in regular contact with Tourism Industry Council Tasmania (TICT), the Tasmanian Hospitality Association (THA), regional tourist organisations, and other key stakeholders about our progress on this important matter. In September, I released a bulletin to tourism and hospitality operators through the Tourism Industry Council Tasmania with an update on the *Spirits* and enabling infrastructure.

We will continue to release ongoing bulletins through the TICT as more decisions are made. On 1 November the tourism round table that first convened in August will meet again and I will provide a further update. I also chair the Premier's Visitor Economy Advisory Council, which meets multiple times a year, and I met with the council and I provided them with an update on the *Spirits* in September. Tourism Tasmania has regular meetings and engagement with the office, in which a topic of this matter would be discussed. At the time discussions concerning this matter would have been occurring, the acting CEO was out of the state and overseas. What is important is that we have that very regular dialogue.

I recognise the concerns in the visitor economy and the tourism and hospitality sectors. I have acknowledged that. That is why I have made it clear this morning in particular that the government is sorting out the *Spirits*, fixing the GBEs and backing our tourism and hospitality industry.

Supplementary Question

Mr WINTER - A supplementary question, Speaker?

The SPEAKER - I will hear the supplementary question.

Mr WINTER - Can the Premier confirm that Tourism Tasmania found out about the delays in the new *Spirits* through the media?

The SPEAKER - The Premier could probably address that. He said he has regular meetings, but if the Premier could -

Mr Winter - The first they found out is through the media.

The SPEAKER - Would you all like to maybe sort this out and I will come back in a couple of minutes?

Mr Winter - I can ask the question again.

The SPEAKER - The original question was: is that how they found out? If the Premier is in a position to answer that question, then I will call him to it. If he is not in a position to do so, then the previous answer will stand.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I have given the answer.

Time expired.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Caravan Parks - Regulations

Ms FINLAY question to MINISTER for SMALL BUSINESS and CONSUMER AFFAIRS, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.07 a.m.]

Constituents from Beauty Point have asked that I highlight two matters in parliament today: legislation to regulate caravan parks, especially for long-stay residents, and working with vulnerable people registrations for all caravan park staff.

What is the timeframe for assessing and processing the consultation responses? How many responses were received? How long will it take to formulate the legislation? Can you please advise a date for bringing legislation to parliament, and does the responsible minister regard the need for legislation as urgent? A lack of regulation puts caravan park residents at risk with no fire plan, no bush plan, no evacuation plan, no designated emergency assembly area, no fire evacuation drill, no appointed fire wardens, no fire hoses, et cetera.

Do you as minister or the Attorney-General understand the urgent need to protect a wider cohort of vulnerable Tasmanians at risk? Do you understand this group has no protection or right of appeal, or a designated agency to report physical and mental abuse? A clear case of negligence and a failure on the part of agencies -

The SPEAKER - The member's time for asking the constituency question has expired.

Mount Field - Community Consultation on Visitation

Ms BADGER question to MINISTER for PARKS and ENVIRONMENT, Mr DUIGAN

My question is from business owners in Westerway and Maydena. There is no dispute that Mount Field requires a funding increase to keep up with growing visitation. At face value, the budget allocation to make Mount Field National Park a year-round destination is welcome, but where was the community consultation on the plan or strategy that guided this funding? Many businesses in our region are tourism dependent. The future direction of Mount Field will also shape the future of our businesses.

In 2021, the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Tourism Plan cited the need to prioritise a Mount Field and Styx Tall Trees Area master plan to deal with balancing visitor infrastructure and the protection of the environmental qualities that people travel from around the world to see. Can you please provide a progress update on the draft Mount Field master plan or whichever strategic document is guiding the Budget expenditure, and can you inform the community how they can have input into this critical piece of work?

Workers Compensation - Noise Induced Hearing Loss

Mr BEHRAKIS question to MINISTER for SMALL BUSINESS and CONSUMER AFFAIRS, Mr ROCKLIFF

I have been contacted by local constituents regarding the requirement for workers affected by noise-induced hearing loss to make claims within six months of leaving their employer. Given the onset of symptoms is often not experienced until many years later, this requirement can affect their ability to make claims and consequently receive compensation and support.

What is being done to ensure that Tasmanian workers are being appropriately supported and compensated after experiencing work-related hearing loss, and will you consider reviewing the *Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988*?

Penguin - Proximity of Road Work Signs to Works Location

Ms DOW question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, Mr ROCKLIFF

My question comes from one of my constituents in Penguin who wants to know why road works signs are placed so far out from where road works are being carried out. They said the example of this was at the Howth roundabout recently where the road works signs were two kilometres out from where the actual road works are being carried out on the incoming lanes to Burnie, but only 400 metres on the outbound lanes.

Northern Midlands Irrigation Scheme - Investment and Environment

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

A local farmer is a beneficiary and customer of the soon to be built Northern Midlands Irrigation Scheme on his farm. He is interested about how to utilise water as efficiently as possible to ensure he can maximise his investment but also optimise environmental outcomes on his farm. Can the minister outline any initiatives to assist my constituent?

Longford - BP Heavy Truck Fuel Depot Development

Mr JENNER question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, Mr ROCKLIFF

A question comes from John, a constituent of Longford, to the Premier as Minister for Infrastructure, and the Department of State Growth. Why has the Department of State Growth not released the document related to the public road that was used in the TASCAT Appeal P2023/122 to overturn the Northern Midlands Council decision to reject the BP heavy truck fuel depot development at 26A Tannery Road, Longford?

Will the Premier give assurances that the Department of State Growth document will be released for public examination within the next 14 days?

The SPEAKER - I am afraid there are no more entitlements for the government members to ask a constituency question. There are two independent spots.

***Spirit of Tasmania* - Booking Availability**

Mrs BESWICK question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

I have been contacted by a couple, who like most Tasmanians, are frustrated by how difficult it has become to secure a booking on *Spirit of Tasmania*, especially for vehicles over 2.1 metres in height. They said they had to book almost nine months in advance for a return trip in 2025 and there are no available car and caravan spots from February to July next year. They have also noticed a reduction in day sailings and feel that freight has been prioritised over passengers.

Given these issues and the demise with the new ferries and Devonport infrastructure, what immediate steps are being taken to ensure Tasmanians and tourists can reliably travel across Bass Strait without being forced to book so far in advance?

The SPEAKER - There being no further constituency questions - I am sorry, the Standing Orders have changed, Mr Shelton, in the last round. There are no extra questions. There are only assigned questions.

TABLED PAPERS

Questions on Notice - Answers

[11.13 a.m.]

The following answers to Questions on Notice were tabled:

No. 9 of 2024 - Government Loan to Tasmanian Alkaloids

Ms WHITE to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

See Appendix 1 on page 135.

No. 18 of 2024 - Ashley Youth Detention Centre - Covid-19 Lockdowns

Ms ROSOL to MINISTER for CHILDREN and YOUTH, Mr JAENSCH

See Appendix 2 on page 136.

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

Assent to Bills

[11.17 a.m.]

The SPEAKER - Honourable Members, I am in receipt of a message from Her Excellency the Governor:

BARBARA BAKER, *Governor*.

A Bill for an Act to amend the Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (Bill No. 24 (*Act No. 15 of 2024*))

A Bill for an Act to provide for the regulation of thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing, to ensure the integrity of persons involved in such racing, to safeguard the welfare of animals, and for related purposes (Bill No. 10 (*Act No. 16 of 2024*))

A Bill for an Act to amend the Civil Liability Act 2002, the Corrections Act 1997, the Criminal Code Act 1924, the Police Offences Act 1935, the Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act 2013 and -

I remind the minister, Ms Ogilvie, that I am on my feet and she cannot stand. Neither can Mr Shelton either.

Ms Ogilvie - Apologies, Speaker.

The SPEAKER -

the Sentencing Act 1997 and to consequentially amend the Annulled Convictions Act 2003, the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023, the Community Protection (Offender Reporting) Act 2005, the Evidence Act 2001, the Evidence (Children and Special Witnesses) Act 2001 and the Justice Act 1959 (Bill No. 26 (*Act No. 17 of 2024*))

A Bill for an Act to amend the Evidence (Children and Special Witnesses) Act 2001 (Bill No.28 (*Act No. 18 of 2024*))

A Bill for an Act to amend the Forest Practices Act 1985 and the Private Forests Act 1994 (Bill No. 20 (*Act No. 19 of 2024*))

Government House, Hobart, 2 October 2024.

Further:

BARBARA BAKER, *Governor.*

A Bill for an Act to make provision for mediation concerning farm debts and for other related purposes (Bill No. 33 (*Act No. 20 of 2024*))

Government House, Hobart, 2 October 2024.

Having been presented to the Governor for Royal Assent, she has, in the name of His Majesty the King, assented to the said bills.

**JUSTICE AND RELATED LEGISLATION (MISCELLANEOUS
AMENDMENTS) BILL (No. 2) 2024 (No. 45)**

First Reading

Bill presented by Mr Barnett and read the first time.

MOTION

**Select Committee on Transfer of Care Delays (Ambulance Ramping) -
Reporting Date**

[11.19 a.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin)(by leave) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the reporting date for the Select Committee on Transfer of Care Delays (Ambulance Ramping) be extended until 21 November 2024.

Can I speak briefly to that?

The SPEAKER - Yes, if you would like to.

Dr WOODRUFF - I inform the House that the committee is very close to making a final report. There is a lot of goodwill and commitment on behalf of everyone on the committee to that end. It was very close. In order to finalise the report, and noting the increased pressures on secretarial staff of committees, we felt it was important to get everything right. On that basis, we are seeking the first available parliamentary week to submit our report.

The SPEAKER - I am sure that the staff of the House appreciate the flexibility of the committee with their significant workload at the moment.

[11.20 a.m.]

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Very briefly, the government does not oppose the motion, but the government would prefer notice of these sorts of motions prior to them being raised.

The SPEAKER - I remind the leader of government business that you have people on the committee, and that this is normally a procedural matter for the House. The committee is master of its own destiny and seeks the support of the House. It would be unusual for us not to grant an extension, but if sharing information is a matter that you wish to raise with the other leaders of business, I suggest you create some kind of format for that.

Mr Abetz - That is why we meet Monday night.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

State of Tasmanian Roads

[11.21 a.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin - Leader of the Opposition) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the House takes note of the following matter: State of Tasmanian Roads.

I rise today on a matter of public importance right across the state, being the state of infrastructure here. I had one of those great weeks that all of us get in politics sometimes where you get to go out and visit people for the whole week. Last week, I was lucky enough to go through Derwent Bridge, travelling through to Queenstown and Strahan, then back down to Hobart and up to Wynyard through Burnie, stopping in at Devonport and Launceston.

I got to see a lot of the state. The concerns being raised by people in the community at the moment are two things, and other members may be hearing these as well: TT-Line has been an issue that has transcended this place and is now in the community, with people staggered at how we got here; and the other grassroots issue is the state of our roads, in particular regional roads across Tasmania. The Lyell Highway is in pieces in patches, and the Murchison Highway, if you speak to people in Queenstown, as I did at the Empire Hotel last Tuesday night, is a disgrace. It has been patched, and we heard in Estimates a couple of weeks

ago that there are literally thousands of patches across roads, particularly in the north-west, but also on the Murchison, Lyell and Bass highways.

Perhaps the worst was Illawarra Road in the electorate of Lyons. There you are dealing with patches on patches and appalling road conditions. It calls into question how we got to this situation. We now have a government and a Minister for Infrastructure proudly patching the holes, but the question is how we got to this situation in the first place and how we got to a road condition that is so bad and so difficult for people to commute on.

We saw reports in *The Advocate* not so long ago of boom times for people fixing tyres. One person I spoke to at Longford with the member for Lyons, Ms Butler, last Friday, said that he had had to get his car realigned after driving on the roads. That is how difficult and dangerous these conditions are.

Speaking to people on the west coast, they had seen some communications that I made about the Bass Highway, and they were absolutely outraged because I had not done one on the Murchison. I apologised that I had not yet driven on the Murchison. We need to get these things sorted out. The patch job approach of the Premier and Minister for Infrastructure to these problems is a problem in and of itself. He is proudly there demonstrating the way that he patches things up, and it is not just the roads that he is patching up. It is the story of his entire government, patching up the problems.

When it comes to the *Spirits of Tasmania*, instead of focusing on berth 3, which is the solution we all know he is going to get to eventually, he has pretended to patch it up with his berth 1 solution. When he gets this report on Friday he is going to be shocked to learn that he cannot deliver berth 1, and when he announces it on Monday, he will say, 'Oh look, it turns out we couldn't deliver the interim solution at berth 1', because we all know he could not.

I have sat down and spoken to Chas Kelly. He told me you cannot deliver it there. He told me it was unsafe before he went to the media, before he spoke on ABC. We know it is unsafe because we spoke to industry about it. I believe at least some of these ministers knew this was unsafe. They had the advice already before they directed TT-Line and TasPorts to go ahead with that interim patch job.

It is a story of this government when it comes to GBEs. The Premier has been talking today about the reform of GBEs. When we ask him what that reform is, he talks about his ministerial charters. That is not a solution. It is just another patch job; the patch-up Premier at work trying to patch up the problems.

Mr Rockliff - Did you not commit to ministerial charters as well?

Mr WINTER - We promised it before you did, Premier. We have spoken to major industrials only recently about the impact that the ministerial charters have had, particularly at Hydro Tasmania. One of the managers at one of our largest major industrials said to me it has not made any difference; the attitude of Hydro Tasmania has not changed one bit. Same old Hydro doing the same old things.

We do need reforms in our GBEs and we have a plan. The response from the government over the weekend when they saw it was to say, 'Just more red tape'. Their approach to good ideas is to attack them. We want to be part of a solution in the Labor Party. We have offered

solutions on the TT-Line: double day sailings. We have offered solutions for our GBEs. The Premier talks about reform but he does not deliver it. He is patching up the problems, not finding the solutions.

[11.26 a.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Premier) - Deputy Speaker, I thank the member for bringing this matter of public importance on infrastructure to the parliament today. As I travel around the state, I am fully aware of the challenges of our road network in places. I go up and down the Midland Highway a lot. I commend the former minister for Infrastructure for overseeing that significant project. He not only oversaw the Bridgewater bridge - and I am speaking of Mr Ferguson, the member for Bass, and his diligence when it comes to the Midland Highway, the Bridgewater bridge and a number of projects at the Royal Hobart Hospital, getting things done. He should be proud of his achievements as Infrastructure minister, with those particular projects as good examples.

You mentioned potholes. I saw an article in one of the newspapers about Victoria's challenges. Water is the enemy of roads and I commend the people who are working to fix our roads. I want a better solution when it comes to pavement preservation and look forward to working with the department on seeing what we can do to ensure our roads are structurally sound and that pavement preservation is at the forefront of road maintenance and construction.

The investment we are making in infrastructure is important as well. This Budget has \$5.1 billion of investment in infrastructure: \$1.9 billion in funding for new and upgraded roads and bridges; \$649 million into hospitals and other health, which is fantastic. I am sure Mr Winter would have passed the Mersey Community Hospital. Did you see that?

Mr Winter - Yes.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Beautiful, great job, being constructed. You may have gone past Latrobe High School: \$11 million invested there. Devonport High School, Smithton: there are many examples in other electorates of new school infrastructure. I am proud of that investment. The new Brighton School is fantastic. Health infrastructure. We have committed \$359 million to schools and skills training facilities, and \$287 million to keeping Tasmanians safe with investments in new courts, correctional facilities and assets to support Tasmania Police.

Mr Willie - Northern prisons, mate, \$7 million on nothing.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am not sure what you are mumbling, Mr Willie.

Mr Willie - I am talking about your backflip on the northern prison.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I would not be missing anything -

Ms Butler - \$7 million dollars wasted.

The Deputy SPEAKER - Order, the member for Lyons can make her contribution on this debate later. I ask her to stop the interjections.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I would not be missing much. It would be negative, as it always is from the member's voice box. We are positive on this side of the House. We have a strong

record when it comes to investment in key infrastructure. I mentioned the Midland Highway. I mentioned hospital upgrades. The minister for Health is well attuned. There are new ambulance stations around the state. We have been to Beaconsfield, Burnie and Glenorchy. We are building and investing in infrastructure. Not only is it about the jobs created and the skills developed on those worksites, but it is also about strong intergenerational infrastructure. The Brighton High School and Legana Primary School are great examples of educational infrastructure, which you would be interested in, Mr Willie, to ensure we have 21st century classrooms -

Mr Willie - I like educational infrastructure, but it has climbed now from \$30 million to \$74 million.

Mr ROCKLIFF - that suit 21st century learning environments for our students. I would be ashamed, if I were those opposite, about the state of education infrastructure we inherited in 2014. We are rebuilding schools, renovating schools -

Mr Willie - You know there is a bit more to education than just buildings. How are your results?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - supporting infrastructure investment into new kindergartens -

Time expired.

[11.31 a.m.]

Ms BURNET (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, that was quite a list of infrastructure projects. However, one project that seemed to be missing from the Premier's list was an infrastructure project that might bankrupt the state. We are talking about the stadium.

Labor has brought to the Chamber the issues about ferries and wharves, and the project Tasmanians were solidly behind way back in 2016-17, with the delivery of the two new ferries, *Spirit IV* and *Spirit V*, and upgrades to the Devonport wharf. Unfortunately, that has proved to be a great challenge for the government to deliver on time, on budget and with the requisite upgrades to the Devonport wharf, and how the Quaylink project has been delivered - or not. We have seen a minister and deputy premier stumble and resign as a result of this. The state relies on that connection to the mainland to meet our needs. Unfortunately, we see tourism ventures and businesses in the north-west particularly struggling because that has not been delivered.

Premier, I think we can learn from this project that has not been delivered well, on time, and on budget. However, if we look at the Macquarie Point stadium project, the Tasmanian people do not see it as a vital piece of infrastructure at a time when we have a housing and homelessness crisis, a crisis in health care and wellbeing in our community, when administrative frontline workers are asked to do more to the point of exhaustion, and when clinicians are often required to step in to administrative tasks. This is the efficiency dividends we have seen in this horrendous Budget.

Catching public transport in this state is a game of roulette, with an underfunded, less reliable Metro Tasmania. With fewer services to rely on anyway, why would commuters take

the bus? Tasmania's education and community services are failing, our state is up to its eyeballs in debt, estimated in the forward Estimates to be an \$8.5 billion debt in 2028 - a significant amount of debt service and, frankly, a huge burden on the Tasmanian community. We have a list of priorities that are not delivering for, or strengthening, our communities. Yet here we are, Premier, with this fool's errand of a Macquarie Point Stadium, another major infrastructure project that could well be something we cannot afford right now and that may only overburden us with debt.

Let us look at the eye-watering figures for the proposed Macquarie Point Stadium. I have in front of me as a stadium cost breakdown and the estimated cost is \$715 million, but the government's financial impact report, part of the Project of State Significance (POSS) submission, names it as \$775 million, GST exempt. I do not know what that means but it is probably an under-representation, and other capital elements not included amount to \$55 million, bringing the actual capital cost to \$830 million. The total funded contribution is \$630 million with a funding shortfall of roughly \$200 million. These are huge figures.

Let us look at some of these projects. In the WSP Report, appendix N of the submission to the Project of State Significance process, the northern access road alone is going to cost \$33.9 million and it is an unfunded project apart from a meagre \$3 million in the Budget for scoping and design work, but the majority is unfunded, like so many of these other projects.

The infrastructure projects costed between \$174 and 186 million that are critical to the delivery of the stadium, present a picture that is scarily familiar to some of the other projects that we need to deliver for the stadium. Reconfiguring Hunter Street: the Collins Street active transit bridge is unfunded but set to cost between \$44.5 and 56.5 million. I am not sure who is likely to pick up that tab, but I hope we are not relying on the local council to do that. The Davey Street footpath expansion is another of a number of requirements that are part of the stadium debacle.

The upgrade to the Tasman Bridge is funded, but it is a project that is unfortunately, on so many factors, painfully slow to deliver -

Time expired.

[11.37 a.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Attorney-General) - Deputy Speaker, it is a pleasure and an honour to be standing here today supporting the Premier and standing up for our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future. Right up front, I recognise Michael Ferguson and thank him for his strong advocacy for his community, his incredible list of achievements as Minister for Infrastructure. That is what we are talking about here, infrastructure. The Midland Highway, the Bridgewater bridge - these are projects that require leadership and conviction to get things done. Thank you, Michael Ferguson, for our record funding for roads and bridges. People know of my long association and friendship with Michael Ferguson of more than 21 years and I commend him and thank him for being the honourable man that he is: a man of integrity who is kind and generous and who has a conviction to get things done. He cares for his community and I put that on the record right up front since we are talking infrastructure, for which we thank him for his leadership.

As the Premier has made very clear, we have a very strong plan to build more infrastructure and deliver on the infrastructure agenda for this state. It is more than \$5 billion

committed. That is what we are on about. It is in the Budget and we are not slashing it like some in this Chamber wish us to. We have a very strong plan to deliver.

Let us have a look at Health for one moment. We have \$650 million in the Budget for capital infrastructure alone, primarily at our four major hospitals. What did state Labor commit to our four major hospitals for capital infrastructure? Can anybody guess?

Members interjecting.

Mr BARNETT - Let me tell you what it is: I am holding up this big fat zero. That is what it was. Not one dollar for our four major hospitals. Not one dollar was committed in their alternative budget, in their alternative red book plan that was prosecuted up hill and down dale during the election.

A Member - We were building a new hospital in New Town.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, okay, let's talk about the new hospital in New Town. Right at the eleventh hour, Labor promised a new hospital in New Town and with the funding for that, they forgot to fund the staff that would work in the hospital - \$20 million.

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, opposition members can make their contribution next.

Mr BARNETT - Hello, we have a new hospital but where are the doctors and the nurses? Where are the orderlies? Whoops, hello, sorry about that. Big mistake right at the end of the campaign.

Members interjecting.

Mr BARNETT - We are on a roll and it is going to continue. We have the recruitment blitz. We have a capital works campaign.

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BARNETT - They do not like the truth because they tried to progress with the Royal Hobart Hospital and what did they do? They did not lay one brick for the Royal Hobart Hospital. Where will I be on Friday? I will be meeting with the mental-health stakeholders in Launceston, where we will be discussing plans for the \$90 million mental-health precinct adjacent to the Launceston General Hospital. This is the same plan that state Labor did not even know about and, in fact, thought had been canned, then the next day, what happened? We lodged a development application. They are so out of the game they have no idea what they are talking about. That is a big project for Launceston. I am very excited about that. That will deliver state-of-the-art mental health services right adjacent to the Launceston General Hospital.

It does not stop there. What does the Budget say about ambulances? The Premier mentioned the \$27.1 million in the budget for four new ambulance stations at Cygnet, Snug, Legana, and King Island. It is on the go. This is planned, it is in the Budget and this is on top of our super stations at Burnie and Glenorchy, and they will be open soon: we are talking weeks, not months away. This is action we are delivering: the Premier mentioned this today; delivery, delivery, delivery. We are on the go. It is happening, and I am so excited to be supporting the Premier as Minister for Infrastructure by highlighting that important infrastructure, especially in health.

We make no apology for being so positive about the plans ahead and we will get on with the job and we will continue delivering.

[11.43 a.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Thank you, Deputy Speaker. Premier, you missed a magnificent day at the Tulip Festival on Saturday. The sun was shining; it was absolutely beautiful on the Inglis River. About 20,000 people attended that event and I can tell you that I spoke to a lot of people that day and the two recurring themes that they mentioned to me - they also talked a lot about the member for Bass, Michael Ferguson - but the two major issues that they spoke to me about were the *Spirits* fiasco and the state of Tasmania's roads. In other words, your failure in infrastructure as a government.

Time and time again, people came up to us and spoke about that. You talked about Smithton and investment in Smithton, we had a chat to the local mayor, Mr Blizzard from Circular Head, and it was great to catch up with him. He spoke about his frustrations about your government's inability to deliver the roadworks between Smithton and Marrawah that have been promised for years. That road is unsafe. The money was committed to, I believe, by the federal government to be administered by your state government. The improvements have not been done. There is one section of the road that has been completed. I encourage you to get down to Smithton and have a look at that road and fix that job as well, Premier. You have a lot on your plate, you have a lot of responsibilities this week in the parliament but I think it would do you good to get down there and speak to people about the state of that road because it definitely needs to be fixed.

The problem with this government and the problem with this Premier, Deputy Speaker, is that it is always someone else's fault. They always blame someone else and they say that they do not talk about politics, but what was that previous presentation from the newly minted Deputy Premier, that was all about politics and it is politics that have got this government into the pickle and the mess that it is in when it comes to infrastructure across the state. The one project that is the greatest illustration of that is the new *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels, because your patch-up job was all about politics, and your ministerial direction was all about politics and saving face for this government. You talk about due diligence just months before the *Spirits* are meant to be here, or when they are already meant to be here. You should have been speaking about due diligence over the works that needed to be done at the Devonport port years ago. It is too late. We are all excited about the arrival of the *Spirits*. Tasmanians are proud of the *Spirits*.

It should have been a wonderful time for our state when those new ships sailed down the Mersey. It should have been a great day for you, Premier, in your own electorate as the Premier of the state and the now Infrastructure minister but it is not going to be, because it is going to be marred by the incompetence of this government.

The Singapore solution that we asked questions about this morning in the parliament is just another example of saving face for your government. It is all about politics; it is all about those ships not being berthed in Hobart. That is what it is about - the failure of these ships to be able to be berthed in the river at Devonport in a timely way. It is a floating billboard for the incompetence of your government.

You will not answer questions about whether berth 3 is going to be completed by January 2026. You have failed to do that. The timing of the report being handed to you from your experts who are now intervening and doing the work on behalf of the government, is all about politics. Parliament is not sitting to be able to provide scrutiny about this report and this project again next week. Everything is about politics.

The fact that we have had early elections has always been about self-preservation for this government. I am pleased to hear that the Premier is looking at the preservation of pavement rather than his own self-preservation because that is what this government has been focused on for far too long. You have dropped the ball completely and it is time that you put Tasmanians first.

It is not just about GBEs putting Tasmanians first; it is about the Premier of the day and his government putting Tasmanians first. That starts with the infrastructure portfolio and, quite rightly, as you say, fixing the mess and getting on top of the mess with the *Spirits*. You might have introduced another three-phrase slogan about the *Spirits* that you announced this morning - 'Sort the *Spirits*; fix the GBEs; back the tourism industry' - but it is going to take more than that slogan to fix the mess that you have created.

[11.48 a.m.]

Mr WILLIE (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak on this matter of public importance concerning infrastructure. There is no bigger stuff up in Tasmanian history than the *Spirits* fiasco. How is it that we are the only state surrounded by water but our government is not very good at procuring ships or upgrading the necessary infrastructure for them? I have said in the past, it is like that episode of *Yes Minister* where they built a new hospital and they deliberately left it empty so it was the best performing hospital in the country.

We are going to have the newest, best performing ships in the harbour, probably moored in Hobart, sitting here waiting for the government to deliver the port that they need to operate from. These ships are five years delayed and \$500 million over budget. They had more time to get the port delivered and they still stuffed it up. It is incredible, and there are many Tasmanians who care about this, not just in the north-west, not just in the north, but in the south as well. These ships are vitally important to our economy - \$500 million a year of extra activity from the 40 per cent extra capacity from these ships. There are many businesses that have made investments of their hard-earned dollars, anticipating the arrival of these ships and what it would do for their business, creating opportunities for Tasmanians. They have been let down and it is costing all of us socially and economically.

We have a previous promise that they will be operating by January 2026. I did not hear the Premier recommit to that in question time today. We have also had the suggestion that they may be hidden in Singapore. It is going to cost the taxpayer to keep them in Singapore, and it would be a political fix to hide them in a country far away from here - not in Hobart, where they could be moored for free with a ministerial direction to TasPorts, but hidden in a foreign

country, paying millions of dollars, because this government cannot deliver the port infrastructure.

We have offered suggestions like day sailings. I am being contacted now by people within the industry and people who cannot get on the TT-Line with their caravan who want to go on holidays and are waiting long periods of time. There are not enough day sailings, so the government should get on with it and start creating more capacity where they can.

We have offered suggestions like amending or having a good look at the GBE act to make sure that government businesses are not just focused on their profit and loss statements, but are actually focused on the Tasmanian economy, improving opportunities for Tasmanians and being Tasmania focused. We have seen government businesses in this fiasco which are very short sighted in their view and very focused on their profit and loss statements and not the broader Tasmanian economy.

We have also seen in this instance one shareholder minister, resulting in no competitive tension between an Infrastructure minister and a treasurer who might be concerned about the financing of different projects. We want to make sure that that does not happen again, and make sure there are two government ministers of the Crown providing oversight so that there is competitive tension in conversations that are happening between portfolios.

Creating board term limits would also be a good way to get new ideas into these organisations. We had the government dismiss these suggestions, saying it would add red tape, but something needs to be done. Just amending ministerial charters is not working, and we should be open to new ideas.

Then we have berth 1, which is going to be the next fiasco. I have read the Integrator report; you can see that on the Public Accounts Committee website. They warn about the safety issues. There are significant risks with upgrading a port while there are two ships operating there - there are significant risks to costs, and we know that it is too shallow for the two new ships to operate.

It is not only that integrator report. You have experienced people in the shipping industry like Chas Kelly telling the government they have had two near misses there with the current ships and it is not safe. We have the Premier saying, 'We're going to follow advice'. They issued a ministerial direction not knowing how much it would cost or whether it would be feasible and now they want advice. It is utterly farcical. I am not Nostradamus, but I reckon what is going to happen is you will receive the port report on Friday, and then you will be working out how you can walk away from berth 1 because you did not get the advice to make the decision in the first place.

[11.52 a.m.]

Mrs BESWICK (Braddon) - Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the chance to speak on the matter of infrastructure. When a major infrastructure project goes to plan, it is a site to behold. To give credit where credit is due, having driven past the new Bridgewater bridge many times over the last six months, it has been an impressive feat of engineering. In contrast, the replacement of the two *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels has been nothing short of a disaster. The ferries play such a crucial role in the whole state's economy, but in my electorate of Braddon, they are especially indispensable.

As a child I remember watching the Abel Tasman arrive in Devonport. My father was in the brass band and there was always something exciting happening there. The purchase of two *Spirits* massively increased capacity and the ships have helped underpin Tasmania's tourism and freight sectors ever since. The history is a key part of why Tasmanians are feeling so frustrated right now.

Tasmanians have a sense of pride and ownership when it comes to the two ships, and are following these projects much more closely than they would other political issues in this state. When I campaigned in Braddon, there was a genuine sense of excitement about the new *Spirits* and the increased tourism and freight capacity that was coming with them. Of course, that excitement has now turned to extreme frustration. They are sick of delays, they are sick of weasel words, and they are sick of the blame game.

Tourism businesses invested with confidence, having been promised the *Spirits* would be fully operational on time. They have been left in limbo, unsure when they will start to benefit from these new vessels. I urge the state government to make sure those businesses are supported. It would be a tragedy if a business were to fail because of these delays. I urge the government to have a greater presence on the ground in the north-west, explaining the new timeline to affected businesses and offering them help where they can. So many of these businesses are family run, and with very small margins for error when it comes to keeping their heads above water.

The arrival of new *Spirits* was a boost that many of them needed. The anxiety and stress created by the delays cannot be underestimated.

I really hope there is a silver lining to this saga, hopefully, at least significant reform for Tasmania's state-owned businesses, providing a reset to their attitude when it comes to serving the public. GBEs must be facilitators of economic activity, not blockers. They must be led by what is best for the state, not by what is best for the individual bottom line. They must work collaboratively in the best interests of Tasmania's people. It seems like a very straightforward set of requests, but at the moment we are being very badly let down.

Tasmania needs to have a pipeline of publicly funded infrastructure projects to create jobs and economic activity. As Saul Eslake explains in his excellent report released earlier this year, there are ways we can do better. If we take a more strategic approach to infrastructure spending, we can guarantee the most crucial projects are prioritised without putting undue budget pressure on the budget.

I would urge the next Treasurer, whoever that may be, to consider Mr Eslake's advice when it is framing the next Budget, which is very soon.

On that note, I thank the Liberal member for Bass, Mr Ferguson, for his enormous contribution to public life as a government minister. Serving in cabinet for a decade is no small thing, and I note that the member has taken on some of the most challenging roles in government over time. I am sure yesterday was an incredibly tough time for him and his family, and I think they handled this difficult situation with poise and class. I do not know what it would be like to be in that role - I am very new here - but I think we all have something to learn from this whole saga.

Time expired.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2024 (No. 39)

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2024 (No. 40)

In Committee - Estimates Committees - Consideration of Reports

[11.58 a.m.]

Mrs PETRUSMA - Chair, I have the honour to bring up the reports of Estimates Committee A on the Estimates of:

Premier, Minister for Tourism and Hospitality, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Trade and Major Investment, the Treasurer and Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs;

Minister for Transport and Minister for Business, Industry and Resources;

Minister for Parks and Environment and Minister for Energy and Renewables;

Minister for Finance, Minister for Local Government and Minister for Sport and Events;

Minister for Children and Youth, Minister for Community Services and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs,

together with the minutes of proceedings, the transcripts of evidence and additional information presented to the committee.

Mr BEHRAKIS - Chair, I have the honour to bring up the report of Estimates Committee B on the Estimates of the:

Minister of Police, Fire and Emergency Management, Minister for Skills and Training and Minister for Housing and Planning;

Attorney-General, Minister for Justice, Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing and Minister for Veterans Affairs;

Minister for Primary Industries and Water and Minister for Racing;

Minister for Education and Minister for Disability Services;

Minister for Corrections and Rehabilitation, Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Science and Technology and Minister for the Arts,

together with the minutes of proceedings, the transcripts of evidence and additional information presented to the committee.

[11.59 a.m.]

Mr WILLIE - Thank you, Chair. It feels like it has been a long time since the Budget was delivered. We have had school holidays in the meantime, and we are back here this week.

We usually get it done in three consistent weeks, but it has allowed further commentary on the Budget in the community and further reflection. Just yesterday, we had some research put in the public domain about how the Budget has been received by Enterprise Marketing and Research Services (EMRS).

They released a press release yesterday, titled *The Budget Underwhelms*, that said:

The recent state budget has underwhelmed Tasmanian voters, according to an exclusive poll undertaken by Enterprise Marketing and Research Services (EMRS). The statewide poll of around 500 Tasmanians found that nearly half of all respondents, 45 per cent, thought that the Budget was bad for Tasmania, compared to just over a fifth, 22 per cent, who thought it was good. When asked whether the Budget would leave them better or worse off, a total of 38 per cent indicated that it would leave them worse off, compared to just six per cent better off.

Respondents were also asked how they felt key issues were addressed in the Budget. They were asked about cost of living, 63 per cent said they were total unsatisfied, 11 per cent total satisfied; health, 61 per cent total unsatisfied, 21 per cent satisfied; housing, 61 per cent said they were total unsatisfied and 16 per cent satisfied; debt, 62 percent totally unsatisfied, 11 per cent satisfied. Asked to nominate three unprompted words to best describe the Budget, the most common responses were debt, 44 times; irresponsible, 43 times; and poor. Debt, irresponsible and poor.

The poll also asked respondents their current state voting intention and that goes into a number of numbers there. The recent state Budget was clearly very unpopular with voters, with nearly half of the respondents saying that they believe the Budget was bad for Tasmania, EMRS Acting General Manager Ken Drake said.

It is notable that the word most associated with the Budget is debt, an issue that the government has taken a lot of criticism for in this Budget, and the other stuff is about polling, but that is what Tasmanians said about the Budget in some research released just yesterday. It has not been well received, they are not believing the government's spin on this Budget and it is a budget that is a work of fiction.

In Estimates, I highlighted that the government's forecasting has been way off in recent years and there was one particular example I gave to the member for Bass, the former Treasurer, that in 2022, he forecast the net operating balance for 2023-24 to be a surplus of \$19.1 million. A year later that was revised to a \$297 million deficit, then in the revised Estimates report it was forecast to be a \$521 million deficit and then they went on to deliver the biggest deficit in Tasmanian history at \$1.5 billion. This is an example of why it is very hard to believe the government's forecasting in this Budget. They are trying to do something that is completely unprecedented in the last couple of decades.

I did a little bit of research and I put this to the former treasurer: how can we believe the expenditure figures outlined in the Budget? It is either going to be savage cuts, cuts that we have not seen in the last couple of decades, or they are going to blow the Budget. It is a deliberate strategy to do that, not to be honest about their accounting, and then in the Budget updates we will see further deterioration of the deficit position and debt. Negative growth in government expenditure has not occurred in the past 20 years and under the previous treasurer's

two attempts in 2022-23 and in 2023-24, spending increased at 8.5 per cent and 14.7 per cent respectively. I do not know why they think they are going to break the streak this year.

I have attached a table that we produced with my press release at the time, and I will go through some of the figures there because I think that they give members an understanding of what happens to government expenditure growth over time. In 2004-05, 20 years ago, expenditure growth was 7.6 per cent; in 2005-06, it was 10 per cent; 2006-07 it was 6.6 per cent; 2007-08 it was 6.8 per cent; 2008-09 it was 11 per cent; 2009-10 it was 5 per cent; 2010-11 it was 4.5 per cent; 2011-12 it was 1.8 per cent; 2012-13 it was 3.2 per cent; and in 2013-14 it was 0.8 per cent.

The former treasurer talked about the austerity budgets of that period of government: there is actually a forecast of greater cuts in the current budget than this time and yet, they are claiming there are not.

In 2014-15, 2.7 per cent; in 2015-16, 3.1 per cent; in 2016-17, 5.6 per cent; in 2017-18, 5.2 per cent; in 2018-2019, 5.8 per cent; in 2019-20, 7 per cent; in 2020-21, 7.3 per cent; in 2021-22, 12 per cent; in 2022-23, 8.5 per cent; in 2023-24, 14.7 per cent. You can see in recent times that expenditure growth increases significantly where the government has lost control. What they are forecasting in 2024-25 is negative 3.5 per cent - this has not been done in the last 20 years; in 2025-26 they are forecasting negative 2.7 per cent expenditure; in 2026-27 they are forecasting a 1.5 per cent growth; and in 2027-28 negative 1.20 per cent.

You can see that this Budget is a total work of fiction when it comes to forecasting accuracy. Negative expenditure growth has not been achieved in the past couple of decades. They are not being honest. That is what it comes down to - not being honest with Tasmanians about the state of the finances. They are not buying it. They are describing it as debt, irresponsible, a poor budget - that is not just me as shadow treasurer saying that. That is research from respected research firm EMRS.

We know that they have increased the budget cuts that they have named up. They called it 'efficiency dividends'; it is just a fancy term for budget cuts. They are indiscriminate and ineffective. That is according to respected economist Saul Eslake, who says that they could lead to greater inefficiencies because they are essentially not making strategic decisions about what position should be retained. They are waiting for vacancy control and other measures to achieve those savings. This means that when people leave, you achieve a saving. There is no strategic thought about who leaves and how you save the money.

We have heard a lot about this current government talking about our plan to ban pork barrelling when it comes to community grants. They are saying, 'A merit-based process, you are outsourcing that to unelected bureaucrats'. That is exactly what they are doing with these efficiency dividends. They do not want to own the problem. They do not want to do the hard work and look at strategic decision-making when it comes to the Budget. They want to outsource the problem to unelected bureaucrats and wash their hands of it.

It is not strategic. It is bad for the Budget. It is going to lead to greater inefficiencies, and now it has been increased. We see the increase just as a line item in finance general, where they are looking at travel, consultants, supplies and consumables, I think, from memory. There is no actual plan to deliver it. It has not been allocated to departments. There is no plan to deliver it. It was just a strategy to make their Budget look better than it is. It is an absolute disgrace,

this Budget - the worst budget in Tasmanian history. It is one of the most unsustainable. There is no plan to address any of the issues. They are not even going to meet their own report card in terms of the fiscal strategy.

I said to the former treasurer in Estimates that my reading of the Budget, you will only meet two of 11. That was not refuted over the forward Estimates. This is a very problematic budget that is being delivered by this government. Tasmanians are not buying it. It will be interesting to see who the Premier appoints as the next treasurer, whether they are going to put their head in the sand, continue to live on the credit card, borrowing not just for infrastructure like they would try and make you believe, but borrowing to fund operating costs and borrowing to fund borrowing.

Debt is in freefall under this Budget and there is no plan to stop it. There are no cash surpluses that look like they are being forecast anytime soon. If we are generous with the government and we let them say that they are going to achieve a net operating balance in 2029-30, that does not mean that the debt will stop, because there will not necessarily be a cash surplus. It will be future generations who pay for this budget mismanagement.

I saw a farcical statement from the member for Braddon, Mr Ellis, about how the government was borrowing to invest in intergenerational infrastructure, and that that was a good thing. It is not true to say that. If you to put it in layman's terms - and I did put this on social media - what the government is effectively doing is buying the Sunday roast on their credit card and then when the credit card bill is due, they are getting another credit card. That credit card is probably going to have high interest. What they are doing with that higher interest credit card is giving it to their children because they have no plan to service it. It will be future generations who will pay for these mistakes being made by the current government. They have their head in the sand. There has been no economic reform. That was made abundantly clear through Estimates.

The other thing I highlighted with the former treasurer was that not only have we got flat expenditure growth across the forward Estimates - or decreasing, which has not been achieved in the last couple of decades - but there are significant non-service delivery costs that are eating into the Budget too. In 2024-25, the government is budgeting to spend \$9.74 billion. Much of this has nothing to do with service delivery or genuine operating expenses. The figure includes \$486 million in depreciation, non-cash recognition of the decline in asset value over time, \$306 million in nominal superannuation expenses reflecting the imputed value of interest on the unfunded liability, and \$22.3 million in borrowing costs for interest payments on general government debt.

In 2024-25 these three items equate to \$1 billion of the \$9.74 billion total expenditure. By 2027-28, these items will equate to \$1.3 billion, even though total expenditure is forecast to fall to \$9.5 billion. You can see these non-operating expenses eating into the overall share of expenses. This is why expenditure remains flat or it is falling.

Meeting genuine operating expenses that flow to services are shrinking even faster than you think. All of this is in nominal terms. There has been no account for inflation, which is forecast between two to three per cent a year across the forward Estimates. We are looking at a very significant deterioration in the operating expenditure which ordinary Tasmanians will suffer for.

We have a budget with its head in the sand. We have Tasmanians not buying the government's spin when it comes to the budget position. We have some things that were revealed in Estimates that were alarming in an exchange between me and the former treasurer. We were talking about Health expenditure and he talked about Health significantly blowing their budget last year. You can see that in preliminary outcomes report. I believe that Health was potentially punished by treasury and the former treasurer. The former treasurer said to me in Estimates that Health leaned into their specific purpose account, to help meet -

Ms Haddad - They raided it.

Mr WILLIE - They raided it. He said lent into, but raided is a better term. From memory, \$150 million was set aside for Health IT infrastructure. They made them use that on operating expenses. It looks like punishment for not meeting their budget. A short-term fix will potentially lead to greater inefficiencies. We know, and my colleague, the member for Clark knows, that the Health department needs upgrades in terms of IT infrastructure. There are inefficiencies that need to be dealt with.

It is very short-sighted decision-making that is taking place. It looks like Treasury has got upset with the Health department and said, 'You can meet some of these budget expenses that are not allocated through your specific purpose account'. They got caught out. It was a slip of the tongue by the former treasurer - \$150 million from Health bank accounts to prop up their budget mess.

The treasurer could not say what the purpose of the funds were in the hearing with me, meaning that he approved the raid without knowing the consequences. Health department officials, probably with my colleague, the member for Clark, subsequently admitted that the funds had been set aside for digital health upgrades. Funding for digital health upgrades has since been cut in this year's Budget, at a time when Tasmania's hospitals are in desperate need of technology upgrades. Nursing rosters are still being printed on paper and stuck on walls. Funds set aside to modernise our health system have been drained because the Liberals cannot manage their Budget. Just how sick are Tasmania's finances when they are looking at doing things like that?

We know there are a number of black holes in the Budget, too. I got a bit creative this year. We often talk about budget black holes in opposition, press releases and things like that. I thought I would get a visual. It is the school teacher in me. I had a corflute printed out and I went out in Parliament Square a few times and stuck things on there that are not funded in the Budget. There was a long list of things.

This current government used to acknowledge some of the things that were not funded, in a time-limited way. They used to have a provision for that. That is not in this Budget. There are things in the Budget that were not funded properly, such as 1000 jobs from the public sector. The Public Trustee was announced to be privatised, after the former treasurer said he was not a 'privatising treasurer'. We had \$7.2 million spent on the Northern Correctional Facility, and nothing was delivered. They back-flipped on it. What a waste of money that was, and to put all those communities through that heartache.

There was \$35 million from the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management. There was \$12 million cuts to wages in the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management. There were the fast-track housing approvals, the Southern Outlet, the Cradle

Mountain cableway and the new Tamar Bridge. There were a litany of things in this Budget that were not funded.

I had some time with the Minister for Community Services. I highlighted to him that a lot of his programs in his part of the Budget are not funded. There is no provision for time-limited programs, which they used to have. They used to have a provision for that for about \$180 million. There are a lot of things that are not funded in the forward Estimates. That is because this government has made an art form of fudging the figures, particularly in the outyears, to try and make it look like there is an improving bottom line when there is not.

For example, the government has funded Seniors Week for 13 years. You are not going to stop funding Seniors Week - but in the Budget you have. We know that their figures cannot be believed, and there are many black holes in this Budget.

We have had the community not buying the government line. It is very concerning that the community is not buying the government line. We also have some very concerning commentary, since the Budget has been delivered, from credit rating agencies. There were some significant quotes in *The Advocate* that I think are very concerning for all Tasmanians. Credit rating agencies were highlighting their concern for a lack of budget discipline, and the fact that this government is not even abiding by its own report card, and that they have no plan to address any of this. There was a report in *The Advocate* which had quotes from Standard & Poor's Martin Foo, warning that:

Tasmania's 'AA+' credit rating could change if the ratio of debt to operating revenue increased to above 120 per cent.

He said:

That would be a likely trigger for a lower credit rating.

This would mean higher repayments on debt. There is no plan for that to stop happening. Mr Foo said:

It is unusual to see these targets, and then just a few short sentences after, a frank admission that the state is going to breach all of its own targets.

There are significant questions about what the increased cost to government will be if there is a downgrade in the credit rating. John Manning from a rival agency, Moody's Investor Services, said:

A government's failure to achieve its own financial targets prompted doubts its commitment to budget repair.

The article also quoted him as saying:

The state government's plans for \$1.3 billion in pre-election spending for 2025 and infrastructure spending would have "quite a negative impact" on the state's financial profile over time.

There are questions about what sort of resource the government is going to put into Treasury to make sure that they can work with them through their reviews and outline a plan. That is what we need from this government: a plan to deal with some of these issues.

We have seen in recent times some political turmoil in this minority parliament: we have had people with party status become independents, we have seen agreements ripped up and we are only about six months from the election. I actually think if this government can survive this parliamentary term, it is going to struggle to deliver four budgets with conviction because of the state of the finances and the decisions that they have made over 10 years are going to catch up with them. We are going to see the debt profile increase unless they have a plan to deal with it or we are going to see some very hard decisions that have to be made and this government has no intestinal fortitude when it comes to making hard decisions or when it comes to economic reform to set the state up in a better place.

What do we have to show for all of this, Chair? We have a flatlining economy, we have significant issues when it comes to our participation rate in the economy. We now are going back into this cycle from the 1990s where we have very good Tasmanians, skilled Tasmanians who have a lot to contribute, thinking that they have a better future on the mainland and that is a tragedy for us all. I have three young children. I want them to be able to stay in Tasmania and live a good life like I have. I want them to think that they have opportunities here. I will not begrudge them if they do go to the mainland or overseas for an opportunity, but I want them to love this state and see an opportunity here too. If they do go, I hope they come back because I love this place and I want this place to have the same level of service as our mainland communities and the same opportunities in the economy. That confidence grows. We see that snowball happen when confidence happens in the economy and so we need to address some of these structural things.

In the lead up to this budget we had Saul Eslake's report, a very comprehensive and excellent report. We do not necessarily agree with all the things in the report, but it was a very comprehensive look at publicly available information. It looked at the structural issues with the economy and three things that I think are really important too, like Saul, are the participation rate, productivity and population. We need to have a plan for those. He also outlined some things that are happening in other jurisdictions that we should look at: 10-year projections. He said it is very hard to have an infrastructure program or other things beyond the forward Estimates if you do not know what the budget looks like in those years. I think that is an important reform. We have committed to some of these in our budget reply, our Parliamentary Budget Office which operates in Victoria, New South Wales and the federal jurisdiction where we are increasing the capacity of the economic debate in the state. We could look at a model that would not be that expensive but would provide more of a resource: something we should do.

I also agree with Saul's recommendation about the Auditor-General and making that more independent from government. We used to actually be quite high on the table in terms of public finance oversight where our Auditor-General act sat, it is quite outdated now. We have actually fallen right down to the bottom, so we could make the Auditor-General more independent, provide greater scrutiny over spending decisions and give them more autonomy to do the job that we need them to do as well but what is this government doing? They are applying an efficiency dividend to that office, which is having a very real impact in terms of oversight. It will impact the performance audits of that office - sorry, what was that? You were just mumbling something over there.

Mr Abetz - Private conversations, nothing about you, do not worry.

Mr WILLIE - I do not mind if there is, if you want to say it, I will hear it.

Performance audits of the Auditor-General's office are going to be impacted by the efficiency dividend. When we should be having greater oversight and more independence, we are going to have less because of the financial impact on that office.

I only have a little time left so I will go to one of my other portfolios, Aboriginal Affairs. I had a good discussion with Mr Jaensch. It is clear that the government is very focused on closing the gap. We have heard that from the Premier and the minister. An implementation plan is being developed. It is important that plan is consulted well with the Aboriginal community, and I am hoping that is happening. We have heard that the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* is going to be updated this year and we are expecting that to be tabled in parliament soon.

One of the things I highlighted with Mr Jaensch was the lack of funding for Reconciliation Tasmania, the only reconciliation council in any Australian jurisdiction not supported by a state government. I would have thought, in the wake of the failure of the Voice referendum a year ago - a very disappointing result, in my view. In my electorate, Clark, we voted for it - it would have been a great pathway forward to try something different. For example, funding an organisation like Reconciliation Tasmania, which does very important work in communities, with business, with schools, helping to educate the broader community about things that happened. I am a fairly young man at 40 and there were things I was taught at school that were fundamentally untrue. Those things have been reverberating in the community for many generations. If we are going to move forward in terms of reconciliation, we need to make sure we are prioritising education and support. It was, therefore, disappointing that request was ignored.

We have also had expectations built up about truth-telling and treaty. We had the report from Professors Kate Warner and Tim McCormack, who were commissioned by the former premier, Peter Gutwein, to have a look at this and create a pathway forward. That was in 2021 and we have had no progress. We had members of the Aboriginal community camped out here on the lawns highlighting their frustrations. If this government had no intention to progress any of those things, it should not have gone down that path and built expectations up, because all it is will do is create disappointment with communities that have been consistently let down by governments over generations.

It will be interesting to see how that work progresses. We had the Premier go out and speak to the Aboriginal community on the lawns. He must have said things that were assuring because they packed up and left. However, I am pretty sure they will come back if nothing else happens.

I have gone through a number of things raised in the Estimates process. It is not just me as shadow treasurer saying some of these things; we have research from EMRS showing Tasmanians are not convinced about this government's management of the budget or their message. There is concern. We are in tough times, the economy is flatlining and we have a government that does not want to take on any hard decisions or address challenges we face. There is only so long they can keep doing it because I think they are going to get found out in a big way over this parliamentary term. Many Tasmanians have woken up to their poor financial management when it comes to the economy and the budget.

Time expired.

[12.29 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT - Chair, I am pleased to speak on this address in reply and support the Budget and its plan for Tasmania, focusing on the things that matter and the priority for us in terms of getting the job done.

Before I reflect broadly on that, I take this opportunity to indicate what a great honour it has been for me to be elected unopposed by my parliamentary Liberal Party colleagues as Deputy Leader, and then sworn in as Deputy Premier. It is very humbling. I have been a member of the Liberal Party since 1980 and I have a deep love for the values espoused by that great party. It is an honour to stand in this place. Tasmania is the best place in the world to live, work and raise a family. I have my family here. I love them deeply and am grateful for their support and love.

I am pleased to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Premier, Jeremy Rockliff, to deliver on our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, focusing on those matters that are important to Tasmanians like cost of living and delivering those essential services in health, housing, education and police. I also know the importance of ensuring we have a growing economy so that we can reinvest in those essential services.

I offer my sincere thanks to the voters of Lyons for their confidence in me as a member of parliament since 2014 and reiterate that serving them is an incredible privilege, a privilege I have taken hold of with passion and energy since I was first elected. Likewise, in the Senate from 2002 to 2011. Next month, in November, it will be some 20 years of service: at the federal parliament, in the Senate, nine-and-a-half years; and then 10-and-a-half years in the state parliament. It is an incredible privilege.

I recognise the former treasurer, Michael Ferguson, as I did earlier today, to say thank you for your leadership and conviction to deliver the Budget we are speaking about today. I strongly hope we can pass this Budget to deliver on the objectives in our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future. Michael is a dear friend and colleague, and a man of great honour and integrity. He is kind and generous, a man of conviction and he loves representing his community. He is very dedicated. I put that on the record again. Thank you, Michael, for your service and the servant leadership you have demonstrated, and the values that you uphold, including the Christian values, your love for your family and the importance of family values.

Speaking more broadly to the Budget, I am pleased and proud with this process. I think the budget Estimates process is really valuable. As a former senator, the importance of the committee system to have that back and forth across the committee-room table is of great merit and we can learn a lot. I have learnt a lot during the process over many years, including in the most recent budget Estimates process. It is a very healthy process for any government.

In terms of the fundamentals, our government has delivered well over 47,000 jobs since we were elected more than 10 years ago, and unemployment is at 4.1 per cent. This is to my point that we need a growing economy to be able to reinvest in those essential services like health, education, housing and police. Mr Ferguson has delivered a budget in difficult circumstances. This is similar across every jurisdiction in this country and, indeed, across the globe.

We have come out of COVID. In Tasmania we have also had the commission of inquiry and met our obligations, and we will continue to do so. Certainly, as Attorney General, I am totally committed to implementing all 191 recommendations. The Budget allows for that, taking it into account not just for now, but for the decades into the past; some four decades, in fact. It takes account of that and also for the years to come in terms of implementing those 191 recommendations.

The Budget, as you would have heard from Mr Ferguson, is designed to be a balanced budget in terms of providing a pathway to surplus. I put on record my thanks to Saul Eslake for his report, which has been convened and supported by the Premier and the treasurer, together with the Jacqui Lambie Network, in terms of the comprehensive nature of that report and the credibility of the report. Further consideration will be given to that over time. I wanted to indicate that and put that on the record.

In terms of the Budget, just to indicate that the investments we are making in infrastructure are really important, and certainly on behalf of the government, I make no apology for that \$5 billion commitment to infrastructure investment in the Budget. You have seen it as you drive across the Bridgewater bridge that we are getting things done. The Premier said earlier today that delivery is a key focus for our government. Too right it is, and that is why we need to continue to invest in that Bridgewater bridge. The record funding in roads and bridges, that is very encouraging indeed; some \$557 million for roads and bridges across this great state of ours.

The CEO of the Civil Contractors Federation, Andrew Winch, said this about our infrastructure spending, 'All the dollars spent on investment in infrastructure ends up in cafes, service stations and shopping centres around Tasmania'. It has a flow on effect. It has the benefit of growing our economy, delivering jobs in building and construction: some 47,000 new jobs since we were elected in 2014. We are getting on with the job, we are delivering and that is why this budget is so important under very difficult circumstances.

I am very pleased with the infrastructure spending, particularly in health. In terms of the health portfolio, we have record funding committed. We have, under the previous budget, some \$12.1 billion over the forward Estimates and it has increased to \$12.9 billion across the forward Estimates. You can see that is a real increase and that is all about delivering better health services faster, building a better health system and I am very pleased and proud as Health minister to be able to lead the charge for and on behalf of the government. It has been such a joy to visit the various frontline workers in recent weeks in terms of welcoming them to the frontline; for example, the \$88 million at the Royal Hobart Hospital over the forward Estimates, and we have now got 44 new doctors and 25 new nurses at the Royal Hobart Hospital Emergency Department.

I caught up with Gabrielle from Far North Queensland when she was newish to the Royal Hobart Hospital, working in the Emergency Department. She was so pleased to be at the Royal Hobart Hospital based in Hobart because she has had several offers from other parts of Australia, and she took the offer at the Royal Hobart Hospital because she knew that this was a great place to work, live and potentially to raise a family. It was wonderful to catch up with her and meet with other doctors and nurses there, just some months ago, and to lock in that commitment that we have already delivered those 45 doctors and 25 nurses for the Royal Hobart Hospital Emergency Department.

We are moving, this is action, we are getting on with the job and that is why I am so pleased and proud, on the back of 10 years, 2500 extra healthcare workers in Tasmania since we were elected and 13,090 new nurses alone over that 10-year period. It is a very good result, but there is a lot more to do and that is why under our budget, under our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, we have committed the biggest recruitment blitz in health in Tasmanian history. Since April, we have seen a record recruitment blitz of more than 1000 people onto the frontline. We are talking about doctors, nurses, paramedics and allied health professionals on the frontline.

What it means is that there will be more on the front line this time next year than we have today. It is an incredible feat. The department is putting their shoulder to the wheel. We are raiding those frontline workers from Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. It is a recruitment raid and it is working. We have had full page ads in those jurisdictions. We do social media and we have other advertising and marketing programs underway to bring those workers to Tasmania. Whether they are from the mainland or overseas - I have met doctors and nurses at the Launceston General Hospital from Ireland, England and Scotland who have come to Tasmania - it is absolutely brilliant. It is working. Nobody can say it is not working. We have a net increase now since April of 197 healthcare workers, as I have outlined. That is a great result.

It was such a joy to be at the Launceston Ambulance Station headquarters just last week, and to meet four new paramedics who have come from mainland Australia. It was wonderful to catch up with them. We hopped into one of the new, state-of-the-art ambulance vehicles and checked it out. We are talking about building our ambulance service with another 78 on the frontline over the next four years. We are committed. They are starting to roll out, and have already started this wonderful work since April this year. We are getting on with the job and we are delivering better healthcare services, faster.

We have an incentive program to bring nurses to Tasmania. It is \$10 million. It is already in the Budget. Just last week I was at Deloraine, and likewise at Ulverstone, meeting some doctors who are on what is called a Single Employer Model, where we are working with the federal government and state government to attract and encourage doctors to work across various employment regimes, to gain that training and encourage them to be in rural and regional Tasmania.

We are stepping in where federal Labor has failed us when it comes to GP practices. We have the Rapid Response team. We are already recruiting for the 10 GPs that we promised we would deliver during the election campaign. Guess what? It is happening; it is working. We will step in. We have stepped in already at St Mary's, Glenorchy, Lauderdale, East Devonport and Bridgewater. We will not stop. We want to make sure that Tasmanians have access to GP and healthcare services when they need them.

It is a big challenge, but we have a plan to deliver on that, and we are rolling it out. We have \$250,000 grants under our Budget for GP practices. Already, we have put that out for expressions of interest. Those GP practices have now made their applications, which are being independently assessed, to make them more viable, to extend their opening hours, to add a registered nurse to provide better healthcare, faster, in those communities. We have funding support for 40 new GPs in our rural and regional areas. This is going to be rolling out over the next 12 months and beyond. They will be bonded for five years with \$100,000 incentives to get them to Tasmania. Guess what? Great news. It is progressing.

On top of all that, there is \$650 million in the Budget for capital in the healthcare sector alone. At the Royal Hobart Hospital, there is \$170 million over the Forward Estimates. Likewise, at the Launceston General Hospital, there will be nearly double that for the emergency department. There is a \$90-million investment for the Mental Health Precinct in Launceston.

I reflected earlier today that Labor's investment in our four major hospitals across Tasmania was - you got it - zero dollars. We are committing \$650 million over the forward Estimates for those important healthcare services. I am very pleased and proud to say that is in the Budget, and that is why I am pleased to be working with the healthcare stakeholders. I meet with them regularly. I am happy to have roundtables with the unions and others because that is how you learn and engage. That is how you get the feedback on building a better healthcare system.

I am looking forward to the mental healthcare roundtable I am hosting on Friday at lunchtime in Launceston with all those stakeholders to talk about our \$90-million Mental Health Precinct in Launceston. It is going to be a game changer when it comes to mental health services in northern Tasmania.

I was pleased to be up on the north-west coast at the Mersey Community Hospital. We have made a \$40 million commitment there to delivering outpatient services - endoscopy and services that support families; mums and dads to get the care that they need. You have seen the construction work as you have driven past through Latrobe. The workers are there; I have had so many visits there. It is so encouraging to see those tradies on the tools getting the job done, and there is more work to do. Likewise, we have big plans at North West Regional Hospital. I released the master plan for the north-west coast about six or eight weeks ago. There is a lot that is going on.

I have not mentioned, in terms of ambulances, our plans for Cygnet, Snug and Legana.

Mr Abetz - Hear, hear.

Mr BARNETT - I hear a 'hear, hear', particularly for Cygnet and Snug, I suspect from the member for Franklin.

Mrs Petrusma - Hear, hear, as well.

Mr BARNETT - Also over there from the other member for Franklin. We have Legana in the seat of Bass and King Island. There is \$21.7 million in the Budget for four new ambulance stations, and that is on top of our super ambulance stations at Burnie and Glenorchy, which are very significant investments of over \$12 million for each. This is a big investment, and guess what? It is nearly complete. I am so keen to get up there and ensure that we can get them working and operating so that we can deliver better healthcare services, faster.

Not to mention the helipad in Launceston - I recognise some special guests from Launceston today. Thank you for being here on this very special day. We give you special recognition as we debate the Budget to ensure that we can deliver a strong economy, and invest and reinvest in those essential services. A special welcome to each and every one of you today. I look forward to catching up with you at lunchtime.

I should mention the \$2.7 million to the Midlands Multi-Purpose Health Centre. Some of those in the Chamber know exactly where I am talking about. It was great catching up with Athol Bennett and the auxiliary just last week. They are so keen. We have just delivered and extended the services there with another eight beds for the residential aged care facility and the multi-purpose health centre. It was totally supported by the local community. Dr Michael Lee and Athol Bennett are absolutely wrapped in the auxiliary, as well as the acting mayor, Karen Dudgeon, and so many councillors in the local community. I pay tribute to them for their advocacy for health care in that community. We will not give up, we will not stop, and we will get on with the job.

I will reflect on my other portfolio in terms of justice and indicate that we have delivered an additional \$42.8 million for a whole range of initiatives across the justice system. I thank those in my department for the work that they do. In Justice just as in Health, they put their shoulder to the wheel to help provide those important services to the public.

We have delivered extra funding for the Just Healthy Families program over four years, which is providing legal advice for those impacted by family and domestic violence. It is such a scourge on our community and we all need to do better in that regard. We have had a range of reforms, but this is another initiative to provide that support. Tasmanian Legal Aid, thank you for what you are doing. They are celebrating 50 years this year. I hosted an event in Parliament House to celebrate the 200 years of the Supreme Court and the importance of an independent judicial system that is delivering that quality justice system with access for all. The Tasmanian Legal Aid is providing that funding support, now 50 years old, but it is providing additional funding support for legal advice and services for those who are impacted by child sexual abuse. That is a very important increase: funding for victim support services, for victim support and counselling services. The list goes on and on - the funding support for the Office of the Independent Regulator, such an important role. I have mentioned earlier about the commission of inquiry and the 191 recommendations that we are totally committed to implementing, and we are implementing. We are going through stage 1, and moving to stages 2 and 3.

I have some remarks, before I wrap up, on the important role of veterans. There 17,500 veterans in this state. I am so pleased and proud to be an advocate for them, to represent them, to indicate that the Teddy Sheean VC Grants are well-appreciated, and to provide peak body funding for RSL Tasmania to continue the Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize as well as providing the veterans' health through our wellbeing voucher program.

All those initiatives were questioned and queried at the Budget Estimates committee hearing some weeks ago. It is an important part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future. I want to do a callout for Teddy Sheean VC. Those in the Chamber will not be surprised to hear me say how pleased and proud I am that in the Budget there is some \$50,000 for the statue in honour of Teddy Sheean VC. That statue will be unveiled on Remembrance Day, just a few weeks to go. It has been supported by the Latrobe Council, by the state government and with the entire support of the local community in Latrobe and across the community from the veterans and their families, but particularly the Sheean family.

It was so good to catch up with Garry Ivory on the weekend. We had a coffee and catch up. He was wearing his Armidale T-shirt. I was wearing my Teddy Sheean VC fight campaign jumper. We are so looking forward to the unveiling of the statue. This will be a national event with the unveiling of the statue. I can advise that the Chief of Navy will be flying

down for the unveiling. It is going to be one of the greatest honours and pleasures of the role, as the Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

It has been some 17 years of fighting for that campaign for Teddy Sheean, for his VC, by Garry Ivory. Some 32 years he fought for that VC for Teddy Sheean and he has so richly and justly deserved achieving that. On 1 December 1942 when he went down with the ship, the Armidale, in the Timor Sea, he was being shot at with his mates. The order was to abandon ship. All his mates were getting off and then they were being strafed or shot at in the water by the Japanese Zeros. He could have got off and had a chance to save his life like everybody else. He could have done that, but no, he went back to the Oerlikon gun. He strapped himself in. He knew exactly what he was doing, because he knew when he strapped himself in that that was it. He would be going down with the ship. He shot at the enemy aircraft, attracted fire, took down one plane, damaged two others and went down with the ship literally moments later.

His shipmates could see him doing this. There were seven independent adult witnesses. We gathered this through the various tribunal hearings and reviews that I helped get started. I acknowledge Mary Dean in the Chamber today, who gave me such support, together with many others in my office over so many years, particularly in my Senate office and in my office in Launceston as a state member of parliament. We fought so hard. We had so many knockbacks and we never gave up and as I say, a tribute to Gary Ivory for getting that done. That will be such a special occasion to be there on that day to unveil that statue in honour of Teddy Sheean after such a long and challenging journey to get the job done, but that funding is in our budget. That is the vision we have to deliver: what is important to the people of Tasmania.

I conclude there and commend the Budget. I commend the Budget to all members of this place and to the members of the public. I thank again our treasurer, Michael Ferguson, when he delivered that Budget with the vision and foresight that he had to make those investments. I also thank the Premier, for the opportunity to speak today and be part of a team that is delivering the 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future.

[12.55 p.m.]

Mr WINTER - Deputy Speaker, I have five minutes before we go to the lunch break, so I might just make some brief reflections on the Estimates hearings this year before I get into it, perhaps after lunch. The Estimates this year worked better than Estimates in my time - albeit relatively brief compared with others. Estimates was actually useful and I understood more about what the government is doing because of Estimates than I did beforehand, which is a compliment to the leader of government business. It was better than usual. I want to be complimentary to the chairs of the committees, who had to deal with more MPs wanting to ask questions than is usually the case and that can be a bit challenging, especially when some of us get a bit frustrated that we do not have as many questions as we would like. It was useful and the additional day was helpful as well. I appreciate that the government was flexible in allowing that additional time to take place.

Getting answers does not mean you are always happy with them, and I was not overly enthusiastic about some of them. The answer that I thought was the most impactful is one that has not had any coverage that I have seen anywhere outside of this place. It was given by the Premier on the Monday and it was about confidence and supply. We have been given a huge challenge by Tasmanians in this Parliament to try to make it work and the stability of this government is held by the confidence and supply agreements that it has with the crossbench.

This government commenced its time in this place being a coalition with the Jacqui Lambie Network. There are different versions of how that fell apart, but for whatever reason, two of the former JLN are no longer members and one is. There is now a real lack of certainty about what confidence and supply agreements the government actually has.

The remaining Jacqui Lambie Network member has said that the agreement is null and void; that it does not exist anymore. You have a confidence and supply agreement with Mr O'Byrne, which is the clearest of them all. You have the member for Clark, Ms Johnston, who says that her agreement is not really a confidence and supply agreement. It is more of an understanding. I am sorry if I have mis-paraphrased that.

Mr Behrakis- Working arrangement.

Mr WINTER - Working arrangement would correct it, thank you, member for Clark. You have the two former JLN members who have signed their own agreement now, which is probably actually quite clear as well. That does not give the government full confidence and supply, except for what the Premier described as a verbal confidence and supply agreement that he has with Mr Jenner.

When I asked about that verbal confidence and supply agreement, the Premier was unable to tell me what the terms were, what the agreement was or what the exchange was. What I recognised in that, is that it does not appear to be a supply and confidence agreement at all. Mr Jenner has said that he is not voting for this Budget, meaning that the supply agreement is null and void by virtue of it is about to be breached if it does exist. There has been no commentary or explanation of what that agreement actually is. That means we have a government that does not have a firm confidence and supply agreement with the crossbench and that is a perilous situation for any government to be in, this government included.

Today marks exactly six months since the first Question Time of this Parliament and we started with a coalition agreement. We do not have that anymore, but it is pretty clear the agreements, such as they are, do not give this parliament the stability that Tasmania needs. Tasmania needs stability. It is not just the government that needs stability, it is actually business, working people and communities that need stability -

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

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2024 (No.39)

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2024 (No.40)

In Committee - Estimates Committees - Consideration of Reports

Resumed from above.

[2.30 p.m.]

Mr WINTER - Chair, before I go any further, I meant to say at the start of my contribution, congratulations to Mr Barnett on his appointment today. It is a great honour and I know how important it is to you. We wish you all the best in that new role.

Before the break, I was talking about the confidence supply and how important it is to Tasmanian business. Business looks to this place for leadership and stability, and we need to ensure that business feels supported. They know they are supported when they have a government focusing on what really matters to people, that is, long-term solutions. When it comes to long-term solutions, the ability to provide that comes from the Tasmanian budget.

In the last 20 years, governments have entered into global financial crises, as the last government did and pandemics, as this government did, with balance sheets that could sustain the shock of a massive global event, which is what happened on both of those occasions. One of the concerns I have about going into \$8.5 billion of debt is the ability for a future government to respond to a crisis in that environment, when instead of having net cash and investments in the bank, you have net debt to sit on. It limits the ability to act.

When the global financial crisis hit, there was a government with the financial capacity to react to that. When the pandemic hit, this government, I think, would say it had the financial capacity to act, and that it was able to continue to stimulate the economy and invest more in infrastructure because there was net cash and assets sitting in the bank. The concern I have is going into a future crisis with \$8.5 billion of debt, where you are spending \$441 million a year just servicing the debt, limits the ability to do that. I think that is a core problem with this Budget.

The Premier says, and the former treasurer said, it is a budget for the times. It might be a budget for today, but is it a budget for tomorrow? Is it a budget we are going to be happy with? Is this a budget that will be remembered? I argue that this will be a budget that will be remembered for a long time to come: a budget that has not set us up for the future but has set us up for decisions that will go further down the track.

One of the documents Treasury and Finance does is its long-term fiscal outlook, every few years by legislation. In 2021, it tabled its document and that talks about the government needing to take corrective action as soon as possible, rather than leaving it too late. It talks about the possibility, under a number of scenarios, of up to \$30 billion of debt by 2035. That is the worst-case scenario but, at this stage, the government's trajectory is looking like we are tracking towards one of those very difficult bad results, which is not what anyone here wants. However, that is the problem with not having a plan. We are not dealing with the issues.

I am yet to see a final response to Saul Eslake's report. There was an interim response, I think the word was, but not a fulsome response to the report that I think is probably required. The Eslake report gave a very good introduction to this Budget. It outlined what the problems were and, I think, made Tasmanians more attuned to the concerns about this Budget, including the Tasmanian business community.

In previous budgets where I have sat here and listened to former treasurers talk about everyone who endorsed the budget, it is usually a long list, in fairness. I remember Peter Gutwein going through the list of the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Small Business Council, every business group he could find, saying how good his budget was. We did not get any of that this year because the concerns raised by business were pretty serious: concerns raised about the debt, the deficit and the lack of a vision going forward for our state. I think that is concerning.

When it came to Estimates, it was an opportunity for us to extract more information about what some of these numbers meant, some of the numbers about the job cuts. We received RTI information before the Budget, which outlined the estimated amount of money spent last year, which should be close to exactly what happens.

If you take the amount of money spent in Health last year, versus what the government is planning to spend this year, you are talking about over \$100 million of cuts from our healthcare system. You are talking about \$130 million from staff wages. You have a government that, on the one hand, even today is talking about putting more health workers on, but they have a Budget that says they are going to spend less on health workers this year. Unless something quite extraordinary has happened, those two things cannot both be true. Unless they are giving workers a massive wage cut, which I am sure they are not, these things cannot be true. This means they have two choices: either they are going to blow their budget, which would be extraordinary, or they are going start sacking doctors and nurses.

The government has been very open about how many people it is adding to its workforce, but it has not been so forthcoming about how many people are exiting. What we are interested in is the net numbers on how many people are working in our healthcare system, in particular, but also across education - across all the agencies. We need to make sure that we have a workforce in our Tasmanian public system that is supported, secure in its work and well-paid. Unfortunately, I do not think we have those things.

During Estimates, we also asked a considerable number of questions about the catastrophe at TT-Line, about the ferry fiasco, which seems to have become a bit of a talking point in the media over the last few days, what they are calling the 'ferry fiasco'. I wish I had thought of it. It has been a fiasco. For example, asking questions about the subcommittee the government has been established to deal with the *Spirits of Tasmania* project, it turns out there were three members. One is the Minister for Transport, Eric Abetz; one is the Premier, Jeremy Rockliff; and the other was Michael Ferguson, the former minister for Infrastructure at that stage. It showed me that there was still the same control over the project there had been in the past, that there had not been the level of change in overseeing the project that was desperately needed.

The one defence the Premier has had over the ferries fiasco over the last six months has been, effectively, that he did not know anything about it, that he was the Premier and minister for Tourism for two years, and did not know anything about it. He did not know that they were bailing out the Finnish shipbuilder to the tune of \$80 million from our Tasmanian taxpayers' dollars. The Premier of Tasmania did not know. That is the claim. He had no idea that TT-Line was dealing with a foreign entity, that it was considering bailing out the shipbuilder, that the shipbuilder had massive financial problems, and then that we actually did it. He did not know any of that. When we asked him in the first question of this parliament, he did not seem to know much about that either.

He did not know, despite being the member for Braddon and, presumably, being in Devonport quite a lot, that they had not started the infrastructure at berth 3. He had no idea, despite it being critical for the new *Spirits* to operate. He was the minister for Tourism with the biggest infrastructure project for that industry since the last time we bought new *Spirits* on the horizon, and he did not know that it was not going to be ready.

Now, here is the kicker. I asked the Premier in Estimates: when did Tourism Tasmania find out that the new *Spirits* were not going to be here on time? I did not get a clear answer to the question but I now know the answer. I have had it confirmed: Tourism Tasmania found out in the media. The body tasked with overseeing, supporting and growing our tourism industry was not told that the *Spirits of Tasmania* were not coming this summer. Tourism Tasmania was working towards the *Spirits* being here this summer and was never told. They saw it on television that night from this place.

The communication with the tourism and hospitality sector has been appalling. You cannot say you respect and support this industry when you are prepared to ignore, disregard them and not communicate with them. It is all well and good to say after the fact, 'Now we are holding our roundtables', but it was too late. Businesses in Devonport in particular have made the investments. In fact, they made the investments ready for the *Spirits* to be here a few years ago. They have been making the investments and getting ready.

Having got ready, the ships did not arrive, and the government did not have the good courtesy to tell them about it. It goes to one of the points we have made in terms of cleaning up this mess, and that is that TT-Line should have a board member from the tourism industry on it. There is a clear disconnect here between the industry that is so reliant on TT-Line and the TT-Line board and the Minister for Tourism, who did not see fit to tell the industry what was going on. I think it is a major mistake, and it is staggering that there was that level of disrespect towards that great industry, particularly on the north-west coast.

It is an industry that is reporting some of its lowest occupancy rates that they have seen for many years. Then you have got Don Cameron up in Launceston, who reported in the media that he had not seen hospitality conditions in Launceston this bad for 40 years. Don Cameron made those strong statements. He was asked to make those statements on behalf of not just his own business, but businesses in the north of the state who are doing it tough, and who are really disappointed that the *Spirits* are not coming and that those new extra tourists are not coming to back in their businesses. He was asked to speak not just for himself but for the whole industry. He said he was not comfortable with it, but he did it because he was standing up for himself and other businesses.

After he made that statement, it hit the *Mercury*. He had a big dinner coming up the next night in Launceston, Mr Fairs - he had a big dinner at Mud Bar booked in the next night. He was looking forward to it. I think about 20 people were coming along from the Hawthorn Football Club and the Tasmanian government for a big powwow and discussion about the future of the arrangements in Launceston, as I understand it.

After he went to the media and made that statement, something happened. He got a phone call to say that the dinner was cancelled - that someone in the minister's office, and potentially the minister as well, was not happy with the commentary that he made about the government, and because of that commentary about the government and business conditions, the dinner was cancelled. He was punished for telling his story. He was punished for saying that business conditions that he worked his whole life for - for 40 years, he has invested in Launceston and in Tasmania, across multiple businesses - had not been this bad for 40 years.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government's reaction to hearing that was to say, 'You are cancelled. I am cancelling your business because you spoke negatively about our government and about business conditions'. It is staggering stuff, shameful stuff. You should be appalled,

Mr Fairs, over the member for Bass. If I were a member for Bass in this situation, I would be staggered and appalled at what happened.

This situation that happened to Mr Cameron was not good enough, and was not fair on him or anyone else in that business. Following on to that, the dinner was then reinstated the next morning and then cancelled again for another reason. I accept that, but it should never have been cancelled for that reason. Never should that have been allowed to occur. I am surprised that it was allowed to happen.

The tourism and hospitality industry desperately needs support. It needs actions and it needs long-term solutions. It does not need another patch job from the Premier and Minister for Infrastructure. The questions that we asked about berth 1 demonstrate that the government knows it cannot deliver the interim solution at berth 1, and I suspect they have known all along. The ministerial directive that was given directing TT-Line and TasPorts to build at berth 1 was made with the government already being aware that there was serious safety issues with that solution.

We heard from Chas Kelly at SeaRoad who said there were serious issues of safety. Since then, we have heard from the Premier and Minister for Infrastructure who says that he has now spoken to Mr Kelly. Perhaps he could have spoken to him before they went down this path. Perhaps either of the ministers could have spoken to the other operator on the next-door berth to say, 'Is it actually safe to deliver this?' If they had asked him, he would have told them, or they could have listened to their own advice - advice that TT-Line was aware of back in February and that the government appears to have been aware of in April.

Questions today about whether the Premier was aware of exactly this issue were not fully answered. It appears as though, over the last seven or eight weeks, that the government has been pursuing an interim solution, a patch-job solution at berth 1, which could never have happened. Instead of focusing on long-term solutions at berth 3, which is what they always should have done, they have wasted a lot of time, energy and money pursuing something that could never have happened.

Perhaps I am wrong and on Monday we will hear there is a solution at berth 1, but I strongly suspect that is not correct, and more time has been wasted. The difference between this is really critical, because one or two months in the scheme of things is not much, but given the season, it really is. The significance of the question to the Premier today about January 2026 is really important because when the industry needs the new *Spirits* it is in summer. That is when the industry expects and wants to see a massive influx of people. That is when, let us face it, the seasonality tells us that more people want to come to Tasmania. I love it in winter as well, but that is the reality.

We need to provide the capacity for them to get here. If the *Spirit* solution at berth 1 is provided in January 2026, that is a very different outcome to it if it is in April. That is three months of lost revenue at full capacity for our tourism hospitality businesses. I have been down as far as Huonville talking to people about this. The caravan park down at Huonville is desperate for these new ferries.

I have spoken to and heard from businesses who have shut up shop because of this decision. There was a Facebook post the other day from a small animal transport business that was transporting animals across Bass Strait, who basically said in its closing comments to its

former customers, 'We're pulling up stumps because the new ships aren't arriving and so we can't see a future for the business'. That is the impact of this on Tasmanian businesses, be it tourism or hospitality.

When it comes to infrastructure more broadly, as I said earlier, there is a major problem with our roads in the way that they have been constructed. I cannot believe the state of them. Coming through Symmons Plains on the Midland Highway on Sunday, the condition of the road there is horrendous. Illawarra Road is horrendous. The Bass Highway is looking better than it was, but the Murchison Highway and the Lyell Highway, even down my way further south - it is not as bad as in the north, but it is not in good shape on the Tasman, Channel or the Huon either. There is something seriously going wrong with the way that we are dealing with this. Patch-up jobs on patch-up jobs are not the same as building the road properly in the first place.

I wanted to get to another big component of what we talked about during Estimates. Our shadow racing minister is in the other place and so I will do my best for the racing industry today in his absence to speak about what we heard in the racing Estimates. I have serious concerns about the Office of Racing Integrity. The Minister for Racing says that the Office of Racing Integrity is now irrelevant. It is not irrelevant, because the integrity body overseeing Tasmanian racing today is the Office of Racing Integrity. It will be at least for the next few weeks, probably months, before the new legislation, which is badly needed, is in place.

The Office of Racing Integrity needs to do its job. I did not get complete answers about the workers' safety components and the lack of a workplace insurance policy. The concern that I have is that Ben Yole - and now Wayne Yole - Racing still do not appear to have adequate workers compensation insurance, which they are required to have by law. The Office of Racing Integrity, having been asked whether or not they have it, has indicated to Tasracing that it is not required, but then in answers to me say they refer to WorkSafe.

It is clear they need insurance. It is clear that they do not have it, and we know the impact on real people like Lily Blundstone, who ended up in that horrific crash up at Rowella only a couple of years ago where one of the passengers lost sight in one eye and four young Tasmanians were seriously injured because they were asked to work for 20 hours straight. There was no insurance, the brakes were not working and nothing appears to have been done to resolve that issue.

It is shameful what has happened. When it comes to the Murrihy review and the answers given by either the department or the minister, I do not understand why charges were not laid. The Murrihy review was set up as an independent review to ensure the integrity of Tasmanian racing and to shine a light on all the issues, and it did shine a light. Ray Murrihy is one of the most respected stewards anywhere in Australia, certainly one of, if not the, most experienced. He came to Tasmania, spent six to eight months on the job working hard to get to the bottom of this and made strong recommendations.

He found that four participants, two members of the Yole family, two members of the Ford family, Mitch and Nathan, had participated in race fixing and had participated in team driving. He found that Ben Yole had been involved in the mistreatment of animals - shocking animal welfare allegations, plugs in, in the washbay, literally beating horses. The government's response was to not tell Tasracing or the public for two months, then announce that they were

not going to do anything about the four people named other than refer them to another independent review on top of the one that had already happened.

If you are going to have an independent review, you want to do something about the outcomes, but their response was to not do anything about it for two months and then refer it to another independent review.

The second independent review reported recently that it did not find as many things wrong as the first one. Mitch Ford, for example, is not named in the new report, yet I see a steward's report from only last weekend showing that he has been found to have breached the code again and has been rubbed out for five weeks for not giving a horse its full opportunity to win the race. People in the industry who have seen that race can speak about it better than I can, but it is truly shocking that he was let out.

The Director of Racing position has been continued to be filled for the last almost 10 years by people who do not understand the racing industry or the basics of the steward's role. They simply do not. The current Director of Racing appears to be unsure how to use the fit and proper person test. He was prepared to say that Robbie Walters was okay to become a trainer in Tasmania and that Ben Yole could get relicensed despite having assaulted animals, and was prepared to allow the continuation of the type of practices happening at Ben Yole Stables. None of that seemed to worry him at all; they were all still fit and proper people.

Then there is the kicker: two things. The first, the question about Steve Shinn, the former chief steward of harness racing in Tasmania. I asked the then minister if there was any evidence of tampering with swabs. The minister went back to the department, and the answer was to effectively not give an answer.

Steven Shinn was stood down with no reason given and no announcement made. He departed the role with no reason given, nothing at all. The question is: what really happened? Steve Shinn is now a steward in Queensland. He simply transferred to a new role. Last year, I asked the government - I think Madeline Ogilvie might have been the minister back then, it is hard to keep up - what happened? The answer was that they would not say. The point is he is now stewarding in another jurisdiction and apparently nobody will say what happened, but they certainly will not deny the allegations.

I asked about police referrals and I now understand that Mr Murrihy has made at least one police referral out of the Murrihy review. I want to know more about that and to know that there is action happening here because there are serious findings made, not only against the four participants, but against the Office of Racing Integrity (ORI) itself. One steward was in charge of all the races that Mr Murrihy looked at: all of them.

These issues need to be looked at. We cannot say it is irrelevant now because we are moving on, as the minister did. We need accountability and we need to fix the problems. That is what we need in every instance. That goes to the heart of the issues with the government at the moment. This is all about patch up jobs, filling potholes, and making patch-up solutions for Berth 1. It is not about real long-term solutions. It is about getting through every single day. It is about making sure they can survive the day and get to the next one. This is not a government that is capable of making big decisions for the state, because it is not capable of looking much past its nose. We need to have a government that is focused on the future and that looks at the opportunities for the state. There are so many of them.

I wish I had time to talk about renewable energy. We have this incredible opportunity in front of our state. We have \$25 billion worth of investment waiting at the door, waiting at Bass Strait - actually sometimes wanting to invest in Bass Strait in offshore wind. We have money wanting to be invested in Robbins Island and Whaleback Ridge. We have money wanting to be invested in HIF up on the north-west coast. Abel Energy at Bell Bay is an incredible opportunity. We need a government that is prepared to grasp these opportunities. The Coordinator-General needs to have some teeth.

By the way, I have forgotten to get to this - it turns out the Premier does not have a policy on the Coordinator-General. He could not say whether he supports the Coordinator-General being able to rezone land. He could not say if he supported the Coordinator-General being able to direct GBEs to support business, rather than running interference on them. There is not a policy to sort the Coordinator-General out. There needs to be. If the Premier wants advice and support on that, I am happy to support him. We need a Coordinator-General to get to work to get these projects actually happening. If we do not, we are going to miss the opportunity.

[2.56 p.m.]

Mr ABETZ - Deputy Chair, this Budget deserves to be passed by this House and this parliament. It is a challenging Budget, with debt issues recognised, and service demands recognised. Both have been professionally balanced for the benefit of the people of Tasmania. What we have just heard from the alternate Premier is a sack-bag full of negativity - no solutions. Negativity after negativity after negativity.

Prior to the Leader of the Opposition, we heard from the shadow treasurer, before lunch. He took great delight in the superficiality of opinion polls. He said that the opinion polls saw debt as the major issue in the Budget. Guess what? This government acknowledges debt as an important issue. That is why we have a pathway to surplus mapped out for the future. There was a very telling point of the shadow treasurer relying on an opinion poll for the centrepiece of his contribution - not an alternative budget, just the latest opinion poll. The point is the one element of that opinion poll he did not want to talk about. This was that despite the relentless negativity of the opposition for the past six or seven months since the election, the Liberal Party still has more support in the community than the Labor Party.

This is an inconvenient truth that the shadow treasurer did not want to talk about. Why is that? The people of Tasmania expect that if you are going to criticise the Budget, which is a fair and reasonable thing to do, there should be an alternative set out. Of course, the Labor leader and the Labor Party went to the last election promising twice as much as we did by way of election promises. During Question Time, day after day we hear on the one hand that the deficit is far too great. Then, the next question says that there is not enough expenditure. You cannot have it both ways. You have to have integrity and robustness in your advocacy. You can say that the debt is too great and therefore these savings need to be made. You cannot talk out of both sides of your mouth and say, 'On the one hand we do not like the debt burden, but on the other hand we're spending a lot more than you would.'

If I can turn to my friends in the Tasmanian Greens, they want to get rid of fish farming, but do you know what they are going to do? They are going to increase taxes on fish farming. How on earth are you going to balance the Budget if you are going to get rid of an industry and then increase the taxes on that very industry that you are going to get rid of?

That is why I would invite everybody, commentators in relation to the Budget, to genuinely consider the detail of it in the long-term plan, the strategy, the methodology that is outlined in the Budget, which will serve the people of Tasmania exceptionally well.

Can I quickly refer to the member for Franklin, Mr O'Byrne's suggestion, that we sack boards and CEOs in relation to certain GBEs. I hear his frustration and to a certain extent, I share those frustrations. However, to sack the boards, the CEOs and appointed administrators at this critical time will only delay the delivery of infrastructure, especially for Devonport for the arrival of the new TT-Line ships, *Spirits IV* and *V*. I share the frustration but I think the proposed solution, the nuclear option, is not one which would serve the people of Tasmania well.

This Budget has a number of great initiatives in it for the people of Tasmania, whilst charting a path to surplus to ensure that the legacy of debt that is left is not over burdensome, but we have to be careful in how we reduce the flow out of the tap in relation to government expenditure. With that in mind, we have nevertheless, in a number of portfolios that I am involved in, been able to make some good and sound long-term strategic investments. For example, as I announced last Sunday, the reworking of the Bellerive ferry terminal, about \$5 million worth, which will see modern day infrastructure to make public transport more accessible, the amenities more enjoyable, providing protection from the elements and all those sorts of things that will make the public transport of a ferry across the river so much more appealing.

We are continuing to fund the half price public transport fees both on ferries and on our buses. We are seeking to encourage public transport as much as possible whilst also recognising that people may want to use their cars. That is why I did announce that the government would pull the proposed funding for the bike paths in Collins Street in our capital city. It is one of those surprises that you get every now and then when you make an announcement and people give you all sorts of dire warnings. However, when even the ABC online commentary and polling of the *Mercury* and *Pulse Tasmania* has support for the decision at about 80 per cent and you then have a Lord Mayor attacking you saying there is no support for this decision, you sort of wonder how there are these two parallel universes.

Having said that, encouraging people to walk and encouraging people to cycle is important and it is something that we as a government seek to promote but with all these things you cannot be blinkered. You cannot be so ideologically motivated that you would say the commuters who need parking spaces, the commuters that need to be able to travel through Hobart without too much inconvenience, that the small businesses, that the property owners, indeed bus drivers complaining about the proposal as well, should all be ignored in the pursuit of cycleways. There has to be a sensible, mature balance in these decisions and that is why we as a government, in announcing 18 other active transport projects, felt the need to pull the funding in relation to these bike paths.

Can I say I have been heartened by the support that the community has provided for that announcement. I am also disappointed that the Hobart City Council Lord Mayor has indicated that she is going to fund it all anyway, which tells me they had a stash of cash in the corner and they were playing us for fools in saying that they needed our money to partner with them. They always had the money there in the first place. They clearly did not need state government support, which is disappointing to learn that they made that submission to partner with us. That

aside, it is up to the rate payers of Hobart to determine whether or not they want that sort of leadership in their council.

Whilst on public transport, can I also briefly address the issue of the Kingston Bus Interchange? There has been an attempt by Kingborough Council to blame the Department of State Growth for the design faults that have led to what could be politely described as a suboptimal outcome - an outcome that makes it unworkable. The advice I have received time and time again is that the money for the construction of this interchange was paid to Kingborough Council under the Greater Hobart City Deal. When plans were provided, suggestions were made by Kingborough Council to the Department of State Growth and bus operators. The council was warned on a number of occasions that the plans would not be appropriate. The tightness of the corners or the curve in the roadway would be such that would not be appropriate for the disability sector. It would not allow three buses to line up - only two and then in an inconvenient manner. Kingborough Council was warned about this and I would invite the council to acknowledge the warnings provided by the Department of State Growth.

Turning to some other areas in transport: new bus stops, a new interchange - all those sorts of things are part and parcel of the government's desire to ensure that those who avail themselves of public transport find it as attractive and convenient as possible. That is why we are pursuing the common ticketing program. We are also pursuing real-time tracking of buses so people can know the certainty of their bus services.

Turning to other areas in my portfolio, the fishing sector: I was delighted to be able to announce the \$600,000 - a relatively large amount to most people in the scheme of things, in a budget, I suppose relatively small, but it will allow for the translocation of rock lobster from the south-west to the east coast of Tasmania, helping both our recreational and commercial fishers. I am delighted that we have been able to allocate \$1.2 million for the preservation of our iconic sand flathead, a fish that most people my generation and generations after me have enjoyed as a good feed after a day out on the water. Unfortunately, the stock is being depleted and, therefore, my predecessor in this role, Jo Palmer, instigated a bag limit. We are now seeking to see whether or not the sand flathead can be grown in captivity, and we will see what that brings. We want to keep the sand flathead as a viable recreational fishery for generations to come. With that, we are also looking at the opportunity of a brand-new fishery for Tasmania in the sardine sector and what that brings. I do not know who it is at this stage. We are still awaiting the advice of IMAS to determine the size and the biomass of that fishery and then what would be a sustainable catch from that fishery. Every indication is that that will be a new sector for our fisheries industry with a lot of promise.

In the Greater Hobart area, the Wellington Precinct review is starting to shape up and we hope there will be a discussion paper available later this month to enable the community to have input into a long-term vision for an area that, in rough terms, is about 18,000 hectares and is the most visited site in Tasmania by locals and tourists alike. It would be fair to say that the infrastructure on the mountain is capable of substantial improvement. How can we do that whilst preserving the values of the mountain? Once again, it is a balancing act. You can either overdevelop it or simply put it in complete preservation. I think most Tasmanians say there is a sensible halfway point and that is exactly what we, as a government, are seeking to achieve by that review.

In relation to Business, I was delighted that we were able to partner with Incat, a world-renowned boat manufacturer in Tasmania, started by a Tasmanian, to support its

creation of recharging infrastructure and electric ferries. These are the sort of innovations and investments we are making on behalf of the Tasmania taxpayer, knowing the wonderful flow-on benefits that will occur for generations to come if this comes off, and we have every confidence it will.

In relation to mining, mining is an important and valued business for the people of Tasmania. Not only does it provide employment and critical minerals for our manufacturing, earning us export dollars, but it also provides royalties, which helps to fund our police, schools and hospitals. That is why, when you know the benefit of the mining sector, you want to ensure exploration continues, and continues on a sustained basis. That is why we have announced the next round of Exploration Drilling Grant Initiative payments and allocated a further \$1.5 million over the next four years in the Budget. If we can co-partner with those who seek to explore the mineral wealth of Tasmania, it is through that exploration we gain the mines of the future. Developing a mine cannot just be done overnight. It takes years of prospecting, proving the load of the mineral wealth in a particular area, then you need all the approvals and you have to develop the infrastructure before the first bit of dirt can be mined. That is why, with a long-term vision, we are today creating a path for future wealth through the mining sector.

Forestry is a fundamentally important sector for Tasmania, providing thousands of jobs right about the state whilst being sustainable. Let us debunk that which we hear so often about the alleged destruction of forest practices. It is asserted by the very same people that tell us day after day - and I think with good cause, that we should get rid of one-use plastics. If you want to get rid of one-use plastics, what are your food containers and straws going to be made of? Paper. How do you make paper? Guess what? You need woodchips. Those who seek to condemn woodchips and that element of our forestry sector are, in fact, condemning the alternative to one-use plastics. The good news is that a paper straw is decomposable. One-use plastics do not decompose. What they do is clog up our rivers and oceans. What is the best environmental outcome? Clearly, the use of forest products and paper. It would be good if that could be acknowledged and accepted by those who seek to criticise our forest sector.

We also need wood for housing, and the less wood there is, the more we have to import; the more expensive the wood becomes, the more expensive housing becomes. We have a housing shortage and we have housing affordability issues. That is where, with all these issues, you cannot just be blinkered in your thinking and say, 'We don't like forestry', and think that there will be no consequences. There will be consequences if you want to get rid of one-use plastics or if you want affordable housing.

As Victoria has found, having stopped native or regrowth forest harvesting, it is now importing huge amounts of timber from South America, burning and belching out bunker fumes as it travels across the water. How is that good for the environment? Do you honestly believe that in South America, where the hardwood comes from, forest practices are better than they are in Tasmania? Of course, they are not.

If you genuinely believe in acting responsibly, you would say, 'Let's harvest our forests in a sustainable manner'. What confirms to me, day after day, that it is being done sustainably is when I am told that certain coupes destined for logging are pristine forest areas. I then inquire, 'How come this is labelled pristine forest by those opposed to it?', and am told it is a regrowth forest of 30, 40, 50 years ago. What that tells me is that having harvested the forest and regrown it, those campaigning against forestry accept that which we have regenerated as pristine forest.

It can be done again and again. That is what Tasmania has been able to achieve over many generations because of the capacity of our foresters. I commend our forest sector and encourage people to think through all the issues when and if they were to seek to condemn forestry. It is a fundamentally important commodity, it is renewable, recyclable, and at the end of the day it is biodegradable. It is genuinely renewable. All you really need is a patch of dirt, a bit of water and a bit of sunshine and, believe it or not, Tasmania has the climate for very good timber farming.

As we transfer to more plantation timber as well, it indicates how we are achieving the transitions that can be achieved if you work at things. What I would encourage people to do, rather than virtue-signal certain sensitivities, is to understand that the Australian wood supply is sustainable and beneficial. We have on-island processing and we are pursuing that more and more with our sector, making monies available for that. Currently, we have seven projects receiving almost \$6 million in funding under the first round of the On-Island Processing Program and we will be co-investing with industry to ensure that we get as much value-add as possible with our timber products.

We are supporting the special species timber sector with \$100,000 to do a demand analysis. We are investing because we know that investment will provide jobs for the future.

In the areas that I have been given the privilege of responsibility, I have been delighted to see the sort of investments that we can make, be it in rock lobster, mining, flathead or forestry, knowing that those investments are going to be paying dividends in 10, 20, 30 years' time and continue to ensure that Tasmania has the brightest of futures.

I am confident that Tasmania has a bright future. We do need to get the debt issue under control and let us acknowledge that but, who would have done anything differently during the COVID situation? Some of us may have had views about that, but as I say to the Labor Party and others in this place, you can look back or look in the review mirror and say they should not have spent that, then and there. The simple fact is it occurred. Same with the situation that we face up at Devonport. It has occurred. Do you want to look back all the time and just play the blame game and criticise or, do you actually want to say and be part of the solution? Do you want to offer alternatives that will make things better?

Day after day in this place we hear questions from the Leader of the Opposition seeking to criticise the Premier, but without ever advancing a genuine alternative. Without an alternative, you cannot be treated seriously as doing a better job.

One of the easiest things in life is to sit in the grandstand and criticise the players on the field. The toughest job is being on the field and kicking the goals that are necessary for your team to win. What we are seeing from Labor and the Greens, in particular, and some others, is they sit in the grandstand, offering all the criticism in the world but without ever once seeking to get onto the field and having a go at the ball and trying to kick a goal. That was shown after the last election when Labor did not even put their hand up to seek to form government, because they knew they did not have the numbers, and might I add also, more importantly, nor did they have the capacity to form a government.

Premier Rockliff, despite the difficulties, took up the challenge to form Government, has done so, and is now doing a masterful job in exceptionally difficult circumstances. He has accepted the budget situation, but has now developed a pathway to surplus. Similarly, with

Devonport, he sees the problem, acknowledges the problem, has apologised for the problem, but is now developing a pathway forward, and there will be more to say about that in about a week's time. This is a Budget for Tasmania's future and it is well crafted.

Before I finish, I commend treasurer, Michael Ferguson, for his stewardship for putting this Budget together. A wonderful person. An individual I have admired for a long time, and this Budget is the budget that is the foundation stone for our recovery after the COVID period, to ensure that Tasmania has a pathway to surplus and has a pathway to a bright positive future. When people do look back through this particular period of time in Tasmania's history, they will see that there was an architect of a Budget that allowed Tasmania to get through this difficult period, and have a pathway to a very good future, and Michael Ferguson will be remembered for that. That is why I have great pleasure in supporting the budget that Michael Ferguson delivered.

[3.24 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, Chair. The Greens came into the Budget Estimates process making no bones about the fact that we were deeply concerned about the Liberals' Budget. In fact, we find large parts of it to be really abhorrent. We think it is not in any way listening to the reality of people who are struggling with the cost of living. It is not in any way representing the views of people who are working in essential public services, who understand that they have already been cut to the bone in their schools, hospitals and child safety work and that there is no money left to be taken out of their services. The Treasurer's idea of having efficiency dividends, which in plain, human, everyday Tasmanian speak just means 'cuts to the budget', is frankly quite frightening for many of them.

We understood the deep concerns of young Tasmanians who are looking at the unfolding climate crises around the world, who have mobile phones and who in their bedrooms and amongst their friends at school cannot help but absorb the reality of the rapidly changing climate that is happening around us. When we see the hurricanes happening in the southern United States, when we see millions of people being displaced because of hurricanes, when we know that the heating in that area of water off Florida is going to keep getting hotter and hotter every single year, and the scientists are telling us that those hurricanes will become a normal state for that area, that is a really big thing for people to grapple with.

That is the truth of what is going on. It was only just over a month ago when many people across Tasmania - thousands of people - spent over a week without power. It is a really serious issue. We remain so concerned that there is no minister for climate change. We do not just need a minister for climate change, we need a minister for a response to what is happening to the climate so that we can galvanise and support communities around Tasmania, and so that we can be as prepared as possible to move and evacuate in a timely fashion, to keep ourselves and our animals safe, to look after our properties and our assets, and to protect our wilderness areas and bushlands.

These are critical issues for a government to grapple with because we still have an opportunity to be ahead of the game. We can look at what is happening in all other countries around the world and realise, just by the fortune of circumstances, we happen to live in this place on the planet that is one of the least affected - at the moment - from the rapidly changing climate. It will not remain that way, but we are seeing other countries with vastly greater impacts from climate change.

Right now, communities across Africa are being driven from semi-arid areas. Semi-arid areas are being turned to arid areas, and temperate areas are being turned to semi-arid areas as they are in large parts of Europe. Huge swathes of the northern European forests are being dramatically damaged and killed off by beetles as a result of climate change.

Last year for the first year in the record of the planet the scientists have just told us that our carbon stores globally were not taking up carbon. They had reached - last year at least - capacity to take up more carbon from the atmosphere. We are not only at a point as a planet where we are emitting much more than the atmosphere can take, we are not absorbing it. We cannot even rely on the great carbon stores of the Amazon. They were not taking up carbon last year. These are the big things that are happening outside our conversations in parliament and outside the government's priorities.

When the Greens came to the Budget period, we developed an alternative budget. We did what minister Abetz just said parties should do who want to make change. We provided the vision for Tasmanians to say, 'We can do it differently. We have choices. Change is possible. We can choose to put the Budget into different areas; we can choose to listen to the community services sector who have been living on starvation rations in their budgets year on year under the Liberals in government for the last decade'.

They have not been getting the CPI, or the basic stuff. They are already - they told us at the TasCOSS budget - cutting people from their staff. These are the same services that the government and needy Tasmanians are relying on to actually be expanding their services, because there are so many more people in great need who are really struggling with the cost of living and the cost of housing. They are not coping.

This is such a small amount of money that the government should have put into the community services sector - to increase their CPI to the realistic level that it should be, and to make a commitment to keeping them on five-year funding instead of this year-on-year budget. Palliative care still does not know whether it will be funded. That sector still had not heard, on Budget day at least, that they would be funded again this year. That is unbelievably disrespectful of the people who work in that sector, with the thousands of Tasmanians they care for in those last weeks and months of their life. To leave them hanging like that shows a real distortion to the priorities of the Liberals.

They can choose to put \$4 million into a chocolate fountain scoping exercise but they cannot afford to put money into the community services sector - about the \$10 million figure - to give them continuity of funding and an actual CPI that will keep them going at the level that they are at, which is not nearly as much as they should be funded.

These were some of the things that were in our mind as the Greens when we were talking about what we should be putting our money into. We were talking about the fact that we are in a global biodiversity crisis. The evidence is coming in daily. The World Wildlife Foundation has just put out another report about the situation in Australia. The incredible heating of landscapes is killing fledgling chicks. Wildfires and fuel reduction burns are happening at the wrong time. We are not listening to Aboriginal communities about the sensitive ways to do proper fuel reduction burning, meaning that we are having huge losses in native mammals and little birds. We are in a place where there is a crunch on all our ecosystems and biodiversity.

We made decisions in our alternative budget to cut some things in the public accounts, and to put things into other areas like making sure that public transport was free and that school is free, so that everyone can afford to send their child to school and can afford the expenses that come with schooling. We made the decision to put the money into the nurses, the paramedics, the teachers and the child safety workers who - they are telling us - are actually required.

I thank the people in Tasmania who continually put their faith in members of parliament to be here and to represent their interests. I thank the people in the conservation movement. I thank the peaceful protesters who are out there in the forest today, as they are almost every day, standing up for our forests, which are still being bulldozed and burned by the Liberals even though we are in the midst of a climate emergency. I thank the unions and the members of unions whose work meant that the Liberals were forced to bring at least some lukewarm, tepid measures into their Budget that make conditions for some workers slightly better than they were before.

That is the hard work of people who have hope and who continue to maintain hope that by their collective spirit and working together they can continue to bring positive change to Tasmania.

In our alternative budget, we sought to represent all the issues that I have discussed and in the Estimates process, all the Greens members went into committees asking the ministers to justify the decisions that they made in their budget. I got to say that my overwhelming view is that the issues that have been discussed in the last couple of days in relation to the previously minister Ferguson's responses to repeated questions in the Public Accounts Committee and in parliament, in the Chamber, about the *Spirits of Tasmania* were sort of exactly the same responses that we got across the board from nearly all ministers in relation to what they are doing in their portfolio and how they were able to provide answers on basic questions. In other words, Greens members, me included, asked sensible, straightforward questions time and again and we just did not get the answers. Repeated questions, really basic things like about the stadium here, we have another massive infrastructure, huge blowout which is happening in front of us and it is something that the Liberals are doing everything they can to hide the true costs.

When I was speaking to the Premier about the costs to the stadium, the Liberals and the Premier have promised that his government would not spend a cent more than \$375 million and that the stadium would come in at \$715 million. We found out that it is actually going to go over budget by at least, according to the Liberals, \$775 million. That is in the documents that they submitted to the Tasmanian Planning Commission, to the Project of State Significance process, \$60 million. It might not sound very much to them, but that would buy a hell of a lot of nurses' wages, support for people who are struggling to pay the rent and be able to provide an amazing amount of work restoring our ecosystems which are being damaged. \$60 million means a lot, but the Premier was still pretending it was not something that the Tasmanian taxpayers were going to have to cough up. When we went along, as we did, and started to try and find out about all the extras that are clearly in the project of state significance documents, we can see there will be a new access road, there will be a bus mall, there will be the required removal of The Goods Shed, there will be an underground car park, there will be a whole bunch of extra so-called -

Mr Bayley - Enabling infrastructure?

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, enabling infrastructure, that is right, Mr Bayley, which will all need to be paid for. The Premier was trying to pretend that somehow that would be paid for by the private ferry investors because they are flying around out there, trying to find an opportunity to donate a bit of money, out of their goodwill because they feel like doing it. Why would they do that to a loss-making venture which is what the stadium is, by the government's own papers showing, that it will be a loss-making venture. How are these private investors to be found to come up with - by the first estimate we had \$200 million extra above the state government, the Commonwealth government and the AFL's contributions - an extra \$200 million? That is not even counting all the things that I just mentioned, the moving of The Goods Shed, the bus mall and a three-storey underground carpark.

The Premier is treating Tasmanians like fools, but worse, he is treating us with disrespect. What I am seeing in his management of the stadium question when I asked him questions, and even now that he is the Infrastructure minister, is a press repeat of exactly what Michael Ferguson was doing as minister, to basic questions on the largest infrastructure project in Tasmania's history. It is a massive cost and we do not believe him when he says that we are not going to end up paying for it. We do not believe that it is not going to go as a loan. He said at one point that the Macquarie Point Corporation would be taking on that loan. The Macquarie Point Corporation is an extension of the Tasmanian government, so any cost to them is a cost to the budget and a cost to Tasmanian ratepayers. We will all be paying for it. Throughout my questioning of the Premier, I did not get any confidence that he was ever going to be honest with us about these true costs.

This is the affliction the Liberals show in government. It is something that was Michael Ferguson's undoing. The first way he misled parliament was in the Public Accounts Committee when he was not honest about the extra €8 million that was going to be a cost because of the Ukraine war and the increasing price of steel. He did not let the committee know about that; he did not want to let them know there had been a price increase. Why would you not want to say that? It is such a small thing in the scheme of what is now a \$700 million project: 'There is a war on, the price of steel has gone up, yes, the price has changed. We know at the moment it is going to be an extra €8 million. We are keeping an eye on it. Obviously, we are concerned.' That is what normal humans would do.

I am concerned that I am seeing the same behaviour from the Premier about the stadium. He is not answering basic questions, like who is going to be paying for the Goods Shed removal; who is going to be paying for the LED; what about the catering supplies? These are all basic questions.

I will talk more about the stadium, but now I will turn to Aboriginal Affairs and how painful it was to scrutinise the work of the minister, Mr Jaensch, and his inaction on protecting Aboriginal heritage. For a very long time, the minister has failed to listen to the Aboriginal community, which has been clear about its priorities. The Aboriginal community wants the minister to focus on protecting Aboriginal heritage rather than changes to the *Aboriginal Lands Act*. Aboriginal heritage is being destroyed on a regular basis around Tasmania. When developments like Robbins Island are approved, if that is built, it will be a massive destruction of an Aboriginal living landscape.

I asked the Premier - I mean, the minister. It should be the Premier. I asked Mr Jaensch whether he would be changing the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* from the woefully inadequate sticks-and-bones approach, which is what it is called by many people, to provide protection for

Aboriginal living landscapes, as they are called, the landscapes that have been formed by Aboriginal people living on country and caring for country over tens of thousands of years. The current *Aboriginal Heritage Act* has been described as shamefully disrespectful by a previous Liberal heritage minister. We are concerned that Mr Jaensch is taking so long to provide this legislation to parliament and concerned about his response, which showed that he is not committing to providing protections for Aboriginal cultural landscapes within the new act he is preparing. On behalf of the Aboriginal people, we are concerned that he is going to do a minimal job and it will not solve the problems.

We are also concerned that there has been no action at all on the Indigenous Protected Area Tenure, which was recommended in the Pathway to Truth-Telling and Treaty report. Those changes could have been dealt with over three years ago, but have stood in the way of, for example, Kooparooona niara being handed back.

After the Estimates process, Mr Jaensch quietly announced that he was dumping the *Aboriginal Lands Act* changes he has been insisting on pushing since he has been minister. He has admitted that process is finished, he needs to step up and make land returns. He needs to prioritise creating that Indigenous Protected Area Tenure so that Kooparooona niara can be handed over. It is not a big process. Kate Warner and Tim McCormack prepared mechanisms. They recommend a process and now Mr Jaensch needs to prioritise bringing a consultation process about that to play.

We were shocked by the lack of respect he and the government have shown regarding the stadium, where they have dumped the commitment to a truth and reconciliation park at Macquarie Point. This is something they promised they would keep all the way through the announcement of the stadium, 'No, no, don't worry, a truth and reconciliation park will be prioritised.' What we found was that, from the draft Macquarie Point Development Precinct plan to the final version, the commitment to a truth and reconciliation park and to consulting Aboriginal people about it has been removed. There is now no formal commitment by the government to have any consultation with Tasmanian Aboriginal people about what is going to be called an Aboriginal culturally informed zone. Instead, he said there will be textures on the outside of the stadium to represent Aboriginal culture. That is so disrespectful. It is almost worse to have that sort of tokenism than the removal of it in the first place. We are calling on the Aboriginal Affairs minister to intervene in the stadium process and insist that the government keeps its promise for a truth and reconciliation park and that the Macquarie Point Development Authority has to deal with that.

We want the government's priorities to be focused on the things Tasmania needs, not building a stadium. We had the release of the State of the Environment report just days before the Estimates process. That report was not surprising to many people who have been watching, caring for and trying to prevent the degradation of Tasmania and the active destruction of landscapes. However, it was still shocking to see how bad our environment has become under the policies of the Liberals for the last decade. We recognise there are other factors at play and climate change is a key driver. However, the approval of developments, the slashing, logging and burning of the forestry industry, the harms done in the marine environment by major salmon farming corporations which are basically left to do whatever they want in our marine waters, are all policy decisions of the Liberals. These are choices being made that allow harms to occur to our environment.

It was disappointing that the Premier did not make any commitment to implementing the recommendations of the State of the Environment report. It is shocking for people who care about protecting nature to see that this government is prepared to take a major legislated report like that and, essentially, throw it in the bin.

A Member - Rubbish.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is, yes, exactly. You are treating it as rubbish. You said it. It is a rubbish response because Tasmanians want a genuine response that is proportionate to the harms occurring on a daily basis. We cannot go on like this. These places are irreplaceable. A report has just been released called *Vanishing Wildlife: the Impact of Native Forest Logging in Tasmania*, which was only released recently by the Wilderness Society and The Tree Projects, which shows 300,000 animals are killed or displaced by native forest logging in Tasmania every year. This is a report about Tasmania that 250,000 animals are killed and displaced through loss of habitat and 32,500 animals are killed or displaced through the burning of forestry coupes after logging. Every year, 19,500 animals are actively killed through a government-sanctioned, so-called crop protection permit process. Logging trucks killed 3600 animals.

These are enormous numbers. There are incredible impacts to waterways, too. We have people in the community speaking with tears in their eyes about the fact that there are no fish in the rivers that they live on and lived on as children. There are no weedy sea dragons and there is no diversity in the estuaries and rivers. These are changes that can be made by the Liberals. These are the sorts of budget priorities the Greens are talking about.

We recognise that there are many other people in Tasmania who want a government that can respond to the reality of the climate emergency, end the destruction of our beautiful environment, provide treaty and truth-telling processes for Tasmanian Aboriginal people, and bring strong laws that will protect Aboriginal living landscapes that have been cared for by Aboriginal people for tens of thousands of years.

These are things that we can do if we have a government with a mind to the future and to looking at the best interests of Tasmanians. We are standing with our people in the conservation movement, the unions, the community service sector, the palawa/pakana, and with everyone who wants Tasmania to remain the beautiful place it is into the future and to support people who are struggling with mental-health issues, the cost of living, and with housing, to get the services that they justly deserve.

We are a wealthy society. When we see the money that we are sending overseas in mining royalties, that money should be coming to Tasmania. When we see the \$30-40 million every year that is going to Tasracing, that money should go to our services. These are choices that we can make.

The enormous public subsidies for Forestry Tasmania: it is not an industry that stands on its own two feet. It cannot do it, and we pay for that destruction. That money could be going into restoring ecosystems, building healthier landscapes, or providing more climate resilience support for communities. That is how we want to put our money as a party. We want to support communities to protect themselves into the future.

We also want to make sure that the Liberals do a proper review of our GBEs and state-owned corporations, not something they cook up themselves. We do not want a piecemeal review and we do not want something that would be self-serving for the interests of a particular government. It is so important that a review has to be independent of the government of the day. It is too important given what we have seen across all the GBEs and the way that the ministers have been responding. It is important that this work should not be done by the government itself. It should be independent and comprehensive of all state-owned corporations and GBEs to update the governance and corporate governance guidelines which are 16 years old and to make sure that they are focused first on the purpose, the transparency, the accountability, the governance, and the responsibility of shareholder ministers who are at the head of them. That is what we will be advocating for so we can get some real transparency in the decisions that are made on behalf of us.

Time expired.

[3.54 p.m.]

Ms DOW - It seems a long time ago that we were in this place and the worst budget in Tasmanian history was being handed down by the then treasurer. A lot has changed in those two weeks, including the fact that we are now in the final stage of the Budget being approved, and the government now has an acting Treasurer in the Premier.

The fact that today we are debating the Budget without a treasurer is incredible: nearly as incredible as the fact that the *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels do not have a berth. I doubt that even this would come as a surprise to Tasmanians, given the track record of this current Liberal minority government.

We have only had six months in the new parliament, but it has been a pretty rocky road, and that is without mentioning the potholes that plague our highways. I will get to those a bit later in my contribution. At least the Premier stated today that he is focused on pavement preservation, rather than self-preservation. I guess that is a start. Things might be looking up for Tasmanians.

The problem really is that this government has been focused on itself and the Liberal Party for far too long, when it should have been focused on Tasmanians. I note that the Premier had somewhat of an epiphany today during Question Time when he said that GBEs needed to have the Tasmanian people at the head of their organisational chart. I would have thought that that is all just a little bit too late, given what we now know about what has happened with the new *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels, but also the fact that these governments had 10 years to address the issues with GBEs across this state. It is only now that there has been this tremendous failure of public policy and the state's worst infrastructure stuff-up in history that the Premier has seen the light and that something has to be done by his government.

This is a government that blames everybody else for its failures and a government that does focus on politics. The Premier talks a lot about not being political about issues, but much of what this government has done, and continues to do, is about political survival. Others in their contribution today have spoken about things being a day-by-day proposition, and right now in Tasmania days are a very long time in politics, and I suggest that we are not going see that change anytime soon, whilst we have this premier and this minority government at the helm.

Estimates and GBE hearings are the only opportunity that we have to question ministers and staff across each government department one-on-one and, hopefully, get some answers. Some ministers made it a priority to give us answers and I thank them for that. Others did not. This is an important parliamentary process and I do not think this should ever be diminished and the opportunity to do that.

I am always blown away by the amount of work that goes into Estimates. The folders full of reams of paper on the government side are testimony to that. I remember when I first attended Estimates as a new member to this place, and being amazed by the number of people who enter this building in suits, carrying bags full of folders, full of reams of paper and information, and the time and energy in resource that goes into preparing that. That needs to be acknowledged.

On our side, in contrast, we have quite scant resources and that is why I put on the record my thanks to our staff for their tireless and outstanding work during Estimates this year, and to let them know that their efforts do not go unnoticed.

On reflection, Estimates went pretty well for us as a parliamentary team on the Labor side of the House, and I congratulate my fellow caucus members on their good work during Estimates and the time and effort they put into preparing for Estimates this year.

Getting back to the Budget, the facts remain and it is important to put those on the record again, as I did on my Budget Reply speech. They are that last year the Rockliff government delivered the largest deficit in Tasmania's history of \$1.5 billion. This budget delivers a combined \$1.7 billion of operating deficits over the next four years. This means the government cannot pay for its day-to-day operating expenses, excluding infrastructure, without using the credit card. The Liberal government has not delivered an underlying surplus in their budgets for the entire period they have been in government and, clearly, has no plan to deliver one in the future.

Net debt will reach \$8.5 billion in 2027, about \$35,000 for every Tasmanian household. That is a very frightening fact. Over the next four years, the government will spend \$1.4 billion just to service debt. To put it simply, we are spending more than we earn and they are taking out a NILs loan just to pay off the credit card.

All Tasmanians know that this is completely unsustainable. They would not run their household budget like that and they expect their government to not run their state like that.

There are some cuts right through this Budget, despite the rhetoric of this government. We have heard, particularly from the public sector unions, about the impact this will have on essential service delivery across the state. Essential service delivery is already on the decline. Our staff across our hospitals and other areas of public service are completely burnt out. Many are leaving the public service to find work elsewhere. You only have to look at our nursing workforce and our child protection workforce.

We really are at a point in time where it is becoming more difficult to provide public services. Part of that is because this government has not had good workforce development plans over the course of its tenure. They have done nothing to develop our workforces across our essential services. You only have to look at child protection services, for example, where it took a huge amount of pressure for even market allowances to be looked at as part of an

incentive to attract Tasmanians and others from other jurisdictions to come and work in this important level of public service.

As the unions have said, right now we need change, not cuts. I think that is a really important point. We do need change. We need a change in attitude from this government about the way that it manages Tasmania's finances, and the way that it conducts itself - not only in this place but out and across the community, and in the information that it provides to the Tasmanian community, and its transparency in its honesty with the Tasmanian people.

We need a complete reset. The Premier has had a few attempts at those over his two-and-a-half-year tenure. I feel like we are going to get another one on Monday when he comes out and talks about the reset about the new *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels, and whether this government will be continuing down the pathway of its patch-up job on berth 1, and whether we will know whether berth 3 will be ready by January 2026.

I think this will be another attempt. The three phrase slogan that the Premier rolled out in question time will be rolled out verbatim, no doubt, over the course of the next few weeks and months, as a way of trying to resurrect any shred of credibility that this government and this Premier have when it comes to the *Spirit of Tasmania* replacement project.

I will start at the top with the Premier and Infrastructure minister, and talk about Estimates. We began our Estimates hearing on Infrastructure on a really important topic that is front of mind for many Tasmanians at the moment. That is the state of our roads, and the potholes across our road network. I shared the experience of one of my constituents, who wrote to me about the state of the Murchison Highway and the impact that was having on people on the West Coast, who, as we know, have to travel the road continuously to access essential services. Those roads can be quite treacherous at times, and dangerous even in the best of conditions. We should be doing all that we can to make sure that the road network to the West Coast is in a good state and condition. I understand that there are still significant potholes right across the West Coast road network that need to be addressed by this government.

During our discussion across the table with the Premier, he could not really tell us what his briefing on potholes had led him to learn, or what he was going to do differently. He did talk about meeting with a range of stakeholders, about looking at the underlying causes of why the road pavement is deteriorating so badly across many of our major road networks across the state. It is not clear whether he has held that meeting. I suspect not, considering that he has been overseas on a trade mission. I would encourage him to do that. I for one would like to understand what he learns from that.

We will be doing our own consultation with those across the civil construction industry, and across local communities, about what they think needs to happen when it comes to the state of our roads. I think others have said in this place today about how often people are raising with me, and with others, about the state of the roads, about potholes, about what things used to be like under the Department of Main Roads (DMR), and about the quality of the hydro roads that were built years ago and how they have stood the test of time. People, quite rightly, have questions about the road network, the quality of the pavement used to seal our roads, and what this government is doing to improve road conditions for Tasmanians, given the fact that Tasmanians do a lot of travelling. We have a huge amount of freight that is transported across our road corridors right across the state that our economy relies on as well.

You only have to look at the comments that were on Facebook and in the local media from a whole range of people that utilise our road network about the importance of having no potholes. Where there are potholes and where people have damage to their car, there needs to be a timely response to that. We discussed that during Estimates with the Premier, and the staff from the Department of State Growth (DSG) outlined the process for that.

Even in more recent times I have had feedback from people in my local community that the time that it has taken for their application for compensation has been far too long. Some of the notice that was given to people with signage and the like was very poor, particularly of an evening. You can be right on a pothole, right in the deep dark of the night and you do not know. It can be incredibly dangerous for people, particularly on roads that are not as well-lit in rural and regional communities such as the west coast.

There is more work to be done when it comes to the state of our roads. We are certainly committed to improving our roads and making sure that the community get the opportunity to have input into that as well as the civil construction industry. I thank those who have worked tirelessly to fill those potholes. I think the Premier probably only filled one, but there are a lot of people around the state who have worked around the clock to make those improvements to the road, and I put my thanks on the record to them. It is not them we are criticising; it is the government.

The second point that we spoke about was about infrastructure spending. In fact, this government is spending less in the out years on infrastructure despite the claims that they are spending more. You only have to look at a couple of bridge projects that have been touted by this government now for many years - the new Tamar Bridge in the north, the duplication of Launceston's Charles Street Bridge, and the Tasman Bridge upgrades in the south. They have all been scaled back in the Budget. They are delayed indefinitely and in some instances I suspect they will probably be completely shelved.

It is not true for those on the other side of the House to say that they deliver on infrastructure. What they actually do is make big announcements, particularly at election time, about infrastructure that the community wants and needs. Then we see, as in the case of a couple of these projects, years have transpired since these projects were announced and still they are not built. We do not know when those projects will be funded or how they will be funded, or whether in fact they will be commenced at all through the tenure of this government. It is not true to say that you are delivering infrastructure, and it is not true to say that you are funding more across the forward Estimates. It is actually in decline.

I come now to the Devonport Port. This is an issue that is really important to me, as this absolute debacle affects people in my electorate. It not only affects Braddon; it affects the whole state. This was a project that we should have been so excited about. The new *Spirits* should have been fanfare. I know that people in my electorate, particularly tourism businesses who are doing it really tough at the moment, are eagerly awaiting an update from this government on when they can expect berth 3 to be able to accommodate a vessel, what is actually going to happen in the time between now and when that can actually happen, and whether the patch-up job is going to proceed at berth 1.

Many weeks ago - and we raised this during Estimates - the then minister for Infrastructure, Michael Ferguson, committed to a four to six-week timeframe for the Tasmanian people to be updated on what would be happening at the Devonport Port with both

berth options. That time has long since transpired, and we now know through what the Premier has updated the House with today and what was in the media previously that that report will not be handed down until Friday, which is outside the scrutiny of this parliament. There will not be any formal update to the Tasmanian community until the following week, which is when I suspect he will try his hand at yet another reset for his government.

That is not good enough. These are public assets: the most important infrastructure project, arguably since investment in the Hydro. The economic benefit that will be felt across our state from this project is palpable. Communities are eagerly awaiting the arrival of these new ships. There is a half a billion-dollar hit to the Tasmanian economy each year that they are delayed.

This is a monumental mess. When the former minister, Michael Ferguson, stood down from the Infrastructure portfolio and the Premier took on the portfolio, the Premier said that he was taking the reins. He was taking control of this project, and yet here we are, weeks on and we are no further advanced. Nobody has any more information. The Premier could not confirm during Estimates that berth 3 was going to be completed by January 2026.

We are all still in the dark and nothing has changed. I hope that the Premier does get on and do something this coming week, because that is what Tasmanians expect. We asked the Premier during Estimates and he did not like it very much. It was a pertinent question about his credibility with this project. After all, this is in his electorate. He has said that he is taking hold of this project, seizing it with both hands and getting it back on track, and that he is going to get the job done. He needs to get the job done and he needs to inform people immediately about what the options are with the Devonport berth and when, finally, these ships will be operational, and when the Tasmanian economy and the community can finally benefit from their activity and the economic benefit that they will bring to our state.

In Estimates, we also talked about the commitment to local content and the LNG infrastructure at the Devonport Port. I am no clearer about when that is going to be delivered. There was a lot of semantics during Estimates about that. Minister Abetz seemed to be a bit confused about the question when I asked him in his hearing. We are no clearer on that, and that is yet another broken commitment by this government.

That brings me to my home city of Burnie and the Burnie Port, which is crumbling like the state's roads. During Estimates, we asked the Premier about the safety of berth 4 at the Burnie Port and whether there are implications about agreements with Strait Link and compensation if anything happens and the wharf continues to deteriorate. Thankfully, there has been information provided that WorkSafe has done an audit. The Premier did not seem to be aware of that during Estimates, and it appears that they have signed off on the safety concerns and that there are no issues about the wharf.

However, the fact remains that that berth is in dire need of infrastructure investment. The Burnie port is heavily constrained. For years - I can think back to when I first started on the Burnie City Council - TasPorts has been talking about expanding the footprint of the Burnie port, making it less of a bottleneck and making sure we can get more activity on there by perhaps moving areas such as the wood chip pile to give more space for more activity.

The Burnie Port is such an important part of our economy. It is our connection to the world. It is the best deep-sea port in the state and arguably one of the best in the country, but it

needs investment. I hope that with his epiphany this morning about GBEs, the Premier sorts things out with TasPorts, because no matter where you look, whether it is berth 6 down here and the concrete cancer, and the risk that there is to us losing our identity of the entrance to the Antarctic and all the economic benefit that comes along with that status, this is serious.

You have King Island, where a bollard came loose, which disrupted an already fragile freight service to the island that has been very poorly handled from day one by this government. There are systemic issues across our ports that need addressing. These were some of the things that we spoke about during Estimates, but we will continue to put pressure on this government because it is critical to the state's economy and to our community. We are an island state and we need good investment in infrastructure at our ports across the state.

I wanted to say briefly that it was good during the Local Government hearings to hear the minister finally rule out forced amalgamation. He clearly does not have a plan to start addressing some of the bullying issues across councils and some of the poor culture that we are seeing in councils across the state. This situation is incredibly concerning, and acts in many instances as a deterrent to good people entering local government, which is what we should be encouraging. Local governments are a really important level of government across the state and we should be wanting people to be involved in representing their communities.

The working with vulnerable people checks were also ruled out, which was something that I was following up again on behalf of my constituents, who have put that to me a number of times as being a solution about some of the issues that have occurred in local government over recent times.

The government is still yet to provide a formal response to the reform paper that was handed down in October. I know through the work that I have done with local government that they are eagerly awaiting that response. There does not appear to be a lot of money in the Budget to start working with some of those councils that have indicated that they would like to work more strategically together. There are opportunities that are before this government that should be seized because there has been a significant shift across a number of councils who previously would never have wanted to work together or have had goodwill to work together.

My strong encouragement to the government is to actually seize that and work with them, and make sure that they are funded to look at what reform could be done across their councils, because it is too good an opportunity to miss. They are really dedicated, fired up and they want to work together.

It was good to see the minister rule out rate capping during Estimates as well. That is something that has been raised in the past. We talked about the recruitment of general managers. I understand the government is looking at and has put in place a number of policies and protocols about working with councils for the recruitment of general managers, and making that a more consistent process across the state.

In Small Business, I raised the issue of funding not being in the Budget for some previous programs that were provided, namely by the Braddon Business Centre. This has been raised with me by them. One matter was about one of the programs that was going to be continued, but only until the end of this financial year. The other one was more about the accelerator program, which assists existing businesses to grow. I thought that was something this

government wanted to see across the state, and that they would want to work with small businesses that have the opportunity to grow, create new markets and develop new products.

These are the small to medium enterprises that we should see grow across the state, and it is a shame that the government has cut this program. I understand that there has been further representation made to the government to reinstate this funding, but I put on the record that I think it would be good if the government did that. There has been no explanation as to why it was cut.

At a time when we are facing significant economic headwinds, we should be looking at how we nurture and support small business. If we see changes to industry, for example on King Island with the pending closure of King Island Dairy, it is small to medium enterprises on that island that would then be in a position to take on those displaced workers. We should be giving them every opportunity to grow.

I also want to talk about Skills and Training. It was a good session with the Minister for Skills and Training. It is disappointing that the government does not have the word TAFE in their ministerial responsibilities. TAFE is such an important institution across Tasmania, and I could not help but get the feeling from the minister on the day that he is not that enamoured with TAFE and does not perhaps think of it as positively as I would on this side of the House. Nonetheless, this government has made significant changes to TasTAFE, for better or for worse, depending on who you speak to. One thing remains: they made a commitment to employ 100 additional teachers. They have only employed 69. It is not clear whether they are still working towards the timeframe that they set themselves to employ those teachers. When we drilled down a little bit further to understand where those teacher shortages are across TAFE, they are predominantly on the north-west coast. When I asked the CEO of TasTAFE about what he thought was some of the contributing factors to why those teachers were not able to be recruited in the north-west, he cited housing as a significant issue. I thought that was interesting, given that the minister has the dual responsibilities for housing and TAFE under skills and training. It would be good if the minister could turn his attention to that and ensure that there are accommodation options available for teachers in the north-west. This would be a way of making sure that they can actually take on those positions and, most importantly, provide vocational education and training to young people across the northwest of the state, which is both of our electorates.

The other question that we raised was about the Renewable Energy Centre of Excellence that the government is talking about. There was a large amount of money that was available through the federal government for Centres of Excellence across each jurisdiction and we do not appear to have really taken full advantage of that. I noticed during Estimates that the minister said that this potentially could become a Centre of Excellence and at the last election, we committed to two of those. It is an opportunity that we should not miss as a state, particularly when we saw the decline in apprentices that was released in the national data just last week. We should be doing everything we can to ensure that we are encouraging young Tasmanians to take up vocational education and training in the renewable energy skills centre that was promised by the government at the last state election.

There does not appear to be a lot of detail about it and it strikes me as just another one of those things that they promised at the election but did not really have any idea about its formal function or when it would actually be operational in delivering training and skills to young Tasmanians. It just feeds into that whole narrative about their lack of preparedness about

renewable energy across the state and their inability to access the opportunities that exist for us as a state - for our economy and communities - from renewable energy and the number of proponents that are proposing developments across the state, which is stalled under this government. We are going to need a skilled workforce to underpin those industries and that is why it is quite shocking that they do not have a lot of details about this announcement that they made, which is now in their 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future.

The last thing I will talk about is the accommodation for TAFE across the state. This was something else that I raised. It is something that my colleague, Janie Finlay, through her work with the agriculture sector has raised, as well in the north-west. It is pleasing to see that there will be accommodation delivered at the Burnie campus, I cannot remember the exact date, but it was reassuring to know that there was a date. I have had constituents raise concerns with me about the Clarence campus, which we discussed during Estimates, and also the level of support that is provided to TAFE students when they are away from home, particularly from the regions. I had a young person's parent talk to me about this at the petrol station recently and it can be a barrier to people taking on vocational education and training if there are financial impediments to that. I want to see - we certainly had some measures in our policy that we announced at the last state election - the government focus on that, making sure that our students are much better supported when they are attending TAFE.

In summary, Chair, I think the Estimates process was good this year. We did glean some information and there will be some further things that we will continue to prosecute that came out of Estimates over the coming weeks and months. It is always a great opportunity to be across the table from the respective minister and try and get as many answers as you can. As we know in this place, on the track record of this government, that often can be pretty challenging. You only have to look at the *Spirit of Tasmania* vessel replacement program. The fact that if it were not for us asking questions from day one of the new parliament in this place about that project and the program of works that was scheduled or what should have been scheduled to occur, perhaps we never would have been updated at all.

Time expired.

[4.24 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS - Chair, I was pleased to appear before the Estimates Committee B for this House in relation to my portfolios of Police, Fire and Emergency Management, Housing and Planning, and Skills and Training. I was honoured to have been given these responsibilities. There is much work that has already been achieved and I look forward to continuing to deliver for Tasmanians in all these portfolios.

It is vital that we pass the Budget, not least because it is the mechanism by which we fund the 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, which is what the Tasmanian people voted on. It is important that that mandate is accepted and respected.

Listening to the contributions of the member for Braddon, Ms Dow, the confused nature of Labor's approach to budget management is again on display in this Chamber. It was on display in Estimates and on display when we had the Budget debate on the second readings as well. Literally one sentence rolls on from the other where they are first concerned about debt and then concerned that we are not spending enough. It is typical of the way this opposition has failed to get its act together over the last decade that there is no coherent plan about what they would do if they ever had the chance to sit on the Treasury benches.

It has been clear, contribution after contribution, and we saw it again in the Estimates process, that the other side of the House cannot figure out whether it wants the government to spend more or spend less. It cannot figure out whether the problem is debt or spending. It is telling, I suppose, because the plan Labor took to the election not only included \$4 billion of extra spending but also \$2 billion of cuts. Part of the problem when they stand up in this place is that there is no credibility behind them because they do not even agree with themselves, as individuals, from sentence to sentence. It is incumbent on the opposition to deliver an alternative budget where it sets out exactly how it is going to achieve \$2 billion of cuts, what exactly it is going to do to deliver an extra \$4 billion of spending but somehow have less debt. It is never clear how Labor is going to achieve that and, sadly, I think it is a reflection on the confusion of those opposite and a lack of strategic thinking.

Turning to the work of the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management (DPFEM), I will begin by acknowledging our amazing first responders. They go to work every day, or volunteer in our communities, without knowing what the day is going to bring, all in the name of keeping us safe. I acknowledge the dedication and personal sacrifice of our emergency services community and extend my sincere and profuse gratitude to every one of you. As the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, I have been inspired every single day by the ongoing commitment to serving our community demonstrated by our career and volunteer personnel right across the department.

Our government is committed to ensuring Tasmania is one of the safest places to live, work and raise a family, and to that end I was pleased to speak about the variety of important work carried out across the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management in our communities and for our communities. We discussed some of the initiatives in the Budget that will ensure our communities continue to receive diligent and timely assistance no matter where they are in the state. We highlighted that the Budget prioritises investment in frontline services to develop the capability of our people and makes clear that the Tasmanian government is committed to investment in our operational response capacity to keep our community safe.

It was an interesting discussion. I suspect that the member for Lyons, Ms Butler, was unable to pivot in her questioning when it became clear that, as we work through modest savings which we detailed in the Budget, we will be responsible fiscal stewards because that is what Tasmanians expect: that our focus is on ensuring the services provided by the department are done in an efficient manner, that we make the bureaucracy more efficient while continuing to grow our front line. That is clear in our commitment for 60 additional police in Tasmania, on top of our already record number of police and record number of police recruits on our parade grounds over the last 12 months.

It is clear with the strategy we outlined - and we had to correct Ms Butler's lack of understanding about the process - that we did not accept the initial advice from DPFEM regarding our efficiency dividends because we thought there were better ways to do it. I think the department's CBD corporate leases in Hobart offer an excellent example of how you can grow the front line as well as find savings at the back-end bureaucracy. We rent a range of different buildings across the city and, of course, pay for that. We have identified that consolidating those leases into a smaller number of locations will save significant funds, which will go towards our modest efficiency dividend. That has nothing to do with frontline services and is a clear marker of where we can find savings and efficiencies. It is backing the Tasmanian people because they pay the taxes for these services, while reprioritising to the areas of need Tasmanians expect, like investing in frontline police officers.

There are also clear savings measures in terms of reducing consultancy fees, advertising and travel, which I assume the opposition supports. However, it is always hard to tell when we have these discussions whether they actually believe their own supposed strategies. Labor proposed \$2 billion of cuts at the last election as well as \$4 billion of extra spending, some of it quite egregious and wasteful. Labor would have required the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management to find \$200 million of savings over the period we are doing our efficiency dividend, as opposed to the \$35 million proposed by the government.

That is the clear difference between us. We look to find modest savings focused on back-end services. When Labor is in government, including the last time it was in government with the Greens, it wastes money and then cuts hard. Labor's efficiency dividends then were a multiple of the ones we are proposing. The efficiency dividends Labor proposed at the election were multiples of what we are proposing now. That is part of the reason why the shadow treasurer lost his role. We are looking at a range of different areas, non-salary-related expenditure items including travel, transport, advertising, consumables and consultancy, for how we can do things more efficiently across government, ensuring that we are spending taxpayer money wisely. That is all good common sense.

I mentioned that cracking down on crime means we need more police on the beat. The Budget includes \$16.6 million to recruit an additional 60 police officers. That is on top of the positions committed in previous budgets. There are currently 30 police officer positions scheduled to be recruited over the next two years, which meets our 2021 election commitment. In addition, a further 10 growth positions are scheduled each year for the next six years. Tasmania Police continues to attract recruits despite a very competitive employment market, far in excess of our peer jurisdictions around the country, because people know Tasmania Police is one of the most respected organisations in our society. That is reflected time and time again where we see far higher rates of community satisfaction with our policing services compared to other jurisdictions.

It was interesting that the Greens spokesperson for police did not seem aware that her plan in her alternative budget was to cut police. It was something of an embarrassing conversation when she had to go back to her own alternative budget to see the deep cuts proposed by the Greens on these frontline services. I think it behoves all members of the Greens that if you are going to criticise the government for something, you might first want to check what your own policies are because you might find you have a plan to defund the police.

Since budget Estimates, we have welcomed another 22 new constables into Tasmania Police at their graduation on 4 October. Sadly, I could not be there for the first time since I became minister because I was sick. I know quite a number of people who graduated, including a young man who came through the JCP Youth program. We are so proud of the work of Will and the entire team there, who are really turning lives around and demonstrating the power of mentorship. There will be another graduation coming up very shortly in the coming weeks. We will also celebrate some very special four-legged graduates officially joining Tasmania Police. I am personally looking forward to celebrating the upcoming graduation of another recruit course later next month.

I was able to inform the committee about how our government has rebuilt Tasmania Police over the last 10 years, and the Budget ensures that our police continue to have the resources they need to keep Tasmanians safe. The government set a clear pathway to ensuring

that there will be more police next year than there were this year, and more police in the years to come than there have ever been.

An allocation of \$31.5 million is made to ensure the important work of our multidisciplinary arts centres for victim-survivors as a permanent service provided to the community, including provision for the establishment of a new facility in the north-west. I mentioned this morning the Family and Sexual Violence Command that we have established over the last 12 months or so that the art centres are a part of. There is also our sex offender register, and a range of other important services.

Speaking of that, the new Community Protection Offender Reporting Disclosure Scheme will empower community members to make informed choices for the benefit of their children and children across the state, with \$2.5 million committed to this important initiative. It is important that within government there are appropriate pathways to manage information for the protection of children. That is why the Budget delivers on a \$4.6-million commitment to ensure that the information sharing relating to children is timely and a whole-of-government approach for decision-making can be taken spanning departments and agencies.

There was a good discussion about the response to the commission of inquiry. Tasmania Police continues to be on track for all our recommendations to be delivered. In addition to that, there is important work in responding to the Weiss Review recommendations as they relate to Tasmania Police, and some whole-of-government work as well.

We are supportive of the work of Crime Stoppers. The Budget includes an additional \$160,000 over four years for them to continue their important work. I note the celebration of 30 years of Crime Stoppers and just recently, Crime Stoppers Week. One in three reports to Tasmania Police now come from Crime Stoppers, and it is a wonderful example of communities working with police to ensure that our communities are kept safe. We are focused on investing in Tasmania Police, investing in our police force, growing our front line and keeping Tasmanians safe.

We spoke at the committee about the work of the Tasmanian Fire Service (TFS) and the State Emergency Service (SES) during a busy year. Unfortunately, as is often the case with storms, fires, floods and significant weather events, we are only as strong as our people. I was pleased to provide further information about the DPFEM's nation-leading health and wellbeing program, which the Budget provides funding for of \$4 million a year. I pay tribute to Mr Ferguson, the member for Bass and former Treasurer, for this matter in particular. Tasmania is fortunate that we have been able to develop a nation-leading health and wellbeing program for our first responders - DPFEM staff, of course, but ambulance as well. I know his personal commitment and passion for the wellbeing of these amazing people. The program is critical in the delivery of proactive and preventive intervention measures for our emergency responders, and that includes career members and volunteers.

Looking back to when we came to government some 10 years ago, I spoke about the uplift for that program that we have seen and its important investment for the future. In August, we welcomed 24 new career firefighters who joined the ranks of the Tasmanian Fire Service. The graduation of this course puts the total number of career firefighters in Tasmania to 360. I was also thrilled to discuss the success of our TFS and SES volunteer recruitment, which saw a combined 590 new volunteers over the year. Volunteers are the backbone of our fire and

emergency services, and Tasmanians can be assured that we will not be resting on our laurels as we continue to recruit volunteer emergency responders.

Sadly, we are seeing declining rates in some parts of our country of volunteering in general. We are fortunate in Tasmania that we still have so many passionate people who want to make a difference in their local community and choose to do that as an emergency responder. No matter where you are in Tassie, we want you to have access to timely and diligent emergency services through the work of the State Fire Commission. We spoke at the committee about putting an additional day work crew of firefighters on the north-west coast, and additional field works offices in the north and south as well.

We shared an update with the committee about how we use technology to improve the way that we operate and provide better services to the community. An example of this is the online fire permit system, which went live this year as part of our 2030 Strong Plan. It makes it easier for our farmers and rural landowners to undertake fuel reduction burns across the state. I note Ms White in the Chamber and her family's massive personal commitment to ensuring that fuel reduction burning is happening across the south-east. A big thank you to all the work that they do down there. We cannot quite do enough burning for the White family, I think, but we will continue to try. I look forward to sharing future updates on the functionality of the portal as we go along. It has been very encouraging to see our rural landowners taking up the opportunity to register their burns.

The committee heard about climate change predictions indicating that rainfall and flooding events in Tasmania are more likely to become more frequent and more severe over the coming years. The SES work hard to improve the resilience of our communities as they adapt and respond to these risks. Flood mapping is an important piece of this work. It is jointly funded by the state and federal governments. It delivers a set of strategic maps that show current and future flood hazards right across the state. These inform statewide flood planning. An example of their success is the use in the most recent severe weather that we had in August and September. Predictive modelling can show where flooding will be, allowing it to target resources better.

I have to say as well, we have been intimately involved in the rollout of the Latrobe flood mitigation infrastructure, which is jointly funded by state, federal and local government. It is led by local government there in the beautiful township of Latrobe. Only recently, in the last few days, I was pleased to present the mayor with a Resilient Australia Award for that project. It is an extraordinary success of engineering and of community rallying around a challenge and investing for the future. It is some of the best return on investment you can find in any infrastructure or flood infrastructure, and is a hugely successful project.

Priorities in the Tasmanian Fire and Emergency Services space for the future include ensuring our volunteer and career first responders have access to the support they need so that they can better support Tasmanians. It is across the spectrum, from health and wellbeing right down to ensuring they have the right tools for the job, be it vehicles, tools, facilities or equipment.

I was pleased to discuss with the committee the Skills and Training portfolio, where we are supporting thousands of Tasmanians to get the skills that they need to build their careers. It has been another busy period for the Skills and Training Portfolio. We have been focused on making sure Tasmanians can access the training that they need to get a job. The Budget delivers

more support for TasTAFE, which trains more than 20,000 people every year, and continues our strong contestable training program that is delivering great outcomes. We spoke about the really strong progress since the TasTAFE reforms came into force.

An important milestone for TasTAFE as a whole, and its workforce, was reached in August, when the Fair Work Commission approved TasTAFE's Education Facilities Attendants' Fair Work Agreement. This approval follows enterprise agreements reached last year with general and teaching employees. Significantly, what this means is that all three employee groups, all of our workforce, have now transitioned to the national workplace relations system. That is allowing us to deliver more training. It is allowing us to meet the needs of more learners. It is also supporting us to pay our workers in TasTAFE more, regardless of where they are operating. It is ensuring that we have the flexibility to put the learner at the centre of everything that we do. This is a key goal for TAFE, and a key goal across our skills and training system.

We spoke about how the new teaching agreement has meant an uplift in delivering the equivalent of more than 20 full-time teacher equivalent staff. We were also pleased to talk about the decision we made to invest strongly in our facilities, including brand new spaces that have been opened in the last couple of years, including the Water and Energy Trade Centre of Excellence in Clarence, the Agricultural Centre of Excellence at Freer Farm in Burnie, and a new butchery facility and cyber security hub at Campbell Street. We have also got works underway at Alanvale, which I was pleased to share with the public recently, to deliver modern health training at a hub that we are establishing there, because we know how important these services are to our local community. It is the largest workforce challenge that we have; it is also one of our greatest opportunities. This project ensures that people of all walks of life can get the opportunities that they are looking for in a career in care, as well as a new student learning hub to make sure that students have a one-stop shop to access support.

We will also be delivering accommodation improvements in Burnie and Clarence, and in terms of equipment we were able to discuss the significant investments that we have made in TasTAFE through technology. We are in the market right now for new automotive equipment, including motor control boards, portable simulated engines, electro technology testing and verification boards that simulate faults that apprentices would come across in the field.

We were also able to share with the public recently new information about equipment and milling machines for metals at Devonport and Alanvale, new plasma cutters for Alanvale, Burnie and Devonport, a new state-of-the-art Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machine and training trailer for Civil Construction Alanvale so they can go out on site, and new equipment for TasTAFE's in-house hairdressing training salons, as well as a welding simulator, which the poor old minister of the Day had a go on. I did beat one of the apprentices, although I suspect probably I had a little bit of help on that one.

There is more to come, and we are seeing students responding to the opportunities available at TasTAFE. Enrolment activity for the second quarter this year shows overall enrolments are nearly 7 per cent ahead of the same time last year and about 32 per cent higher than in 2020, which was the COVID year. We will keep building on these successes as TasTAFE continues the transformation.

We have also had a good discussion about Jobs Tasmania and the important work that they do. We have now doubled down on our nation-leading jobs hub model secured through 2027 as part of this Budget, and we are working with the Commonwealth on what more we can do to support Tasmanians together.

We also have a new two-year workforce participation and training program, which will support local organisations to help vulnerable Tasmanians, including organisations like Dress for Success, and I acknowledge Mr O'Byrne for his advocacy for that wonderful organisation. There is also new funding available for an expanded High Vis Army, including plumbers and sparkies. We were really excited to see that partnership working well, including the other day when we announced the next steps in our \$4.3-million investment with the Civil Contractors Federation for our new Earthworks Academy at Quercus Park.

I am also pleased to talk about Tasmania's first ever youth job strategy, which is all about investing in our young people so that we can future-proof our workforce for years to come and ensure that our young people continue to be more productive and participate in the economy.

Moving now to the important area of Housing and Planning, I was pleased to discuss with the committee the significant government commitments in this space, including our delivery of 10,000 additional social and affordable homes target by 2032 as part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future. The Budget delivers a key focus of our plan, which is to deliver more housing options for Tasmanians. That includes \$500 million for Homes Tasmania to get on with the job of delivering more homes right across the spectrum.

The government's private rental incentive scheme enables the government to secure more private rentals at market price and provide them to eligible low-income Tasmanians at a reduced rent. That is a targeted, time-limited measure while we are seeing such low vacancy rates across our market. The 2024-25 Budget ensures Tasmania continues to be a strong, healthy and safe community, backing in our commitment to Tasmania's most vulnerable.

As I mentioned just this morning to Mr Garland in response to his important question, we are providing an additional 100 more rapid rehousing homes for women and children escaping family violence with \$1.5 million over two years. That is a tripling of the existing scheme, which is an important investment. Jireh House and McCombe House will receive a boost of \$1.2 million over two years. There is significant new support for homelessness services and ensuring that it is more than a roof over people's heads, but a wrap-around support. That is why the 2024-25 Budget delivers \$900,000 over two years to establish key development coaches at each Safe Space site to help Tasmanians overcome trauma and other barriers that can get in the way of finding and keeping at home. It is further supported by an uplift of funding in Shelter Tasmania by \$250,000. A big shout-out to those wonderful people for all the work that they do.

We were also pleased to discuss with the committee during the Estimates the important work of advancing our housing land supply orders. I was delighted to table two new proposed orders in this place earlier today, one at Penguin and one at Brighton. The *Housing Land Supply Act* provides a direct and efficient process for the rezoning of suitable government land for residential development and facilitates the provision of social and affordable homes. To date, our government has made 13 housing land supply orders across all three regions of the state, with more than 70 hectares of land, creating the potential of up to 1000 new homes. It is important that we continue to work on improving that. When we talk about cutting red tape in

the planning process, I include the *Housing Land Supply Orders Act* and I think that we had a good discussion about some of the quirks that maybe slow the process down, but there are opportunities for this House to address if so minded.

The subdivisions currently underway include Rokeby; 15 dwellings that will shortly commence; West Moonah; youth housing under construction at Newnham; an 11-lot subdivision at Devonport; subdivision works commenced at Huntingfield - there are significant civil works there too; and planning is well underway for housing at Romaine and Warrane.

We have also adopted a strategic approach to the identification of housing opportunities, enabling Homes Tasmania to complement rather than compete with the private sector in the residential land market. They are currently undertaking feasibility studies across a number of sites in all regions to a total area of about 80 hectares. Where appropriate, they will consider bringing these forward for rezoning through the housing land supply order process.

Housing land supply is only one of the levers that we will continue to pull as part of our 2030 Strong Plan. We are also making major investments including an additional \$20 million commitment for maintenance on social housing across Tasmania. That is in contrast to the \$90 million maintenance backlog from 2014 from the Labor-Greens government when they lost office. Since that time, our government has invested more than \$300 million in social housing maintenance. There is more to do and we recognise that. That is why we funded it in the Budget.

We have seen a significant uplift in our tenant satisfaction surveys. In the most recent period, the Homes Tasmania team's satisfaction rose from 73 to 75 per cent, but even more encouraging than that, we are seeing a big increase in the satisfaction for many of our community housing providers. They are now far exceeding the national average and that is important.

Deputy Chair, I know planning is an area that you are passionate about and I am very supportive and appreciative of your work as Parliamentary Secretary in this space. We continue to invest in the planning system. The planning scheme is well progressed with 25 of the 29 councils now operating under the single planning scheme, including some of our smallest like West Coast and Flinders and some of our largest like Launceston.

The Budget continues to invest in the State Planning Office with funding towards the review of our regional land-use strategies, which will be important for unlocking major new lands and housing developments across the short, medium, and long term. It is clear that our government expects the strategies to support development and growth across the state. We also expect the new regional land-use strategies in place during 2025 and we want to thank the State Planning Office for their important work with local governments around the state.

We also recently delivered the State of the Environment report and there was a good discussion about that. The government has delivered that and we are working through a response, but certainly there is discussion about new opportunities in data technology and a range of areas that we continue to use to monitor and measure our environment, so that, ultimately, we can manage it for the long-term interests of Tasmania, with regard for both jobs and the sustainability of our beautiful state.

[4.55 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE - Chair, I rise to speak on the Appropriation Bill and reflect on the Estimates process and the ability of members of the House to ask questions to ministers and departments in clarifying outputs and questions on various matters across the committees. As an independent member, I tried to go to as many committees and ministers as I could and I will talk about that later in my contribution.

At the outset, I acknowledge that this is an unusual time. The tumultuous events of the last few days have created a different approach and feel to debate concerning the Budget. Whilst we do not agree on a number of matters, I place on record that regardless of my view on the Budget, the work that was done to produce and deliver it, and the work that you do throughout a 9-12-month period after the last budget is handed down is a significant effort. Whilst acknowledging the difficulties of the last few days, I acknowledge the former treasurer, member for Bass, Mr Ferguson, for his contribution, notwithstanding our disagreements on a few of the matters that have been traversed in this House, it is appropriate for me to acknowledge his contribution in the formulation of the Budget. I do that.

The raging debate that has had the Tasmanian community focus not just on the Budget but about our government business enterprise governance and the costs to the state, the Budget, and the economy of a series of decisions by our government business enterprise and our state-owned companies, I reflect on the Leader of Government Business's views concerning my approach. I believe you referred to it as the nuclear option in terms of the boards of TT-Line and TasPorts and some senior management. I do not see it as a nuclear option. I see it as a demonstration of the parliament and the executive of government expressing its will and its view that they have not performed well.

There is only one position, or two people who have taken, as far as I can see, a penalty for what has happened. That is the minister himself - I believe that is justified - and Mr Grainger, who is no longer the chair of TT-Line. Everyone else is still in their positions when the decisions they made and the approaches they took led us to what is an absolutely disgraceful set of circumstances about key pieces of infrastructure. We do need to take action with these organisations. We do need to send them the message that what they have been doing and what they have overseen is completely unacceptable. The public need to see that there have been some consequences for their actions and the behaviour of those two government business enterprises, state-owned companies, TT-Line and TasPorts.

The lesson may not be learned if GBE boards believe that they can make decisions that damage Tasmania and do not act consistently to meet the needs of the Tasmanian community in terms of service delivery, what they are designed to do, and keeping the interests of Tasmania at heart. If they believe that decisions can be made without a consequence, then I suggest we may very well be back here semi-regularly, bemoaning the same kind of behaviour. I do not resile from those calls because the nature of the fiasco is so great that a great consequence needs to be paid by the people who are involved.

The Estimates process is a really important element of this parliament's work in assessing and being able to prosecute public servants and ministers on the decisions that they are wanting the parliament to endorse. The extra information, the budget papers themselves, are what they are and it is so much work that has gone on to not only create those documents, the budgets, the allocations and line items - we know that there is significant work below - it is the tip of the iceberg, arguably, in terms of the work of departments. Having that ability to ask those

questions and understand the thinking, the nature, the allocation, the timing and the scheduling of various commitments under this budget comparative to previous budgets and either election commitments or public announcements, it is a really important process.

I know there has been some debate about the worth of Estimates - maybe the structure of Estimates needs to improve but the very nature of us being in front of senior public servants and their ministers with the Budget papers and being able to ask questions is crucially important. It informs this House. We know that there is a fair bit of politics: there is always the old 'got you' moment that occurs in Estimates and I have been on both sides of the table. We know that occurs, but the vast bulk of the information that is elicited through those processes improves our approach, our assessment of the budget and the community's awareness of what is being invested. It is such an important part of this parliamentary process in this parliamentary year. Whilst I believe there does need to be some improvements - and there are other jurisdictions that structure their Estimates processes which elicit a greater level of non-political information, which is important - I think there is a better way that we can undertake those Estimates processes. Having said that, we have what we have and it is a very important part of the political process. I endorse that process.

In terms of the overall budget, we know that there are significant challenges facing the Tasmanian government in terms of how you provide sustainable services and how you manage ballooning debt. They are very complex and very difficult matters to work through. There is great concern in the community about the amount of debt that we have and through the process of the Estimates hearings, I do acknowledge there were various commitments made, but there is a definite need for greater clarity and a greater narrative about budget repair in a process which does not tank the economy and does not compromise service delivery. The austerity budget approach, the hardline budget approach that other governments took prior to COVID arguably damaged people's lives. It inhibited the ability of the public service to provide sustainable public services and actually did not end up in a stronger and better community. I argue that those who are arguing for significant cuts to the budget do so in the absence of fully comprehending the impact that it would have on service delivery and the state of the Tasmanian economy.

The Tasmanian government, comparative to other state governments in Australia, plays a larger role in the private economy and in the state's economy than any other state. Having a budget that significantly supports the Tasmanian economy, that does not create a shock - and I have been at the cabinet table where, and I think unnecessarily so, there were significant cuts made in the name of austerity effectively - that had a massive impact on the economy and a massive impact on morale and the culture of our public service and our public sector workers. Whilst it is not a binary choice, if there was a choice, I would say budget repair takes a long time. My critique is that while I do not support massive cuts to the budget, there is a lack of narrative and lack of a pathway for budget repair. The consequences of not repairing the budget over a longer period of time creates significant pressures on the government. It inhibits a government's ability to deal with shock. It inhibits a government's ability to deliver services because money is being diverted to interest payments. Having said that, governments should be able to carry a level of debt. Other states do it. The key is to make sure we get it right.

This year it seemed to me that some of the decisions were kicked down the road, so I am concerned about what the next budget will look like. Hopefully, there is a pathway back to a level of surplus, a pathway to a reduction in the state's debt, done in a sustainable way.

I was advocating publicly for a number of things in the lead-up to the Budget and I acknowledge the government's investments in really good community-building programs like Dress for Success, as the member who just resumed his seat mentioned. That is a fantastic program for women, enabling economic empowerment, ensuring women are the best they can be in heading to get a job, in job interviews, et cetera. These are good small community programs that make a massive difference to the lives of many people in our community.

I acknowledge the work of Ant Edler and the Bike Collective. Ant works in Risdon Vale, Rokeby and down in Huonville. The work involves diverting young people away from behaviours that are not only self-destructive but community-destructive, into a very positive, constructive program, learning how to repair bikes, building friendships, building better behaviours and finding mentors. The funding of that is crucial, particularly for those communities. It is a fantastic community model.

I also acknowledge the work of Em and all the team at Hamlet Cafe in terms of dealing with workers with disabilities and workers who face significant barriers to engaging with the workforce. I acknowledge that the government has supported a number of commitments for which I have advocated.

There was also the announcement about the rejuvenation and collaboration with philanthropists and not-for-profit organisations in the re-fit-out of Bethlehem House in Warwick Street, Hobart. That will get up to 50 women who are currently homeless and in precarious circumstances into a safe place very quickly. That is something desperately needed because we know many Tasmanians find themselves in very difficult circumstances. I welcome that investment. It is a smart investment.

It saves local, state and federal governments significant amounts of money when you invest in capacity-building and providing people with foundational moments in their life. Having a warm bed in a safe secure room, in an environment where they are able to get the support they need is not only supremely important for those individuals and their families, friends and loved ones, it is also important to divert those people away from other services which are far higher cost, more intensive and crisis ridden. If we can remove people from a crisis moment in their life, providing them with some security, hopefully we can wrap the services around them so that they are able to make decisions that make their life better, and they can get support in doing that. I acknowledge those investments.

During the week of the committee hearings, across committees A and B, I was able to ask a number of questions of various ministers. I raised the issues of the GBEs with the Premier, and my concerns about the lack of oversight and lack of, I suppose, responsibility being taken by the government for some of the decisions taken by our state-owned companies and GBEs. The Premier did say they needed a shake-up, that they needed to work in the best interest of Tasmania. The evidence to date has been to the contrary.

In terms of his Infrastructure portfolio, we talked about some of the delays to the South East Traffic Solution, and some of the challenges there. I put a question on notice and I received that today. I understand there have been some significant dollars paid to the Tasmanian Golf Club, which I will talk about more on a different debate in a different manner. I question why that kind of money is being paid to a golf course. It has had no impact on them at this stage, up until this point. We can talk about that at a different time.

I turn to my questioning in Committee A with Minister Abetz - the smart ticketing system just drags on. It was first announced in 2018. There are real questions about the implementation of that. I still think that there are significant concerns. It is a significant amount of money. I think there are better ways. I am concerned about the procurement process that was undertaken by the government to allocate what seemed to be an unsolicited bid with Cubic out of the Queensland system.

We raised the issue about the Derwent ferries. It was good to see some of the locations, but there has been some feedback about the process and consultation undertaken about where at least two of those ferry terminals were placed. You only get one chance to get this right, with the amount of money that is being spent on these terminals. If you get them in the wrong spot, if they are not near the people who need or want to use a ferry - and also the hub approach to getting public transport to and from the ferries for school kids, commuters, and entertainment and enjoying our waterway in the capital city - I worry about that. I raised those concerns with the minister.

There are a number of issues about bus services. These are governed by the Department of Transport. There are some really significant challenges for families with school buses, particularly in my electorate of Franklin, down at Geeveston and Dover. As a right, they should be able to get a bus for their kids to get to school, but because of the nature and the construction and the organisation of the bus routes, they are not able to. Families are significantly impacted, particularly down in Dover. There is a lack of access to a feasible bus service that is appropriate to get their kids to school on time. It is failing.

When you have economic growth, suburbs grow. Over the last decade or so, in another suburb, the Olive Grove Estate subdivision in Risdon Vale, their closest bus stop is a 15-minute walk down a hill. It would not take much for one bus stop to be put closer to the community. These things were raised with the minister. Hopefully due to the virtue of the fact that I raised them, there might be some change. I know the community is very engaged on that.

I was able to ask questions of the Minister for Energy and Renewables, and there were two elements of that hearing that concerned me. One was the lack of action and lack of clarity about when the next wind farm in Tasmania will be built. Many Tasmanians are very frustrated by the issue of energy generation and the process about landing wind farms, not only to contribute to a renewable energy network, but also to create economic activity. There seems to be a lack of will by the minister to really get engaged on that. I was concerned about that.

I also raised concerns with the minister about the behaviour of TasNetworks. He referred me to the scrutiny hearings in a few weeks. I very much look forward to asking questions of TasNetworks and some of our government business enterprises about some of their conduct and behaviour, disgraceful as it is, later in November or early December.

I was able to ask questions of Mr Street, the Minister for Sports and Events. I echo the frustrations of thousands of young athletes, particularly in the south of the state where facilities have been promised time and time again; and particularly the northern suburbs - multi-use basketball and netball and volleyball and futsal courts. It was interesting that the department at one stage said we had only taken it over 12 months ago when I knew that was not true. Thankfully, the secretary of the department corrected the record and said 'No, we took over the project back in 2021'. I was concerned that the instinct of the secretary was to pluck a date as opposed to inform the committee appropriately.

The lack of a strategy, the lack of an overarching infrastructure build for sporting facilities in the south was raised. It has been raised with me by people in the street who have young kids, particularly with the success of the Jack Jumpers, who play basketball at 11.00 p.m. on a Tuesday night or on school nights because that is the only time they can get on the court. That is unacceptable and to have that commitment, which was initially announced by the then premier Will Hodgman in 2018, to now only be in a stage where we think we know we have got the right spot for it, it is six years down the track. It is just completely unacceptable. I acknowledge, though, minister Streets' contrition on that and his acknowledgement that he is just as frustrated as we are. All power to your arms, minister, in trying to get those things built as quickly as you can.

I acknowledge the commitment to organisations such as Reclink who do wonderful work in our community, and I know the minister has a personal commitment and support for that organisation in the very important work they do. I was frustrated in Committee B in asking questions of the Minister for Housing and Planning, and I know we have a philosophical difference in terms of the role of Homes Tasmania. I believe it should be at the heart of Cabinet, not an external organisation. I know we have a review, and I acknowledge the minister for doing that work on setting up that review. The issue about the key worker accommodation was very frustrating for me, particularly whether it was appropriate for an organisation like Colony 47 or not is not immaterial, but it is not inconsequential to the consideration of using Homes Tasmania money to buy a former hotel to continue to house key workers for the Health department and the Health department paying close to \$600,000 - or I assume about that figure - a year to Homes Tasmania when we have a housing crisis - a youth housing crisis. Arguably, the main role for Homes Tasmania is to get people into housing: people who are in desperate need, young people, and the homeless.

It is anti-poverty week this year and the number of kids who are homeless in Tasmania every night is unacceptable. I am not saying that the minister is accepting of that figure and I understand that he wants to bring that down, but when you have an opportunity for an organisation to provide a facility to have Homes Tasmania outbid them, but then celebrate that it is a great win for the Health department but they are still paying rent to another government department, that just does not pass the pub test, in my view. The money that could have been used by Homes Tasmania for other matters is now being used to deal with an issue that is arguably the Health department's challenge. They could have potentially purchased it and the saving of rent and the saving of money that they pay essentially draws down and they have an asset. I think it does not pass the pub test and there are better uses of Homes Tasmania's money and efforts as opposed to dealing with the needs of other departments. I am not saying those other departments should not deal with those matters - they should - but each department and each organisation has a purpose and I am frustrated by that.

We found out during the hearing that Homes Tasmania was unsuccessful in winning any bid for their Housing Australia Future Fund, which is disappointing and I know the minister acknowledged that was disappointing, but it is yet another example of Homes Tasmania and the frustration people are having with Homes Tasmania. At the end of the day, those people in desperate need who are on the priority waiting list, not even the people who are probably worthy of a house but cannot get on the priority waiting list, they see these things happening and their frustration is increasing, and I think that is shared by the bulk of the community.

I also had the opportunity to ask questions to the minister for Health because I am concerned about the lack of a strategy for a mother-baby unit in the south of the state. There is

a high dependency psychological service that is being provided at the Royal and having phonelines and other kinds of services are good but we do need a proper functioning mother-baby unit in the south of the state.

It is unacceptable that the minister was unable to articulate a strategy apart from why we have a review going and maybe in two years we might have a service in the south. I welcome the fact that there is a service that has been established in the north of the state, but that does not mean that the capital city is without a mother-baby unit. That is unacceptable and I call on the minister and the government to take action because the data reveals that the referrals are up by 58 per cent for perinatal infant mental health services in Tasmania,. I do not think that is a coincidence. I do not think that that is an outlier figure disconnected to a removal of what was a very much utilised and loved service in the south that actually made a real tangible difference to the lives of mums, their babies and families.

I also raised concerns about what seems to be the institutionalisation of locums and agency staff and the fact that over many years this government and the department's preponderance to use short-term contracts, roll-over contracts providing an insecure kind of workforce in our health services has meant that people are not seeing a career in the Tasmanian Health Service as something desirable because there is no job security or certainty about it. We all know, as humans, we need a level of certainty when health professionals are making decisions. If it is a six-month contract, a 12-month contract, and they are not going to move states, they are not going to be able to have a level of financial security where they build roots into our community and stay here and build family and connections.

It is a legitimate strategy to top up. Locums and agency staff you top up, but when it now seems to be becoming such a fundamental part of our health services where people are choosing that as a career because of the money and because of the guarantees that these agencies have with providing health staff for our health services, it completely undermines the government and the department's ability to actually build a labour force that responds to the needs of the Tasmanian community and actually provides a health service where you not only have flexibility but you have stability in terms of career paths for people, professional development, and team-based care that is provided in all the different settings that our health services established.

It is frightening the amount of money that is being spent and when you talk to some people in the system, they go, 'Well, you know, we are where we are now and we can't just turn off the tap because the service will crumble'. We need to see change. You cannot have a system that is solely dependent and so heavily reliant on agency staff and locums. They are far more expensive and it undermines the morale of the team-based care that is provided.

Overall, I acknowledge the work of the parliamentary staff and Hansard in making sure those Estimates hearings and the *Hansard* reports are out in good time. They can be very difficult periods of time, a stressful time. I acknowledge the contributions made by all members, on both sides of the table. On the whole, it was pretty constructive.

I acknowledge the Deputy Chair, Mr Wood. It was a herculean effort to get through to the end of the week there, mate, and you were very patient with us and enabled the independents to have their fair say. I am not sure about the other committee; I do not want to reflect on the Deputy Chair, but I thank all members for being involved.

[5.25 p.m.]

Mr STREET - Deputy Chair, I welcome the opportunity to discuss this year's Budget Estimates hearings relevant to my portfolios of Finance, Local Government, and Sport and Events. At the outset of my contribution, I acknowledge the huge amount of work that goes on behind the scenes to first put together the state Budget, and also to prepare for the important scrutiny that follows. I thank the department and authority staff across all my portfolios for the work that went on to ensure that I was appropriately briefed and informed.

I greatly appreciated this preparatory work and those who supported me on the days of the hearings as well. In addition to my departmental staff, I also thank the team in my office for their support throughout the week. I have to say it was satisfying to reflect on the work that has been delivered in my portfolio areas.

When I took on responsibility for the Finance portfolio, I was acutely aware of the challenges that lay ahead in developing the 2024-25 Budget. As the Finance minister, I am conscious of the need to carefully balance the responsible management of the state's finances with the need to continue to invest in essential services and infrastructure and provide cost-of-living relief to Tasmanians. We all know that revenue from state taxation is an important source of funding for the government, estimated to be \$1.8 billion in 2024-25 and increasing across the forward Estimates.

I am also aware of the importance of providing relief through a range of targeted tax concessions and ensuring that this assistance reaches those in our community who need it the most. There are a number of initiatives in the government's 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future that are contained within two key pieces of taxation legislation that passed through the House earlier in the year. I take this opportunity to thank members of the House for their support of this legislation, which delivered targeted tax concessions, including stamp duty exemptions for first home buyers and pensioners, land tax relief and payroll tax exemptions designed to foster skills, create more jobs and help more Tasmanians into work.

During the hearings, I was asked about government grants and subsidies. I am proud of the fact that our government's payroll tax rebate scheme supports about 3300 apprentices, trainees and youth employee placements each year. The average rebate paid per employee for the period ending 30 June 2024 under the scheme was \$1741.

Ensuring more Tasmanians are able to own their home is critical, and I am proud to be doing my bit as the Minister for Finance for the 471 Tasmanians who received the first homeowner grant in 2023-24. Our Stamping Out Stamp Duty policy also ensures that first home buyers of established houses valued up to \$750,000 will pay no stamp duty on the purchase. This will save first home buyers up to \$28,900, making it easier for about 1500 young Tasmanians to get into the property market.

As Minister for Finance, I reiterated my commitment at Estimates to the implementation of a mandatory card-based system for electronic gaming machines as soon as reasonably practical. We are not waiting though. Under our 2030 Strong Plan, the government committed to a number of new poker machine harm reduction initiatives, including an increase in the frequency that responsible conduct of gambling training is required to be undertaken. During the hearing I confirmed I had recently issued a direction requesting the Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission implement a requirement that responsible conduct of gambling training be undertaken every two years instead of the current requirement of every five years. The

government will work with key stakeholders to implement this commitment to ensure responsible conduct of gambling training meets the needs of industry and helps to minimise harm from poker machines.

In my Local Government portfolio, feedback has been really important, as I have worked closely with the sector to prepare the government's response to the Future of Local Government Review. I note Ms Burnet has just left the Chamber, but she asked important questions about what the government is doing to ensure our council workplaces are safe. Let me be clear that every Tasmanian has the right to feel safe at work, and I am absolutely committed to working with the sector to eliminate poor behaviour and bullying at the local government level. Work is being done with local councils to ensure they have appropriate mechanisms in place to manage work health and safety risks in the sector, and this work is being completed in conjunction with WorkSafe Tasmania and the Local Government Association of Tasmania. This includes the development of guidance materials for councils and targeting legislative reforms to improve workplace safety.

We want to be able to attract the best possible candidates to stand for local government and ensure we have the mechanisms in place to provide appropriate support. It was a pleasure to attend the graduation ceremony at Government House last Wednesday night of the Pathway for Women in Politics Program. It is a really positive program. I also acknowledge that Ms Burnet raised at Estimates that we need to make sure that the workplaces that we are encouraging women into are safe and are fostering the appropriate behaviour. It should be easier and easier to encourage people to stand for local government.

We have a situation at the minute where we have a sector that is difficult to sell to people as a valuable sector to contribute their time to, but I am a very fervent believer in local government, having been a member of Kingborough Council before I got to this place. I know how important the local government sector is, and we want to be encouraging workplaces that encourage people to put their hand up to run for election.

Throughout the Future of Local Government Review, arguably the most talked about point has been in relation to council amalgamations. I was able to outline our government's plan to support councils that are interested in exploring structural reforms. Our plan will include the government walking alongside councils and supporting them to build a business case, including undertaking relevant studies to ensure the proposed amalgamation is in the best interests of both the councils involved and their respective municipalities.

Pleasingly, a number of councils have already approached the government seeking funding support to further investigate their amalgamation proposals. I look forward to working with these councils and their respective communities. During the review process, I have been incredibly impressed by the level of engagement, both from the local government sector and the community. It is vital that the reform proposed by the reviewer is delivered in a way which is collaborative and constructive, and has tangible community benefits.

I thank the sector again for their work and feedback throughout the review process. We are finalising our response and will be releasing it in the coming weeks. Like I did at Estimates, I acknowledge that the local government sector through this review process has had some pressure on it in terms of resourcing their responses and the work that they have contributed towards the review. That is why I was so pleased with their collaborative approach, but also so

appreciative of the time and effort that they have put into engaging with the state government through this process.

In the events space, I am also pleased to be continuing to support the events sector. I was pleased to share with the committee how this government provides funding to attract, retain and grow events that drive economic growth, tourism and jobs in every corner of the state. Events create excitement, entertainment and employment opportunities for Tasmanians. They also contribute to our sense of place, generate pride and promote participation. I was pleased to talk about Events Tasmania's Event Marketing Tasmania Grant Program, which provided \$260,000 to 34 events right around the state. I am advised that, due to the success of the Marketing Tasmania Grant Program, and to provide additional support for events during winter, this year we ran a special Event Marketing Tasmania - Winter Program, which funded a total of 11 events, worth just under \$100,000.

Events are incredibly important to Tasmania's visitor economy. Not only are they a trigger for visitors to travel to Tasmania, they also significantly boost our tourism and hospitality sectors.

During this section of the hearing, Mrs Pentland asked about the government's partnership with the Hawthorn Football Club, and if this partnership will be extended beyond the existing arrangement. I know, Chair, that it is something that you are interested in as well as a Launcestonian.

CHAIR - Very much.

Mr STREET - We know that our agreement with Hawthorn drives interstate and intra-state visitation to the north of the state, particularly during the winter months. I was able to advise the hearing that the government is committed to securing AFL content for Tasmania, and that we are in negotiations with Hawthorn to extend the deal.

To complement our investment in events such as the deal with Hawthorn Football Club, the Tasmanian government committed to a major redevelopment of UTAS Stadium worth \$130 million dollars, comprising \$65 million from the Tasmanian government matched by \$65 million from the federal government. This redevelopment will deliver new and improved player, staff and spectator amenities, increased seating options, including additional accessible seating, and better spectator experiences, with new seating closer to the playing field.

Once complete, it will provide enhanced economic outcomes for Launceston and the region by enabling the attraction of more elite sporting and other events to northern Tasmania, as well as supporting the entry of the Tasmanian Devils into the AFL.

Speaking of stadiums, there is no doubt that the Macquarie Point Multipurpose Stadium is a game-changing infrastructure project for our state. As social infrastructure, it is important to note the impact it will have on the economy, the jobs it will create and the positive benefits it will bring for businesses and experiences by attracting more visitors and events to the state.

During construction of this project, it is expected to add \$269 million to the Tasmanian economy over five years and create thousands of jobs. Once operational, about \$30 million is expected to be added to the Tasmanian economy each year and it will support just over 200 jobs on an ongoing basis. This is a significant contribution to Tasmania's economy.

During the hearing, I reiterated the government's commitment of \$375 million into the development of the multipurpose stadium at Macquarie Point. The remaining funding will come from the federal government, the AFL and be raised through private sector investment. We have been very clear from the start that we are considering a variety of options for partnering with the private sector and we will choose an approach that delivers the best outcomes and value for Tasmania. We know there is interest from the private sector and we will continue to progress down this pathway. We have a unique opportunity to deliver something very special at Macquarie Point for the people of Tasmania and we are getting on with the job.

While our plan for Macquarie Point understandably took up a lot of time at Estimates, I was pleased that we were also able to talk about a number of other areas in sport that clearly demonstrate our commitment to getting as many Tasmanians as possible involved in the sport and active recreation pursuit of their choice. I was asked about the performance of the Tasmanian Institute of Sport (TIS), which currently supports 224 athletes across various levels of targeted assistance, including 68 high performance athletes. The TIS provides a vital service to the Tasmania sporting landscape, identifying young athletes with potential, nurturing their talent and guiding them all the way to the pinnacle of their chosen sport. This government is proud of the performance of the TIS, which was reflected in the 11 Tasmanians who competed at the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris, where Tasmanian athletes finished with six medals. Swimmer Max Giuliani was a terrific example of an athlete who received support from the TIS through his development from a young age, and although he is now based interstate, we can rightfully claim his bronze medal in the 4x200m relay as one of the TIS success stories.

Just on a personal note as well, it is been pleasing in my three years as minister for Sport to see Max's progression through the sport, attending both long course and short course state championships up at the Hobart Aquatic Centre. One of the jobs that gets given to the government representative is to present certificates and medals for the previous year. I remember meeting Max as a 15-year-old, who was about a foot taller than me even at that age, coming up to receive a stack of certificates and medals, and it was clear that he was going to be a star. That is exactly what he has become and, like I said, even though he is now based interstate, it was a pleasure to catch up with him in Launceston at the welcome home for the Olympic athletes. I know that Max appreciates everything that Tasmania did for him and I believe it was only the move of his coach interstate, who was based in Tasmania, that Max made the difficult decision to move interstate to go with his coach as well.

The TIS can also boast of its contribution in terms of support, releasing its cycling coach Matthew Gilmore to serve as AusCycling's bunch race coach in Europe for an Olympic training camp in the lead up to Paris. That is an indication of the calibre of the coaches who work with our Tasmanian athletes. I am also pleased to report that our TIS coaches are currently working with 81 athletes through the TALENT ID FOR 2032 program, which is seeking to uncover local sporting talent with the aim of developing athletes for the 2032 Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games. No doubt once Brisbane comes around, we will again clearly see the fruits of the labours of the dedicated team at the Tasmanian Institute of Sport. I very much doubt that I will be the minister for Sport at that time, but it is good to see that the TIS is working not just for the now, but for the future as well.

This government is also committed in ensuring sport is accessible to those who will only ever dream of Olympic selection though, and it is something that I am really passionate about as Minister for Sport. In this Budget, we have provided an additional \$250,000 per year for the

next three years to deliver an expansion of the Ticket to Play program so that it can be available to children and families who receive the Family Tax Benefit Part A supplement in the previous financial year. It is estimated that an additional 2500 more families will be eligible to access two vouchers worth up to \$100 each to go towards club membership and registration fees through this initiative. Ticket to Play is of course available for traditional sports like football, basketball, netball, cricket and soccer, but since its introduction we have also made sure to add activities along the way. Circus School, which I attended down at Kingston at the Kingborough Sports Centre one afternoon, fencing, jujitsu and underwater hockey have all been included, as well as the Learn to Swim program, as part of a continuing review and improvement process for this program.

The Budget also includes a \$1 million commitment over two years to pilot a program for older Tasmanians which, in consultation with the Council on the Ageing, we have called Ticket to Wellbeing. I know Mr Jaensch is very supportive of this program as well, as the Minister for Community Services. The idea behind the program is for Tasmanians aged 65 and over who have a valid Services Australia healthcare or pensioner concession card to access \$100 vouchers to help them be involved in healthy activities. The guidelines for Ticket to Wellbeing have recently been released and Active Tasmania, within the Department of State Growth, is currently asking activity providers who want to register for involvement to get in touch so that the vouchers can start being used in the new year. Ticket to Wellbeing will no doubt help more people get involved in traditional sports but it will also be available for wellness activities like balance classes and yoga.

As I have said from day one as the minister for Sport, the last thing this government wants is for finances to be a reason for anybody to not be able to access sport in this state. It is why we are as proud of the Ticket to Play program and its success as we are, with some 12,000 vouchers in the last financial year, I believe. It is also why we are so proud of the introduction of Ticket to Wellbeing, and look forward to seeing its success in the new year.

This ties into another issue I am passionate about and that is encouraging Tasmanians who might not necessarily have the chance to access sport and active recreation through traditional avenues to get out and be active. This Budget provides funding for the likes of ParaQuad for its physical disability sports program and Reclink for its programs for Tasmania's most disadvantaged people. Mr O'Byrne, in his contribution before me, was talking about Reclink as well and I know how much he believes in the Reclink program. There is also money for Working It Out for its work to support the LGBTIQ+ community access sport.

The government's commitment to building a new indoor courts facility in Glenorchy was raised in both committees. I am happy to reiterate today that an announcement on the preferred site of this project is imminent. It will deliver four new indoor courts for the northern suburbs of Hobart, providing this rapidly growing region with a facility that will cater for basketball, netball, volleyball, futsal and other indoor sports. I put on the record in both committees my understanding of the frustration of the people of the northern suburbs for the delay in this project. There were some good reasons why we made the decision, as I said in the committee, to try and deliver a joint project at Wilkinsons Point with the JackJumpers' high-performance facility. Unfortunately, that has not proved possible. As I said, an announcement on the preferred site for this project is imminent.

In conclusion, I can confidently say that this Budget includes benefits for the Tasmanian people across all my portfolio areas. It is a careful and considered budget that delivers real

cost-of-living relief and takes action on the things Tasmanians care about, like health, housing and education. It outlines our plan to chart a responsible pathway to surplus by 2029-30, consistent with our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future. I commend the Budget bills to the House.

[5.43 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Chair, I rise this afternoon to speak on the Appropriation Bills. I start by acknowledging and welcoming the Estimates process and the work that went into establishing the schedule. There was significant negotiation across the Chamber amongst staff and others to come to the arrangement we did with regard to the times for various ministers and portfolios, and adding an extra day. I acknowledge the work that went into that because scrutiny of the Budget and the expenditure of taxpayer funds is an important process of this House, and it is important that Budget Estimates be conducted fairly and squarely. That does not mean we get all the answers to our questions. We were regularly frustrated with the level of information, obfuscation, deferral and delay, and the like. However, we had the opportunity to ask the questions and we did get significant levels of answers, which is important.

I acknowledge the work of our team in particular, in helping us prepare questions and ensure we were across our portfolios. I know there is a power of work that goes into everybody's contribution to the Estimates process, and that is not just done by the members themselves. Thank you to our team for your work in helping to prepare our questions and analysis, and riding us hard through the process.

I also extend that acknowledgement to the secretariat of the committees and the chairs of the committees because they have to track our work, follow up on questions on notice and make sure we actually get what was agreed to be delivered. To all involved in making these Estimates happen, thank you very much. I appreciate your efforts.

When it comes to Treasury and Finance, and the Budget, any budget a government delivers is a set of choices, a set of priorities and a set of what that government fundamentally believes in. When it comes to this Budget, it was framed as a budget of our times. It was theoretically anchored to a so-called Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future. However, I think what has been demonstrated by the *Spirits* debacle is that the government does not really have a plan. It does not have a plan at the micro level, when it comes to the *Spirits*, and when it comes to the Budget, I do not think it has a plan at all. While this was described as a budget of the times, it is really a set of cuts dressed up as savings. It is efficiency dividends, it is vacancy control, it is a bunch of measures that cut hard in places where they should not that will ultimately hit the services Tasmanians deserve, expect and want.

Quite rightly, unions, some in the community sector and others across our community more broadly were outraged with the set of priorities and choices this government took forward through this Budget. We have had some data on that through the EMRS polling. I heard Mr Willie run through some of the statistics that have recently come out in terms of consumer sentiment, public sentiment when it comes to this Budget, and it is very negative. The hits and impacts of this Budget have not been lost on the public. In part that is because the contrasts are so stark. We have a stadium at Macquarie Point. Everybody knows it is a billion-dollar stadium but, irrespective, it is attracting hundreds of millions of dollars in this Budget. Meanwhile, Health, Education, Housing and other departments are being impacted by the vacancy controls, the cuts, efficiency dividends and the like.

I also point to the fact that the debt levels are incredibly alarming. It was welcome to hear the Leader of the House, Mr Abetz, acknowledge that debt is a problem and that the government needs to 'get the debt issue under control'. The level of debt escalation is truly alarming when it comes to this Budget, with \$5.4 billion in the coming year. This debt is something Saul Eslake, in his independent analysis in the lead-up to the Budget, described as 'entirely the result of conscious decisions to increase spending and cut taxes'. It is a profound level of intergenerational tax that we are passing on to our children, not least because that \$5.4 billion actually rises to over \$8 billion in the forward Estimates. That is \$8 billion we are committing to our children into the future to pay for the excesses, decisions and choices we make today.

Part of those choices include pork-barrelling: the \$1.3 billion in election commitments, including community grants. We are highly critical of that process, as is the Integrity Commission and others. We are not critical of the claims from those community groups. Of course, those community groups do good work, require public support and deserve public support. However, there needs to be a proper, open, and transparent process about how those groups are funded and how these election commitments are made.

I have been quite alarmed, to be honest, at the hyperbole coming from the Liberal government when it comes to the Labor Party's proposition, which is incredibly welcome, to establish some kind of process about election commitments. It is fundamentally important. At the time of an election, no one is elected to the parliament. The hullabaloo that this government makes about unelected officials making decisions on behalf of the public is simply false. What we are seeing with the Liberals and their pork-barrelling when it comes to the election commitments is unelected apparatchik in the party and/or candidates running for election, making decisions about who gets funding, then trying to leverage public support, exposure and, as a result, votes out of those decisions.

The Integrity Commission have been abundantly clear about this as a process. They have described it as indirect electoral bribery. We do have to do something about it because not only does it mean that those decisions are not necessarily fair and equitable, but it may also be loading up that debt level going into the future.

I mention and congratulate Dr Woodruff for the Greens' alternative budget. It was good to hear the leader of government business, Mr Abetz, talk about opposition parties sitting in the stadium and not wanting to have a go. We did have a go. We put our alternative budget on the table and we are abundantly clear about what we would prioritise in a future Greens government and what we would not. There are some fairly profound decisions in that that I will come to in a moment. A pathway to surplus: again, Mr Abetz talking about a pathway to surplus. It is simply impossible to visualise a pathway to surplus in the next term or two of parliament, especially when we are investing such a significant amount of money into a project like the stadium.

Coming to Finance, I will talk about the increase in income generation. Saul Eslake identified this as something the government should be doing in the lead-up to the Budget: Raising royalties for mining companies, increasing the levies on fish farm companies and the like so that we can increase the revenue that is coming into the budget coffers. That has not been a decision of this government. We still see this government handing out mining royalties and leases at below the national average. We still see fish farm companies taking advantage and despoiling our beautiful marine waters and not paying their fair share for that privilege at

the end of the day. It is not good enough. We should be raising more money and through these kinds of initiatives and it is high time the government took on the advice of people like Saul Eslake who floated a number of different opportunities for revenue generation in this state.

In the Finance portfolio, I had the opportunity to push the minister, who has just resumed his seat, Mr Street, quite hard on the mandatory precommitment card. It was a recommendation that was embraced by government and that was very welcome. We are deeply concerned that the government is intending to walk away from that. We know the Tasmanian Hoteliers Association has been strong in its condemnation of the Liberal government for its decision to go ahead with a mandatory precommitment card. For example, the spokesperson for the association said, 'Mr Ferguson's decision was made with zero consultation with industry, zero consultation with Electronic Gaming Machine (EGM) manufacturers, and, more importantly, zero consultation with his own party'. He has been abundantly clear that these precommitment cards are a problem. They are a problem for the Hoteliers Association. It is going to cost their members money because it is going to reduce harm in our community. We pushed Mr Street hard on his and the government's commitment to those cards. He reiterated that commitment and that is very welcome, but we will continue to ask the question. We understand the Premier's met with the Hoteliers Association. We understand that a commitment has been made that that card will not proceed and we are going to watch and ride that issue very hard.

It was disturbing as part of that debate and that line of questioning to hear that the community support levy, which is imposed on gambling providers had unspent funds of \$1.2 million: 25 per cent of that was supposed to go to sport and recreational clubs, 25 per cent to charitable organisations and 50 per cent is supposed to support problem gambling. Yet, under questioning, we hear that levy, which is \$4 million plus, had \$1.2 million unspent. That is just unconscionable: 50 per cent for problem gambling. Why is this government not stimulating and encouraging applications and making it very well known to community organisations and others that are assisting with problem gambling that that money is unspent, that money is available and it should be taken up. It is absolutely unconscionable that that money remains unspent.

The stadium is writ large in this budget. Anyone who hits a door and talks to our punters or is at the shows or at other events, people see the contradiction between cuts and a stadium. It was very good to be able to interrogate the minister for sport and recreation about the stadium. The saga of the *Spirits*, the ferry fiasco, to me presents a very interesting correlation with the stadium. Here are the ferries, no one opposing it, no controversy about it, everyone supportive of those ferry purchases and everyone supportive of a wharf to be built so that they can actually berth. Yet, it has been completely mishandled and completely muddled. We have a stadium, highly contested, controversial, people will fight it along the way and this government keeps claiming that it is going to deliver it on time, on budget and to a standard that is going to be actually acceptable - it is really laughable.

The Budget was followed really closely by the release of the Project of State Significance documents, but really at the end of the day they raised more questions than they actually provided answers. To my mind, they provided the Tasmanian Planning Commission everything it needed to say: actually, there is not enough information here to be able to approve a stadium, but there is certainly enough information to be able to demonstrate that it should not go ahead. One of the examples that I pressed the minister on was the cost benefit analysis of the stadium. We asked him really closely, and the former treasurer, as to whether they thought, in a cost benefit analysis, if a stadium was not to be built, do you think it is acceptable that the alternative

is the site remains vacant? That is exactly what the cost benefit analysis says: if no stadium is developed, the site remains vacant and undeveloped. That is just completely laughable, not least because there was already an approved master plan for that site.

In fact, in the middle of the year, 20 June 2022, the Premier and the then responsible minister, Guy Barnett, issued a media release saying Mac Point was moving to full development stage:

The Mac Point development provides a significant one-time only opportunity for Hobart and Tasmania. The development is estimated to be worth \$1 billion and will support almost 10,000 jobs during construction alone.

That is not for the stadium. That was for what was approved and agreed to beforehand. That was for housing, a truth and reconciliation park, an extensive Antarctic precinct and a range of other community benefit and urban renewal issues there. That was one of the documents that has been released as part of the Project of State Significance process.

We also asked the minister whether he would reinstate expectations of the Macquarie Point Development Corporation that they act appropriately when it comes to commercial activities. The ministerial statement of expectations before the stadium was announced versus the one after the stadium was announced was that this statement was dropped. The statement states that the minister expects the corporation to only carry out commercial activities that are consistent with the corporation's principles, objectives and functions, appropriately costed and carefully managed and compliant with the government's competitive neutrality. Why on earth would a minister drop those expectations of a company when it is about to build a billion-dollar stadium unless it did not expect or want it to have to comply with those expectations? That is why we are deeply concerned about the stadium and that is why scrutiny of the stadium needs to be very strong, hard and consistent.

One of the reasons that got us looking even closer in relation to the ministerial statement of expectations is: why on earth would you drop the requirement that the corporation act consistently with its principal objectives and functions? If you go back to the *Macquarie Point Development Corporation Act*, you realise that one of the principal functions of the Macquarie Point Development Corporation is actually to develop the site, including a corridor allowing transit through the site by means of public transport. Under questioning, the minister and the CEO of Macquarie Point Development Corporation could not point to any public transport corridor through the site. The best they could do was point to part of the paved Aboriginal Informed Cultural Zone and that is described in the Macquarie Point Development Plan or precinct plan as an access road to the Northern Access Road, so it does seem that a Macquarie Point Precinct Plan has been approved and finalised. That is fundamentally inconsistent with its own act.

There is unfunded elements of the plan that have been revealed as part of the Project of State Significance (POSS) documents and we had to understand this a little bit better when we came to scrutinising the minister. The Goods Shed is unfunded, the catering elements are unfunded, the advertising screens, the AV, and the carpark were unfunded. When we added up the total unfunded cost of this stadium, it comes to \$830 million and then, as has been mentioned elsewhere in this House today, there are unplanned and other unfunded elements that are not even part of the POSS application, things like Rapid Bus stops, the Northern Access Road, the Collins Street Bridge, coach parking on the Domain. These are all critical safety or

enabling infrastructure for the stadium, but they are not in the POSS documents, they are not part of the government's commitment of \$775 million and they seem to be utterly hanging out and hanging in the breeze and yet they are described as critical safety and enabling infrastructure.

I want to pick an example. This is one of the examples that we managed to extract out of the minister during questioning on the Macquarie Point Development Corporation: the coach parking on the domain. The transport concept in the final development plan for Macquarie Point basically says, 'The overall stadium transport concept for site operation is outlined below ...' that it includes, 'Queens Domain is the preferred area for drop off, parking and pick up with a walking route available via the Bridge of Remembrance.' We had not heard of that before. We had not heard about the Domain drop off and Coach Point and this is going to add about 2 per cent. This is going to have to facilitate about 2 per cent of the crowds. I asked the CEO of the Macquarie Point Development Corporation exactly where that drop off point is and she could not answer. Here is the letter that came back on notice.

The Queen's Domain is identified in the Mac Point Precinct Plan as a preferred coach drop off and pick up location in acknowledgement of its close walking proximity to the Macquarie Point site. The specific location at the Queen's Domain has not been explored and will be determined in consideration of and consultation with other users in the area.

This just came to us last week. We have a finalised precinct plan; we have a critical piece of infrastructure that is proposed in that precinct plan to deliver people to the stadium and the specific location has not even been explored. The government does not own that land, let alone whether it is going to be assessed.

The final thing that I will raise regarding the stadium are the cost estimates because really no one has believed the \$715 million, which is now \$775 million. There was a critical quantity surveyor document that was missing from the information - the POSS information - and under questioning we finally got a brief cost breakdown which adds up to in total \$774,905. Yes, just under the \$775 million excluding GST.

The \$775 million commitment from the state government and potentially even the \$375 million cap is actually excluding GST, so you can add 10 per cent to most of that. I do not know which bits maybe GST exempt, but you can add significant bits to that, so there are significant black holes when it comes to the stadium.

We are in the process now. The Tasmanian Planning Commission (TPC) is going to assess this stadium, but it seems to me to be the greatest risk to the AFL team. The stadium condition in the AFL deal was always the greatest risk to the AFL team because no one could agree to a stadium: not Premier Rockliff, not minister Street, nobody. It really would seem to be time for this government to be doing some contingency planning, some Plan B planning about what happens when the TPC knocks off and says 'no' to the stadium. How on earth do we keep the team? We want a team, we need a team, we deserve a team and we have stadiums where they can play footy. How do we work with the AFL to ensure that we can still get a team when this stadium is proven to be unviable, un-fundable and utterly out of reach for a state like Tasmania?

Finally, Mr O'Byrne touched on this and Mr Shelton also asked a Dorothy Dixier about this, I was also keen to explore and have been talking to Dicky Allanby. He was welcome to hear and see the Reclink's commitments in the Budget and the minister confirmed them to Reclink. I have been talking to Mr Allanby and you know they run such a good program that it is really critical that program continues.

Deputy Chair, I had the opportunity also to interrogate and ask questions of the Environment minister. The Department of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) has significant efficiency dividends that it needs to soak up \$1.7 million, \$3.4 million, \$5.1 million across these next three years. The question is: where do the cuts come from and when it comes to these efficiency dividends, I take a moment to acknowledge departmental staff who are going to have to be doing the work on where these efficiency dividends are going to be made. That is no easy feat, working out which of your colleagues do not get replaced, which of your colleagues have to pick up other work.

The State of the Environment report was released just the week after the Budget. That was very welcome, but it did not come easily. It took some pressure, but it paints a very dire picture. Indicators show that there is a decline in 16 of the 29 categories and forestry is listed as a pressure in 88 of the 29 indicators. The government's commitment to implementing and funding the recommendations is absolutely critical. We absolutely need government action to protect the environment. We need government action to commit to protecting and restoring ecosystems because as Dr Woodruff articulated in her contribution, we are in a biodiversity and climate crisis. We do need to make sure that these species are safe and have places to go to.

\$2 million for threatened species was allocated in the Budget. We have 680 threatened species. That is \$3000 per species. It is negligible. It is not going to make a difference and paying for active breeding programs such as for the Maugean skate are utterly vain exercises unless we ensure that they have a viable wild habitat to release them into. That comes down to dealing with issues such as fish farming in Macquarie Harbour.

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) released a report just in the last days and the Wilderness Society and The Tree Projects have released something similar that highlights the incredible impact on wildlife of human activity around the world and when it comes to the local organisations here as well, and we saw just during Budget Estimates, or just before Budget Estimates, the minister pointing to the private land sector and the action that it was taking to protect the swift parrot, 260 hectares of conservation governments. That is really welcome. That is really welcome that the private sector is stepping up and protecting habitat, but it is public land that is being logged that has habitat of the swift parrot on it. It is only government that can actually take action to protect the swift parrot habitat on public land and, indeed, the government's own recovery plan is calling on the government to take that action. It has specific actions in the recovery plan to identify and protect remnants of state and Commonwealth owned land in areas of habitat critical for the survival of swift parrots. That includes public land to protect them from Forestry Tasmania.

Similarly, the State of the Environment report highlights that the reserve estate should be expanded. The commission recommends the Tasmanian Government expand Tasmania's terrestrial reserve system where necessary to provide greater protection for underrepresented ecosystems.

It is abundantly clear the government needs to heed these warnings if we are going to protect these species. Minister Abetz talked about the \$600,000 for the Kunanyi Review. This is a thinly disguised pathway to a cable car. The Premier made a promise in a State of the State Address a few years ago to create a pathway for the cable car. Minister Abetz talks about a balancing act when it comes to kunanyi. The Wellington Park Trust receives less than \$400,000 every year to help manage that land, but this government is willing to give \$600,000 to an internal review that is all about getting up a cable car. We are deeply concerned, as are many in the community who have battled the cable car on kunanyi/Mount Wellington.

I will flag an issue here that we did not get to talk about in Estimates - something that we need to be mindful of as we go into this season with migratory birds coming, which is: how prepared is Tasmania for bird flu? How prepared are we for the epidemic that could well come?

I had an opportunity to question minister Ellis about homes. We ran through the fudged figures in terms of vacant land and crisis accommodation being counted as social housing, and we unpacked that. It was revealed that Homes Tasmania has been unsuccessful in any Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF) funding applications. It could not demonstrate that it had the projects of interest that met the criteria. This is deeply concerning, not least because that is the kind of money that we need to build houses as opposed to borrowing. The interest-bearing liabilities of Homes Tasmania blow out to \$720 million. It is only a couple of years old, and it is going to be \$720 million in a few years' time.

The social housing wait list and wait times are still at record levels, and the dashboard appears to have changed, which makes it harder to track some of those issues. We desperately need to take more action when it comes to housing, including policy actions, not just building more social and affordable homes. We need to take policy actions to control rents, to end no-cause evictions, to ensure that there are minimum standards of efficiency in houses and to rein in short-stay. A 5 per cent levy on short-stay really is tinkering around the edges.

I acknowledge my federal colleagues and the national conversation in this space that is going on at the moment about negative gearing and capital gains tax. It is very welcome that that conversation is finally happening.

In the education and training space: there has always been much discussion about Tasmania's education results, year 12 retention and National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). The government has finally agreed to a review, and the Bayliss Review is coming. Department for Education, Children and Young People's (DECYP) efficiency dividends are \$13.5 million, \$27 million and \$40.5 million. During Estimates, the Better and Fairer Schools deal was released, but we noticed that there are significant concerns from unions about it. They point to a loophole where four per cent of that money actually goes into other elements, not just funding schools.

I raised questions about Aboriginal education workers, some of the most vulnerable workers in our community, who are on annual contracts working in our schools with Aboriginal students. It is simply not good enough, and the government needs to do more about looking at it.

Last, unions have made sure that violence in schools is a really key issue going forward.

On the energy front, the Joint Select Committee had a recent field trip that was really useful, but we asked questions in Estimates about Marinus, and the risk that was contained and articulated in the Budget in relation to Marinus. Peter Gutwein identified that Tasmania should pay no more than 10 per cent of the costs, because it would not get more than 10 per cent of the benefits, and yet we are owning 17 per cent going forward. There is \$100 million in the Budget for TasNetworks to make it whole. That is a concern. Marinus remains a significant issue of concern in terms of its impact across the energy sector.

Time expired.

[6.14 p.m.]

Dr BROAD - As I rise to give my summary of what I got out of the Estimates process, I can say largely that we are none the wiser. What we saw was typical evasion from the government. I will give a couple of examples of that. Before I do, I will say that I find it really interesting that ministers of the Crown - we have seen it from minister Abetz, minister Ellis and indeed the Premier, when they stand to talk about the Budget, they spent their first decent portion talking about Labor. I have been in this place coming up to eight years next year, and I remember when I first came into this place the way that this report back process worked. It was basically the Liberal Party gloating about the state of the budget and the support they had from the community and the business groups who were getting large swathes of cash from government.

What we see now is that we are so far down a budget slippery slope into record debt that the government have turned their guns onto us in Labor to try to divert and blame someone else. It is ironic to point that everybody's attention to us in this - 'Look over here while we trash the state's budget over there'. It is interesting that we have the government talking about avoiding the blame game and also talking about there being no alternative.

We heard minister Abetz today talk about Labor not having any alternative to the TT-Line *Spirits* fiasco. He obviously was not listening in Question Time, because we outlined a number of things that the government should be taking on board. We have a Liberal government in denial. When it comes to the *Spirits* fiasco, imagine what would have happened if Labor had not started asking questions about this when we first came back to parliament after the last election. Imagine if we just did nothing and if we did not pursue this for six months.

We would be none the wiser. How do we know? The government would not have said 'boo'. They would have been hiding all the information until the very last minute when they had to make some admissions. We would have seen a government that would have waited or tried to hide the information about issues such as the variation in the contract with the Finnish boat builder. They would have tried to hide the €50 million payment to keep the company solvent. That would have been some obscure line in the annual report and the people of Tasmania would have been none the wiser.

Instead, we had to drag the government kicking and screaming towards the truth to give answers that the people of Tasmania deserve. Yet what we hear from the government is that Labor is into the blame game and is playing politics. That is terrible for this government. They are still in denial about the situation and they are almost upset with us that we finally got a portion of the truth out. We are not going to give up. We are not going to listen to their simpleton jibes. We are going to keep pursuing the truth, because this government will not disclose anything without us dragging them kicking and screaming.

We heard 'pathway to surplus', too, from - I cannot remember which minister was bragging about it, but I think it was minister Abetz again talking about a pathway to surplus. We know that there is no pathway to surplus. It is a complete furphy. We know that the budget is in a terrible state. Whoever the next treasurer is will be on the horns of a dilemma: how to get this budget back under control without trashing the economy and trashing services.

That is a situation that maybe will turn the Treasury portfolio into the poisoned chalice that people consider the Health portfolio to be. How can the new Treasurer who is coming in resolve this dilemma? There are no good choices here, and the reason we have got to this point, as has been pointed out and as Saul Eslake pointed out, is because of the government's own spending and their own lack of discipline. They have got to a circumstance now where their largesse has caught up with them.

What we have seen from this whole *Spirits* fiasco - part of it came out during Estimates, but largely through the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) process and questions in Question Time - is that when the truth finally came out, Tasmanians are angry. They are very angry with this government. On the weekend, 20,000 people went to the Tulip Festival in Wynyard. It was fantastic, but people wanted to talk about two things. They wanted to talk about the *Spirits* fiasco and they also wanted to talk about potholes. These are two shining examples of the government's long-term failures, but I digress.

In my sections in Estimates I took Minister Ellis to task because the Budget document contained a completely misleading statement. This is the accompanying Tasmanian Budget 2025 Overview, the 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future and on page 11, it makes the following statement:

We're building a record number of new houses with more than 3000 delivered in the last four years.

I took Mr Ellis to task for this because the government have been trying to get away with slippery language about the number of houses they have been building. They have talked about homes and lots, instead of talking about houses, but this language was very specific. It talked about houses.

It is an absolute fact that this government has not delivered 3000 houses in the last four years. Absolutely not true, yet it is in print in an official government budget document. I took Mr Ellis to task and I will read a bit from *Hansard*.

I said:

This is the budget document that describes this government delivering 3000 houses. That's very specific language. Why is it that the budget document appears to be very misleading in the language that it's used?

Mr Ellis:

Generally speaking, we use the term 'homes'.

and then I said:

I'm not talking about what you generally do. I am talking about this very specific line in your own budget document that is woefully inaccurate. 'New houses', it says.

Mr Ellis says:

We'll take some advice and get a clearer picture on that and follow up. Generally speaking, we use the term 'homes' rather than 'houses'. I'm sure people can see why that oversight might have happened. If we need to update, I'm happy to do that as well.

Then I said:

The problem that we have is that you're claiming that you've gotten to a third of your target in a third of the time, your target being 10,000 social and affordable houses.

Mr Ellis says:

Correct.

I eventually managed to get Mr Ellis to take that issue on notice. What does Mr Ellis do? Absolutely typical government propaganda and misleading. The question that I was asking for a response to was:

Why does the budget overview state that 3000 new homes have been delivered and this is clearly not accurate?

That should have said houses too. I think they have changed the question, but the answer, instead of actually going near answering it, they said -

As of 31 August 2024, the Tasmanian Government through Homes Tasmania has delivered 3772 social and affordable homes towards the government's target of 10,000 social and affordable homes between 1 October 2020 and 30 June 2032.

I am pretty sure I have put in 3000 new 'houses' have been delivered, but despite that they have not really answered the question. Why is this important? It is important because the housing wait list is not declining and we got that out of Estimates. Apparently, it has levelled off, but it is not declining. If the government had gone anywhere near delivering any of their claims, you would expect that the waiting list for housing and the wait times for housing - instead of getting worse, the wait times are blowing out, and the number of people on the waiting list is growing. If the government had actually delivered, things would be getting better and that is why it is so important.

The government's spin is not helping people who are in crisis situations, who are living in substandard accommodations, who are living in poverty because they have to pay extraordinary rents. The government is not fixing this problem. That is what makes me angry.

If you look through the transcript of Estimates, we did not get answers to why the situation is not getting better because the government sticks rigidly to their line that they have delivered a third of their target in a third of the time and it is completely untrue.

It is also completely untrue because we see homelessness services shredding their cash. I was speaking the other day with Hobart City Mission. They managed to get some funding to buy the Balmoral Hotel on the Brooker Outlet. They have some 30 homeless people in there to get them out of homelessness and try to transition them into more stable housing circumstances. They are absolutely shredding through their own money because there was no operating. They put in a bid for some operating to keep that facility open and it was not forthcoming in the last budget and now that they are shredding through their own reserves because the demand for homelessness services is extraordinary. It is increasing. That is why they invested in the Balmoral Hotel, but it is putting them under severe pressure. Homelessness services are under enormous pressure.

Housing wait lists are growing and the wait times are blowing out. The situation is getting worse. All the stats show that it is getting worse, yet we have a government and Mr Ellis crowing about meeting a third of the target in a third of the time and a budget document saying 3000 houses have been delivered. This is just not true. It is not true and people are suffering because of it. I find it extraordinary that the government thinks this is fine and that they can get away with it. It is absolutely extraordinary.

I have to say that we have seen Mr Ferguson fall on his sword and he is no longer in Cabinet. The only issue that I have with that, and it is with a tinge of sadness, is because in the section Consumer Building and Occupational Services (CBOS) Estimates, I discussed the horrendous circumstances of two of my constituents, Tasha and Ken, who have a house in Turners Beach that was not built to any sort of standard. It is a disgrace the way this property is being constructed and that the builder, Golden Homes, has declared bankruptcy - seems to have been trading insolvent and now it also appears that they are in the process of phoenixing. The reason there is a tinge of sadness is because during that Estimates process, I laid out on the table the circumstances of these people and the now member for Bass, Mr Ferguson, took a genuine interest and I was to have a meeting with him on Thursday to talk about the issues that this raises and the issues with the regulation of the building industry. The things that I wanted to talk to him about specifically were the cosy and interdependent nature of the relationship between builders and building surveyors. What we see in the industry, and I explained in Estimates, is that the building surveyors are supposed to be acting in the best interest of their client, the home owner, but instead what we see is this cosy relationship, which means that builders are getting away with extraordinary things because if the building surveyor cracks down on them, then the builders will not recommend using that building surveyor.

I also wanted to discuss waterproofing compliance checks because you see extraordinary examples of bathrooms that are not waterproofed properly and it causes horrendous problems and is very expensive to fix. Another issue that it raised was builders lending their building licences to third parties like Golden Homes, and also insolvent trading and phoenixing of failed builders like we are seeing with Golden Homes. The circumstances of Tasha and Ken are not isolated. The regulation of the building industry needs improvement and I was really hoping to have some positive conversations with Mr Ferguson about this but I will not let this go so I will wait until I find out who the next minister for Building and Construction and CBOS is, Consumer Affairs, and I will keep pursuing it and hopefully that minister will show the same level of interest because this needs to be fixed once and for all.

Builders want this fixed, too, because it is bad for the industry to have rogue elements out there. It puts people off building. If people heard the heartbreak and financial chaos that this has caused to Tasha and Ken, it would definitely put them off building and that is not what we want. We want more houses constructed. We want more people in new homes to increase supply. We do not want extra hurdles. That is why building regulation needs to be improved. It could be done relatively simply, too, which is why I want to work constructively with a Consumer Affairs minister who will take some interest in this because it needs to be fixed.

The only real solution to a housing crisis and the extraordinary rents that people are paying and the lack of affordable options for people to buy a home, is supply. We need to get rid of all the barriers to increasing supply. Also, not have a government that is pretending that they are delivering when they are obviously not.

We also heard during Estimates that Tasmania was not successful for any of the Housing Australia Future Fund Projects, and that is very disappointing. It is unbelievable, really.

We heard that government is continuing to count lots as homes, but also, they have lots that are housing supply orders like Devonport where the former Devonport Bowls Club was. The Devonport Bowls Club moved out to Spreyton, and now there is this property that is available. It has been on the market. Lots have been on the market for at least 12 months. I queried the prices that they were charging. It is supposed to be affordable. They were on the market for \$230,000 for a 330 square metre block. Okay, it is close to town, but you could buy a whole house right next door to where this Bowls Club is for about \$450,000. It is extraordinary that the government is claiming that the housing supply orders are all about affordable houses, affordable lots. It is quite obvious that you could get a 700 square metre block, and a nice place, and the member for Lyons might like this one, a nice place out there at Port Sorrell or Hawley Beach to be specific. You could get a 750 square metre block for the same price they are charging for 300 square metre block in Ulverstone. It is extraordinary and they are wondering why they cannot sell it, although, I did get Homes Tasmania to maybe consider reviewing it.

We got into some details there about what Homes Tasmania is actually up to, specifically about the Fountainside purchase. It is extraordinary that Homes Tasmania now seems to be, and minister Ellis basically bailed the cat or actually said it blatantly, that the government would consider getting Homes Tasmania to buy teacher accommodation, to buy police accommodation, to buy all sorts of accommodation for workers, for government workers.

Whereas, we were sold the idea that Homes Tasmania was about social and affordable housing, and now it looks like it is going to be a cash cow for covering up all sorts of other purchases or taking over other purchases, and taking them in effect off Budget so you can load up Homes Tasmania with as much debt as possible, and the only thing that the government has to do is service the debt. All the debt will be sitting on Homes Tasmania's books. It will not make the state's debt, the government debt, look any worse. What is the government doing? Shifting everything onto Homes Tasmania.

There are a couple of issues with the Fountainside purchase. Basically, what this does is it locks in the use of locums and agency nurses and other professionals coming in for short terms into the health system. So much so that they need a whole hotel. This could actually be a perverse circumstance where the government needs to be using enough agency nurses and locums to keep the accommodation full. I find it extraordinary.

What was really extraordinary was that Homes Tasmania knew that Colony 47 was interested in buying this property. It is extraordinary, because when you look at Fountainside, there are people sleeping rough within sight of Fountainside. Colony 47 buying Fountainside would have been a good outcome. I think it is extraordinary. Some of the testimony from Holmes Tasmania: they actually looked at the Colony 47's balance sheet and thought that they would not have been able to do it.

How has Homes Tasmania made a judgment call about Colony 47's ability to buy the Fountainside, and then have jumped in and bought it instead of Colony 47? Instead of working with Colony 47 to get that accommodation into homelessness or social and affordable housing - or especially social housing, or homelessness services: it is ideally placed for that. Instead, I think the government is actually, in effect, locking in the use of locums and agency nurses now and well into the future because of this decision that they have made. Extraordinary.

Going through some of the other dot points, I did get some concessions - well, not really concessions, but I asked some specific questions to minister Abetz about forestry and he confirmed that there are no plans for the government to sell the plantation sawlogs or plantation sawlog estate, which I hope the government sticks to. What we are seeing is that the Tasmanian timber industry is undergoing a significant transition at this very moment. The last thing they need is for the government to seek to privatise more Sustainable Timber Tasmania assets, put them into private hands who can then extort money out of our Tasmanian timber industry and make profit out of it rather than deliver the purpose for what those plantations were planted for, and that was to smooth out the transition that the forest industry is actually seeing right now. This goes way back to John Howard planting these plantations.

The last thing that the Tasmanian timber industry needs is these plantations' sawlogs to be sold out from under them at the last minute. What they really need is access at a fair price to these plantation sawlogs and then the government ensuring that any value adding and processing actually happens in Tasmania and not in places like Victoria. It was a bit disturbing to hear, when I raised some issues about the Avebury Mine and its pending sale to who can be described as predatory lending from a United States organisation Heart Tree, the government absolutely had no issue with that. They also had no issue in not helping Avebury Mine stay open at the time too, which I have raised in the past. It seems very hands off when it comes to mining which is very disappointing.

The other section that I want to discuss is about roads and potholes. As I discussed when I first got to my feet, Tasmanians are really upset about potholes. They really hate potholes and what they are seeing is potholes, and it makes them very upset. What it does is it makes for good business for tow trucks, makes for good business for people who do tyre realignments, makes really good business for people who change tyres, but it is not good for motorists. It is only really today for the first time we have heard the Premier talk about the pavement condition. He is suddenly concerned about the pavement condition of Tasmania's roads. It is extraordinary. What we got out of Estimates was that there were 1956 potholes identified since 26 August, that was the information that we got on questions on notice, can you please break down the number of potholes across the state roads by road and the number being filled? We heard on the Bass Highway, for example, there were 844 potholes identified. That is extraordinary.

The government also talked about the number that were filled - I have just got my figures wrong there, sorry, there were 3058 potholes identified. I do not know, I will have to check my

figures - but basically what the evidence provides from the information on notice is that there is still a whole heap of potholes yet to be filled. As of 30 September, there were a whole bunch of potholes that has not been filled. I will have to check my figures again but there is a whole bunch of potholes that are left unfilled. The Premier went out there and made a big song and dance of filling one pothole. Well, there was an extraordinary number of potholes. Even driving out to Wynyard, there were some whoppers. I hit one pretty flush on and scared the hell out of everybody in the car, including myself. This is the circumstance that Tasmanian motorists are facing. No wonder they are angry. You have sections of brand-new road that look like a moon. They are just filled with holes and sections that everybody is becoming familiar with: potholes on potholes on potholes. Fill them up, they become potholes again. In the summertime, they pretend to fix it. They get in and fix a section, and what happens the first time it rains? Potholes again. No wonder people are getting very upset.

On one last topic, we have heard the Greens talk about their alternative budget. I know I probably should not go on here, but you cannot really call it an alternative budget. It is just a complete fantasy. I will give you a good example of it. In their budget for paying for all sorts of stuff, for shutting down industries and taxing them into oblivion, there was an absolute howler that I think deserves some ridicule. The Greens are claiming a windfall of \$160 million a year and they have called it the 'rezoning windfall tax'.

Basically, they are saying they will put a 75 per cent tax on profits gained from when land is rezoned. The assumption there from the Greens is that there are all these people making these extraordinary windfalls from getting property rezoned and rubbing their greedy little hands together, so we as a state apparently need to tax them at 75 per cent. What does this actually mean? For \$160 million a year, that means that there has to be over \$210 million in rezoning windfalls every year. Where are these rezonings happening? Have they tried to get something rezoned, for a start? It is extraordinarily hard to get anything rezoned. What is going to happen if somebody is successful in getting a rezoning is that the Greens are going to suddenly hit them up for a 75 per cent tax.

Imagine if you are a developer and you have rezoned a hectare of land. Let us say you have bought it for a couple of hundred grand. You rezone it. Now the Greens are going to make an assumption on how big the blocks you are going to get out of it are, and suddenly it is worth a heap of money and you will get hit with a tax. Imagine if you are trying to hold that property. It takes a long time to get anything rezoned. It takes even longer to get it developed and get it to a stage where you can actually start selling it. What is going to happen is the Greens are going to hit you with a 75 per cent tax. Then you are going to go broke. There is no way that that sort of tax is sustainable.

Mr Shelton - Or the cost of the residential blocks goes up.

Dr BROAD - Yes. There will be no rezoning, so the cost of residential blocks will go through the roof, because there will be zero incentive for anybody to do any rezoning of any sort, even if it is accidental - even if the government forces it onto you. You will be in significant financial trouble because you will be hit with a 75 per cent tax. It does not seem to take into account any sort of holding costs. There will be zero in it for anybody. In fact, there would be a huge risk of going broke.

However, the Greens are plotting out \$160 million every year to pay for their little pet projects. It is going to be \$160 million year one, and obviously there is going to be a heap more

rezoning in year two, then there is going to be a heap more rezoning in year three and a heap more rezoning in year four. The reality is that it would be year one and then there would be zero in year two, zero in year three and zero in year four, because that is the way the market works.

I want to know where all these land developer fat cats are making these huge profits out of rezoning. It seems like something that maybe they have imported from Victoria - the idea that outer metropolitan areas in Victoria are being subdivided after these windfall rezonings. It is absolutely laughable. You cannot run a state like that. You do not have to be serious when you are Greens. You can put up these wacky ideas and no one really holds you to account.

They have a plan to tax the mining industry into oblivion and tax the salmon industry into oblivion, pretend to collect the revenue across the forward Estimates, and they think that industry is not going to react. Of course they are going to react. They are going to disappear; that is what is going to happen. The state economy will tank, and investment will tank, because if the Greens are in charge and putting in place taxes like this, we will become the worst place on earth to invest, and our economy will suffer because of it. The Greens can do it because they do not have to be responsible, because, hopefully, they will not ever get the Treasury benches.

Time expired.

[6.44 p.m.]

Mr WOOD - Chair, I am very pleased to contribute today following Estimates committee hearings for our 2024-25 State Budget, which delivers on our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future. As chair of one of the House of Assembly's committees, I had a front row seat to a week of hearings, and I take this opportunity to thank those members who participated in the committee process. It was a long and arduous week but enjoyable, nonetheless.

On the whole, behaviour from all members was respectful, in my view. The Chair's rulings were respected and both the questions and answers were communicated, in the main -

Mr Shelton - Except I tried to get a second question but you shut me down.

Mr WOOD - My apologies, Mr Shelton. You probably deserved it. Questions and answers were communicated in a calm and professional manner.

The 2024-25 Budget takes real action on the issues that matter to Tasmanians, and that was the government's focus during the week of Estimates committee hearings. The government remains focused on responding to cost-of-living pressures; providing record investment into health, education and housing; and continuing the pipeline of intergenerational infrastructure Tasmania needs today and well into the future.

What we do not need are political games or distractions. We are simply getting on with the job. The government is delivering our plan to manage Tasmania's economy and public finances prudently and responsibly. Job creation is not a new priority for our government. It has and always will be a priority, if not the priority for our government. Our government has a proven track record on delivering on this commitment.

We are acting on cost-of-living pressures, keeping Tasmania safe, and investing more into health and mental health practices, education and housing than ever before. It is crucially

important to this government to secure a positive future for all Tasmanians. Our government is fully committed to making Tasmania the best possible place to live, work and raise a family.

Jobs are at a record high level, with 281,078 Tasmanians now in work as of August 2024. The current unemployment rate of 4.3 per cent continues the record run of low unemployment in our state - nearly three years of 4.3 per cent or under - since the ABS started collecting data in 1978. This is a whopping 3.6 per cent lower than the catastrophic 7.9 per cent it was at the peak of the former Labor-Greens government's 2013 recession.

The participation rate of 60.8 per cent is just under the 10-year average of 61 per cent, and above the level of 60.6 per cent when we came into government after years of Labor's disastrous economic management. Since we came to government in March 2014, about 46,000 jobs have been created and there are 6100 fewer unemployed Tasmanians.

The state of the economy was a central matter in the Budget Estimates hearings. Gross State Product grew 1.1 per cent in 2022-23 to a record high of \$38.584 billion. Growth in the prior two years was 4.3 per cent in 2022 and 4.8 per cent in 2021, with the next release 20 November 2024.

State final demand grew by 1.8 per cent in the year to June 2024 - the second highest growth among all states - to a record high of \$44.6 billion. In trend terms, the nominal value of retail trade in Tasmania in July 2024 was \$722 million, 2.9 per cent higher than in July 2023. This is 57 per cent higher than the \$460 million recorded in March 2014.

Tasmania achieved a near-record level of construction in the 12 months to June 2024 of \$4.1 billion. This was 1 per cent up on the 12 months to June 2023. Residential building approvals have normalised to long-term levels after a heightened level post-pandemic and the extraordinary pull forward in demand thanks to the successful HomeBuilder program. The new Legana School will be built in my electorate of Bass and will take its first students next year. A new child and family learning centre is to be built in Scottsdale, construction of a new ambulance station in the increasingly popular suburb of Legana and an additional police house on Flinders Island. I remind everybody that the Flinders Island Show is this coming Friday, so get over there. It is a really good day.

Our government is taking real action on the cost of living. This government understands the pressures that far too many Tasmanians are facing. We are listening to the Tasmanian people, we take cost of living very seriously and this Budget reflects that by delivering a further 200 homes to the Private Rental Incentive Scheme, creating the Homes Faster! incentive fund to stimulate supply and delivering additional key worker accommodation for our regional workers. A major focus of the government is to recruit and maintain health staff across the state to ensure our hospitals and health facilities are well equipped to deliver a quality health service to our community.

The 2024-2025 Budget invests in new infrastructure, contains additional outlays in cost-of-living relief and stronger public services including health, housing, education and transport. It invests \$82 million over four years to support new renewable energy in Tasmania, increasing jobs and reducing our power prices. There is a further \$2.5 million to assist peak bodies and primary producers to achieve success and an additional \$250,000 invested in the Young Farmer Support Package. This Budget will see an additional 60 police officers and

a further \$140 million invested in fire and emergency services to upgrade equipment and infrastructure.

In the 2024-25 area and across the forward Estimates, we are providing more than \$550 million in cost-of-living measures. These are matters that cut across many portfolios and were discussed during Estimates. Our measures include more than 100 different types of concessions. It includes energy bill relief, concessions on council rates for pensioners, and water and sewerage concessions, and it includes real cost-of-living relief like Stamping Out Stamp Duty, halving public transport fares, our increased Private Rental Incentive Scheme, Healthy School Lunches and more. This is real action, real funding and a real commitment to Tasmanians who are doing it tough.

These measures also include slashing all public transport fares by half, with commuters now enjoying half-price bus and ferry fares until 30 June 2025; delivering energy bill relief to every Tasmanian household with \$250 credited through the supercharged Renewable Energy Dividend; building a new ambulance station at Legana; the new school at Legana, which I drove past only a couple of days ago and I must say it is looking outstanding; doubling the Healthy School Lunch program, saving families up to \$950 per year; Stamping Out Stamp Duty for first-home buyers of existing homes up to \$750,000, saving Tasmanians up to \$28,935.

We are employing additional paramedics and doctors to our regional areas. We are also delivering over 100 different types of concessions now. There are four new child and family learning centres which provide wrap-around services like free psychologists and speech therapists, expansion of the Private Rental Incentive Scheme for an additional 200 homes, providing rentals at a reduced rent, expansion of the Ticket to Play scheme to Family Tax Benefit A recipients. There will be a Ticket to Wellbeing program for older Tasmanians, with vouchers of \$100, as well as the Veteran Wellbeing voucher program. There will be up to 2000 more loans as part of the No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) program and continuing to roll out energy-efficient measures in social housing properties. There is a new Apartment Incentive Rebate Scheme with a 50 per cent discount on stamp duty for Tasmanians. There is an extension of the Energy Saver subsidy, a direct 50 per cent subsidy of the cost of energy-efficient appliances for low-income Tasmanians. We are also supporting small business with energy efficiency audits.

We are expanding access to everyday medications in pharmacies, reducing trips to the GP, and reforming the Patient Transport Assistance Scheme to help patients get their financial help much faster. Free TVs are being rolled out in hospitals, along with free wi-fi.

Ms White - Did you write this yourself?

Mr WOOD - Yes, maybe.

Mr Willie - How are you going to get into the Cabinet just reading a speech like this?

Mr WOOD - Maybe it is my plan, Josh.

New free dental care for concession card holders and children on the east coast, covering Nubeena to St Helens, enhancing MyHome shared equity to help more Tasmanians on lower incomes purchase or build a home with as little as a 2 per cent deposit.

We know the increasing cost of living has been a real challenge for Tasmanians. It is being driven by high inflation and interest rates. As members know, inflation and interest rates are squarely the responsibility of the federal Labor government, and it is concerning to hear economists say that the RBA is unlikely to be cutting interest rates. The role of the Tasmanian government is to step in and support Tasmanians as best we can. We have done that in relation to the recent floods, storms and power outages, and we will keep doing it.

We have invested in our community sports programs, investing in our grassroots footy clubs, bowls clubs, strengthening our communities, building on our economic success, investing in our younger generation and providing the right environment for all Tasmanians to continue to flourish.

I, like probably everybody in this Chamber and, indeed, the majority of Tasmanians, are proud to live in Tasmania, and I am incredibly honoured to represent my electorate of Bass. I am so pleased to see such benefits from the 2024-2025 Budget brought forward for Bass. I will list some of the benefits that are included:

- Progressing the redevelopment of the Launceston General Hospital.
- Developing a new purpose-built mental health precinct in Launceston.
- Developing a new four-bed mother baby unit in the new Launceston Health Hub.
- Employing 78 new full-time paramedics, including 27 community paramedics to be deployed to our regional community communities, and 44 additional doctors.
- Progressing plans for a northern heart centre.
- Upgrades to the RSL club cold room refrigeration and equipment.
- New solar panels installed on the Scottsdale Football Club rooms.
- A new installation of a disability access service to the Scottsdale Military Museum to make it more accessible to all abilities.
- Replacement of the iconic Thumbs Up statue as you enter the township.
- Redevelopment of the Scottsdale railway station.
- Upgrades to the Scottsdale playground.
- New lighting for the Mechanics Institute Hall.

- A new bench saw for the Scottsdale Men's Shed.
- Exeter, Launceston, Invermay and Beauty Point bowls clubs all receiving new synthetic greens.
- \$980,000 into stage one of the new high performance training centre to be developed at the Kings Meadows Bowls Club. This investment will put Kings Meadows firmly on the map as a centre of excellence for bowls. It means so much for every bowls club to be part of this new high performance training centre and this will boost our economy in return.

Tasmanians were promised a Budget that reflected our 2030 Strong Plan, and a Budget with heart and sensible principles that made this state the best place to live, work and raise a family. I genuinely believe what we have here encompasses that.

[7.01 p.m.]

Ms WHITE - Chair, I think the best way to summarise this Budget would be to say that it is a terrible set of numbers. There is genuinely no pathway back to surplus, which is the rhetoric that some ministers in the government tend to use as a bit of a crutch when they are getting criticised, but, of course, we know that is just a false statement, because the Budget clearly shows in black and white that there is no pathway back to surplus.

Worse than a bad set of numbers, what this Budget delivers is cuts across public services that will impact on the opportunity for Tasmanians to access the health care, housing and education they need to lead a good quality life and live a life with dignity. It undermines the hard work of public sector employees right across the state who are busting their guts in incredibly tough conditions already, trying to deliver and to meet demand across the state in a range of essential services. We know that the so-called efficiency dividend, which is a budget cut, is going to have a profound impact on the ability of the government to meet the demand that we see and the pressures that we see across the state in a range of different areas.

This is a very bad Budget. There is no glossing over the fact there is no rhetoric or talking points that are written for you by a staffer that are going to make this Budget any better. Unfortunately, if the government had been a bit more honest with Tasmanians before the last election, it could have been foreshadowed. The reality is this Budget has been a long time coming, and budgets preceding it have demonstrated the deterioration in the figures across the forward Estimates. Any truthful assessment of the budget has revealed that year after year, but, of course, the government likes to spin constantly, just wheels churning there in the sand, going nowhere very fast, just digging a massive hole; and it is now a massive black hole. We have budget deficit and debt greater than any Tasmanian has ever experienced in our history, and there is no ability on the part of this government to illustrate how they plan to get us out of this mess.

We are seeing services squeezed, and the most alarming thing of all is that right now, as we speak, the government does not have a treasurer. There is nobody responsible for guiding this state out of this dire set of circumstances that these Budget figures show. The Premier, the acting treasurer, are you going to be the treasurer? Mr Shelton is sitting up the back there with a bit of time on his hands. Maybe it will be one of the other members in this Chamber. The reality is right now Tasmania is without a treasurer. We are debating Treasury bills.

This is unprecedented. It is an extraordinary circumstance that we find ourselves in, and I do not think that we should pretend otherwise, especially when you look at the state of this Budget. It is a complete mess, and no waffle or slogan is going to fix that. You actually need somebody to roll up their sleeves and get in and do the hard work, not the pretend work like we see the Premier doing on his TikTok channel, getting out there and pretending to fill in a couple of potholes. Give it a rest. There are people who actually do that for a living, doing a real job trying to support the construction of the state's infrastructure. The Premier has a real job and he should probably focus on doing that rather than pretending that he is going to fill a couple of potholes in and make the state's roads safer.

This is a Budget that is all about pre-prepared speaking points, pretending everything is fine, glossing over the hard stuff, and going out to community and letting them know you have it under control when, in fact, anybody can see it is as far from that as you could possibly imagine. That is evidenced by nothing starker than the fact you do not even have a treasurer.

I sat across the table from a number of different ministers during the Budget Estimates process. Some gave more honest and direct answers than others. I commend minister Street. I think he, as usual, did a very good job. I sat across from him for a period. I also commend him on his speech in this parliament today. It was succinct and got to the point; he did not waffle on. A lot of us can probably take a leaf out of his book, and I will certainly opt to do so tonight because the Budget speaks for itself.

Anyone watching Estimates through that week was able to clearly see the work that went in across the crossbench and the opposition party to extract detail from this government about what the efficiency dividend means for the provision of public services in this state. What will be cut? How is the government going to deliver on its promises? What does an infrastructure project under this government look like, given their woeful track record of actually delivering on it?

The answers that we got from a number of ministers were less than forthcoming, which I think demonstrates that they did not want to tell us what is going on in their agencies because they are ashamed of this Budget and the way that they have to try and spin it to make sense, at a time when so many people across different agencies are really working incredibly hard to continue to deliver public services for our state in a time when the budget is under immense pressure.

I sat across from the Attorney-General during sections of the Budget Estimates week. I was disappointed that there was not a lot of information forthcoming about the legislative reform that has been promised by the government in this place with continued delays to improvements to the Integrity Commission and its functions. The government has the ability to fob it off because they have an agreement with the former members of the JLN that means they do not have to do anything until 6 April next year.

I note there was a bill tabled today that makes some amendments to the *Integrity Commission Act* concerning the membership of the committee. It is very simple to make amendments to legislation if you actually prioritise it. There will be amendments coming through this House to the *Integrity Commission Act*. If you wanted to, you could have made further amendments based on the numerous reviews that this government has received over a number of years now that illustrate how that body could be strengthened.

There is a lack of information from the government about whether or not it is going to introduce the legislation to ban conversion practices in this state - another commitment made by this Premier. It was a different time, perhaps - certainly a different parliament, but more significantly, a different Cabinet - which makes it very difficult for the Premier to be able to deliver on some of those commitments that were given to the Tasmanian people, including banning conversion practices.

There is a lack of action on progressing reforms to the *Right to Information Act* to make this government do what it says it will do, which is be transparent with people. Again, that has been fobbed off until the 6 April next year. It is a convenient cover for a lack of interest and action by this government, when it has had 10 years to make improvements to these important areas that are about offering accountability to the Tasmanian people as an executive government, and that are about providing transparency regarding the way government operates in this state. These reforms are about being a government with integrity, something that we do not see very much of.

Before I finish on the Attorney-General, I will touch on some of the things we did mention - anyone who was interested was probably watching at the time - which is the slow progress of matters through the court system in Tasmania, and the slow progress of rolling out the digitisation project that we will see improvements in efficiency, sharing of information across agencies and access to justice for people who are currently waiting far too long to have their matters heard.

These are all things that are not news to people who are interacting daily with the justice system, either working in it, representing clients in the justice system, or seeking justice themselves through the courts. These are problems that are unfortunately getting more intractable, with little reform progressed by this government to see some of these challenges addressed with any urgency.

I also sat across the table from minister Jaensch, particularly for the Children and Youth portfolio. I represented the honourable member for Rumney, Ms Lovell, who is the shadow minister. It was concerning to hear about the number of vacancies in child safety services, the delays for some of those notifications being actioned, the slow response to support some foster carers, and others who are supporting the most vulnerable in our state, being children who are wards of the state.

There was also a lack of interest in upgrading the accommodation for child safety staff, when we know that has a significant impact on the ability to retain those employees working in an incredibly traumatic and hard environment. I found the lack of interest in those matters astounding, particularly given that those staff have walked off the job numerous times because of the poor accommodation where they are supposed to work from. The fact that the government does not seem to have a plan to fix that is pretty alarming.

I also sat across the table from minister Duigan, again on behalf of my colleague Ms Finlay, who was in with minister Howlett doing Primary Industries Estimates. Talking with minister Duigan, it is evident that this government's failure to deliver on infrastructure projects extends beyond the Department of State growth, into Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) and Parks. Projects like Cradle Mountain, the Next Iconic Walk, and significant economic opportunities for the north-west are nowhere further progressed than when they were announced in 2018. They are simply sitting there on the books waiting for somebody or

something to start it, to drive this work, while tourism operators on the north-west coast are baffled by the lack of progress. This coupled with the lack of delivery on the *Spirits* means that they are facing a really difficult couple of seasons as people continue to make choices about how they use their discretionary income.

This means we have seen a slowdown in the visitor economy in this state. We need to get those *Spirits* online. We need to get these key infrastructure projects delivered to drive economic activity in the visitor economy. It is one of the pillars of Tasmania's success story, coupled with energy, coupled with primary industries, coupled with our people and our resourcefulness and innovation. This government just seems to sit on its hands or waffle and pretend it is doing things, rather than actually getting on with the task and delivering. This means that good people making decisions about how they spend their money and what they do with their businesses and the people they employ are facing great uncertainty.

They really do not feel confident. You see that in the business sentiment surveys, where confidence across the Tasmanian small business sector has been pretty shaky. You can see that. It is not helped by government that is doing a slash of the budget at a time. It does not have a pathway back to surplus at a time. It is failing to deliver on infrastructure projects that really are important to drive economic growth and potential for our state.

All in all, I would summarise the budget Estimates process as very disheartening. In the hearings I was part of, I did not hear much enthusiasm from government ministers about their ability to affect change in their portfolios. I think everybody seemed pretty flat. You can see it in the mood in the Chamber today. That comes after a pretty extraordinary set of circumstances yesterday, where the treasurer resigned. You are debating budget bills without a treasurer in this House. It is understandable that the government is feeling pretty wounded.

However, your responsibility is to the Tasmanian people. It would be nice if we could actually see some progress on the promises you made to them. At the end of the day, it is Tasmanians who are living in pain, who are waiting for housing, who are wanting to put that next person on in their business, who are struggling to find confidence in you. I think it is not just the crossbench and the opposition who have a lack of confidence in individual ministers in this government. I think it is something that is spreading across the entire government.

The Tasmanian community can sense that. It can sense that there is a lack of confidence in this government. One of the ways you can try to redeem yourselves is by doing your job better and actually delivering a budget that sees an improvement in outcomes for Tasmanians, rather than this waffle and spin that has no substance, no pathway back to surplus, and no restoration of the structural challenges we see in the Budget to start to repair those problems. There is a real concern for those who are working in public services across our state, that they simply will not have the backing of this government when times get tough. You can see that through the efficiency dividend where essentially three health workers a day will be sacked to meet the requirement of that efficiency dividend. Three a day; that will be your legacy this year.

Let us see if you make it through another year as government. I think you are on pretty shaky ground at the moment and if you deliver a budget like this next year, then, as our leader has already said, you will have a tough time getting it through this parliament.

[7.15 p.m.]

Ms JOHNSTON - Chair, the government wants you to think that budgets are all about dollars. They will talk about what is affordable, what is responsible and, more than ever, especially lately, what is efficient. What they will not admit is that budgets are actually all about choices. The choices they have make material impacts on everyday Tasmanians; whether their child will get the support they need to catch up on their reading, whether their mum with a chronic heart disease will get to see a specialist or will die waiting, whether the bus will arrive on time or at all, or whether they will be late for work again.

These are not luxuries of life. These are the basics. Many of the Tasmanians I speak to every day have not had a luxury in a very long time. They do not even have the basics. They go without a meal so their kids go to bed with a full tummy. They barely leave the house because it is too painful to walk while they wait for a hip replacement. They sleep in their car because they are still on a housing waiting list after seven years.

I just sat through my third Budget Estimates. At the outset, I need to give credit where credit is due. I thank the Chair for the way he facilitated the rotation of questions. It was refreshing to see a crossbench being able to fully participate and have the opportunity to explore a line of questions. Thank you, Chair. However, getting an answer, let alone a straight answer from a minister was, as usual, near impossible.

After sitting through Estimates and the answers or non-answers given, I can only come to one conclusion. When my constituents ask me, 'Kristy, why is the government choosing to build a stadium instead of houses, our health and our kids' education. Why are we picking up the bill because the government cannot manage its projects properly? How can we afford a giant chocolate fountain when I have waited three years and still have not seen my public dentist?', I will tell them it is because the government does not care enough about your wellbeing and instead are happy to pork barrel or pursue stadiums. There can be no other justification.

Where is the evidence you might ask? It is there in black and white in the Estimates *Hansard*. In any number of portfolios, this government demonstrates a callous lack of care of the most vulnerable in our community and a callous lack of care for the basics of transparent government. If time permits me, I need to highlight a few examples, but they speak volumes about the priorities of this government.

First, there is a dogged insistence on counting empty lots in their 10,000 homes target. This fools no one and is, quite frankly, insulting to those on the housing waiting list - not register. Then there is trying to hoodwink the Tasmanian community by calling the 4700-odd housing waiting list a housing register. Renaming it does not make the problem go away. These people are waiting for a home: they are not registered; they are waiting for a home.

There is also the issue of forcing mums in distress with young babies who live in the south of the state to use a telephone for help instead of funding an in-patient mother-baby unit. This is putting mums and young babies, young Tasmanians, at significant risk. There is refusal to define what services are frontline and what is back line, and whose jobs will go, and the government's attempt to bail itself out of the budget disaster that it has created.

There is a backing of a stadium without knowing - or maybe not being honest about the fact that they know - what the true cost is.

There have been no end of delays and cover-ups relating to the abuse of animals, especially in the racing industry. We saw only yesterday the minister having to correct the record about that.

Then, there is the underfunding of the very institutions that help hold the government to account, things like the Integrity Commission and the Ombudsman; something Tasmanians will no longer be surprised about with this secretive government, but should nonetheless be enraged about.

We are all becoming too familiar with seeing people on the streets begging for money, food, and shelter, while the housing waiting list grows, and hearing about bed block at the hospital while elective surgery waiting lists grow too, and mental health in schools is declining while the waitlist for school psychologists grows. I am worried all this will become the new normal in Tasmania and that soon we will stop seeing it as our cousins and other cities around this country seem to have done.

I refuse to accept that this is our new normal. I refuse to accept this as a standard that we set for ourselves. Tasmania is better than this. If we have a billion dollars lying around to build a stadium, then we should be funding decent healthcare and education, housing and transport, and protecting our vulnerable animals and our wilderness all before we fund a stadium: a vanity project. We need to do the basics and provide the safety net before we fund the luxuries.

However, this Budget has weighed heavily on my heart. It is an obscene application of government priorities and exacerbates the financial mess that this state is in, which generations of Tasmanians will have to pay for. My first reaction is to vote against this Budget but if I do so and the Parliament rejects this budget, then supply will be blocked, and services will not be funded at all for a period of time. On balance, that would inflict greater pain on already suffering Tasmanians.

How could I possibly look my constituents in the eye and tell them that their waitlist for pain-relieving surgery is even longer because I was trying to make a political point by blocking this Budget? I simply cannot do that. I appreciate that there are some of my crossbench colleagues who will take a different approach; that is between them and their constituents but I am thinking about mine and what my constituents need right now. They need something rather than nothing.

With this very heavy heart, I will support this Budget, but while I still draw breath in this parliament, I will be holding this government and their ministers to account, calling out the bad mistakes they make, demanding they do better, and fighting for the basics that Tasmanians deserve. Thank you, Chair.

[7.22 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE - Chair, it is my pleasure to rise and reflect on the 2024-25 Budget and Estimates process. I would, of course, like to start by deeply thanking our departmental representatives, particularly those who supported me. It is just wonderful to have that level of capacity at the table. We appreciate their work.

It is also important to note that it is not only those departmental staff who joined me at the table but also those who did so much work preparing briefs and collating information. To them all, I say thank you. Also, to my team, thank you so much. Obviously, not my first Budget

Estimates, but it was a great opportunity for me to articulate our government's achievements and delivery for all Tasmanians.

I have some very important portfolio responsibilities, those being the portfolios of Science and Technology, Corrections and Rehabilitation, Women and the Prevention of Family Violence, and the Arts, including heritage. I was pleased to answer as many questions as possible and provide the committees with as much information as I was able. Now, the Tasmanian State Government State Budget drives the delivery of our Strong Plan, which takes action right now on the things that matter to Tasmanians. We are making life more affordable, and under this government, more Tasmanians than ever before are employed, giving them more opportunities in life to do the things that they want and that fill them with joy. This Budget continues to deliver important initiatives that improve the lives of everyday Tasmanians. I was very happy to share information about these initiatives during Estimates.

I realise time is short this evening, so I will have to pick this up again in the morning. Therefore, I will just go through one of the important portfolio areas this evening, understanding that I will turn to the rest in the morning.

First of all, I turn my attention to a portfolio that everybody knows I am very passionate about, and that is Science and Technology. I am committed to delivering, alongside industry, to advance Tasmania's capabilities and potential and in fact only on Monday I met with the new US Consul General and we had a very good conversation about synergies and opportunities in our sci-tech space. It is a language we both speak. Very happy to have that conversation and that meeting.

It is no surprise to anybody in this place how heavily we do rely on technology. From convenience to necessity, technology remains at the forefront of our lives, whether we like it or not. With every advancement in science and technology, no matter how large or small, our lives are made better. We have seen this time and time again, a true testament to the agility of our sector to innovate, to evolve and thrive. I am really pleased that during the committee hearings we had the opportunity to discuss the incredible contribution of our science sector. The Tasmanian government sponsors and conducts science research across several agencies and the output from this research provides scientific advice on matters of high importance to our state, including marine science, environmental management, bio-security, conservation, water management, human health, disaster mitigation, renewable energy and climate change.

The Tasmanian government also invests in critical science research infrastructure that provides scientists with access to world class facilities and nationally linked research systems.

Excitingly, another area that the Tasmanian Government is investing in is the information communications and technology sector, the ICT sector. The ICT sector generates approximately \$1.7 billion worth of revenue per year to our economy. It is huge and employing more than 9,600 technology workers across the economy. It is growing.

Digital transformation is occurring rapidly across the economy and the ICT sector is an essential enabler of modern business and service delivery by providing digital connectivity, technology, software and services that are critical for Tasmanian businesses to grow, stay secure and compete. Tasmanians also have the right to reliable telecommunications to ensure business continuity to stay in touch with family members and manage medical and financial needs, for example. Without investment in high quality, reliable, critical digital infrastructure,

Tasmania's prosperity will be constrained by the inability to support economic growth and key services and in response, the Tasmanian Government has committed \$11.5 million to support a subsea fibre cable project to improve Tasmania's digital connectivity and to deliver an additional subsea cable link landing in southern Tasmania. This investment will underpin economic and social benefits for the state now and into the future.

Tasmanians need and rightfully deserve quality communications tech backhaul to ensure we can continue to remain up to spec like our mainland counterpart, and the federal government must step up and they have been very shy in wanting to do that to date. We will not stop on this program of seeking their support and it is certainly something that I intend to do in person at the next Regional Connectivity meeting and the Digital and Data Minister's meetings.

This investment will also strengthen the Tasmanian UTAS STEM ecosystem, leading to improved engagement and investment in education, skills, career pathways, research, innovation and importantly, commercialisation.

Given Labor's interest in supporting our aspirations to have Tasmania connected via the project, I would strongly encourage their advocacy to the Commonwealth as well to ensure funding flows to ensure this project becomes a reality. It was disappointing during Estimates to have those opposite imply that it was the government's fault that the project was unviable for private sector investment. Again, this clearly demonstrates the opposition's lack of financial understanding and commitment to world class communications for all Tasmanians.

Our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future is also supporting the ICT sector with \$30,000 to TasICT to promote and support student engagement, workforce development and cyber security events and to establish an Advanced Technologies Industry Strategy to assist industry to leverage the rapid advances in science and technology. The plan is also instrumental in driving the strategic vision of the Tasmanian Government's digital transformation, known as Our Digital Future. Given the reestablishment of the science and technology portfolio -

Progress reported.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

[7.30 p.m.]

The SPEAKER - The time being 7.30 p.m. it is time for adjournment matters. I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

Mental Health Week 2024

[7.30 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Deputy Premier) - I appreciate that, honourable Speaker. I wanted to share a few remarks on Mental Health Week for 2024, from 5 to 13 October, appreciating the little things and to pay a wonderful tribute and compliment to the Mental Health Council of Tasmania.

Connie Digolis, the CEO, has done a great job leading the organisation. There were events all around Tasmania and it has been a wonderful week to highlight the importance of appreciating the little things in life, encouraging Tasmanians to tap into their own strengths, their own areas, to find joy in everyday moments to help them stay well. It is a real pleasure and honour to be Minister for Health, Mental Health and Well-Being.

I launched that with Connie at the Royal Botanical Gardens and had the opportunity to pot up some basil and herbs. For me it was some basil and some parsley for some friends. Connie and I took away a pot plant as something to remember the launch. I had many happy memories with my wife and three kids visiting the Royal Botanical Gardens in years gone by: kids rolling down the hill. It is a great place to visit. If you are anywhere near the botanical gardens, check it out.

Certainly, it is a very fast-paced world. Social media is coming in at us left, right and centre, not just for young people. From time to time, it is important to slow down, appreciate the little things in life and get that mental health and well-being in check. For me personally, I enjoy gardening in my veggie patch. I spent a bit of time there on Saturday, planting and certainly weeding as well, providing some of that to my family, friends and loved ones at our church at Newstead Baptist. A week or so ago I spent time fishing with a mate at Four Spring. That was great as well but for everyone it is different. There is something that you can do by taking time out for your own mental health to care for your family, for your loved ones. It is something that I would encourage all Tasmanians to do. Check in with yourself, but also with family members and those close to you.

I wanted to embrace those little things in life and do a shout out to the Mental Health Council of Tasmania for progressing that wonderful agenda. Over the last decade, we have done a lot as a Liberal government to support that. I pay tribute to Jeremy Rockliff, the Premier and the former minister for mental health and well-being, who was very committed in this space; very big shoes to fill. We have delivered record funding of over \$614 million to transform the mental health and alcohol and drug service system: lots of achievements of nearly 200 extra jobs now in the mental health space; additional full-time equivalent jobs.

That includes clinicians, those with a lived experience in terms of those workers. It has been great to visit the Peacock Centre a couple of times, a new mental health centre providing services like Safe Haven Recovery College Integration Hub and the 12 inpatient beds. What a wonderful experience that was and thank you again to those at the Peacock Centre. The new Mental Health Emergency Response Service on the north-west coast is going great guns. It was great to be up there; it was a couple of months ago now, probably six weeks ago, and that is something that is innovative. It is new and is now covering the north-west coast and will soon be starting in the north in Launceston in the first half of next year, but with big plans for the \$90 million mental health precinct in Launceston adjacent to the LGH is fantastic. I will be hosting a roundtable there on Friday this week and really looking forward to that, catching up with the key stakeholders and talking about the merit of that, and likewise on the north-west coast, the \$40 million mental health precinct planned.

Our Budget has lots of initiatives in there to make a difference, but in this Mental Health Week conclusion thereof, I thank all those involved, highlight the importance of it and commend that to everybody not only in this Chamber but across this great State of Tasmania.

Mr Abetz - Comments About No-Confidence Motion

[7.35 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Honourable Speaker, as members of this place and participants in a Westminster democracy, I had expected that all members would hold a deep respect for parliament and its conventions. Disturbingly, in recent days we have seen that is not the case. After weeks of mounting pressure on former treasurer, Michael Ferguson, on Sunday, the Independent Member for Franklin, David O'Byrne, announced he did not have confidence in Mr Ferguson. This announcement made the prospect of a successful no-confidence motion very real. In fact, it looked nearly inevitable that motion would pass. Government minister and leader of government business in the House, Eric Abetz, was asked by media about the no-confidence motion. His response was equal parts baffling and alarming.

Minister Abetz said no-confidence motions were 'a political stunt'. He said they were 'of no consequence' and he also said, 'even if a motion of no-confidence were to be passed in him, there will be no need for Mr Ferguson to resign and I would encourage him not to resign'. That is baffling, it is alarming and it shows a dripping disdain for parliament and long-standing Westminster conventions.

No wonder the Premier intervened at an emergency press conference the next day and clarified Mr Ferguson would resign if a no-confidence motion passed. This morning Mr Rockliff told parliament:

I have seen many times in this place since 23 March that the will of the parliament will and must be respected. We have debated legislation and motions in this place and the outcome has not always aligned with the views of members on this side of the Chamber, but it is the will of the parliament and the people elected the parliament, therefore it is the will of the people'

Mr Eric Abetz must not have been listening when Jeremy Rockliff made that statement. To his credit, the Premier clearly understands how serious this matter is. He is not the only one. Yesterday, Professor Richard Herr told *ABC* radio:

I'm afraid Eric needs to go back to Pol. Sci. 101 because it isn't a political stunt, it's genuinely serious.

When we asked Mr Eric Abetz about this today, he tried to defend himself by referring to a quote from *The Australian* that said, he was 'technically correct'. Let us read that full quote from Matthew Denholm in context. He said:

Abetz was technically correct. Such a vote is not legally binding. However, to flout the will of parliament would have been an assault on long-standing convention and the Westminster system in itself.

That is the critical point we are making, honourable Speaker. Denholm's piece went on to call Abetz's approach belligerent and said it would have 'further destabilised the government', and he credits Jeremy Rockliff for taking a pragmatic and responsible approach. We agree, the Premier deserves credit for intervening and sticking out for our parliament and Westminster tradition, but what of Mr Eric Abetz? This morning, we gave him every opportunity to retract

his statement. He did not do so. Instead, he simply said he would 'Fall in line with the Premier's position'.

It is obvious that Eric Abetz has palpable contempt for this parliament and disregard for the foundational conventions of our system of government. Nobody like that should hold the role of leader of government business, let alone be Attorney-General.

It is over to Premier Rockliff. He did the right thing yesterday by assuring us the will of the parliament and the will of the people would be respected. We need him to hold the line. Premier, you get to decide your ministry. Respect this parliament please. Do not reward Eric Abetz's shocking attitude by making him the Attorney-General.

Arts Tasmania and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra Durga Puja Festival

[7.39 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark - Minister for the Arts) - Honourable Speaker, I rise tonight to note the excellent relationship between Arts Tasmania and the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, which has led them to get together to provide some thought leadership in the sector.

It was my great pleasure recently to attend a session of the TSO's Growing Pains in the Arts. This is an annual series of free events made possible through a partnership with Arts Tasmania. This event, now in its sixth year, is a calendar highlight for artists, arts workers and organisations alike. With a focus on education, capacity development and sector growth in areas of income generation, branding, advocacy, and the value of the arts, this series has benefited Tasmanian artists and organisations through opportunities to hear firsthand from subject matter experts from across Australia. The evening event I was privileged to attend focused on the process of pitching existing creative works and new ideas to those who hold the decision-making power for festivals, venues, arts organisations, and other arts bodies.

As I travelled the state, meeting those in our vibrant creative sector, it is clear that we are not short of creative and talented individuals. It is important to understand creativity and artistic flair is only one component. Events like Growing Pains in the Arts service to assist translating creativity into revenues and exhibition. I am very supportive of that.

In addition, as I have some time, I will share with the Chamber the Durga Puja festival celebrations, which were fantastic. It is without a doubt that we, and the Tasmanian Government in particular, have a firm friendship with Tasmania's growing Bengali community. Last Saturday, I attended the celebration of Durga Puja, the Bengali community's largest celebration of the year. First, a big thank you to the Royal Bengal Club of Tasmania, and President, Dr Abhijit Das, for bringing us all together.

'Durga Puja. What is this?' I hear you say in this very quiet Chamber where you did not actually say that. I am going to tell you anyway. The festival pays homage to the Hindu goddess Durga, the powerful goddess in Hindu mythology, symbolising strength, resilience and the protective nature of women. Durga also reflects the multi-dimensional roles women play, and we know all about that in political life. She embodies compassion, wisdom and unyielding power.

In 2021, Durga Puja was inscribed on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) representative list of intangible cultural heritage of humanity. That is a big deal. The Bengali diaspora's deep connection to their culture, language, literature and art is admirable.

Despite living abroad, many Bengalis continue to speak Bengali at home, and teach the language to their children. This dedication helps preserve their rich Bengali literary tradition, from Tagore's poetry to the folk songs of ball musicians. Bengali people have made significant contributions globally in various fields, particularly in academia, science and literature. The intellectual tradition established in Bengali during the Bengal Renaissance continues to thrive among the diaspora.

Famous personalities include Amartya Sen, and Satyajit Ray, who won a lifetime achievement Oscar and is known as one of the greatest film directors, serve as global icons of this intellectual and creative tradition.

Bengali communities, no matter where they are, carry a deep affection for music and poetry. You certainly saw that in the celebrations: the dancing, the singing, it was just beautiful. This is reflected in the thriving music groups, performances and poetry recitations that keep the musical soul of Bengal alive. The diaspora also embraces and blends with the cultures of the countries that they live in, leading to a unique fusion of Bengali and foreign influences. This can be seen in art, music and cuisine where traditional Bengali elements mix with global trends. We certainly saw some of that on the night as well. It is evident that the Bengali diaspora maintains a delicate balance between adapting to new environments and preserving the distinctiveness of their rich heritage, which can be seen here today. I acknowledge and thank the Royal Bengal Club of Tasmania and all the volunteers and cultural performers for their very hard work in creating this outstanding event.

As I attend more of these events, I notice with great respect the inclusion. The way they go about that is really beautiful and remarkable: to see the families and all their children in the event, and the beautiful saris and dresses.

Time expired.

Westbury Heavy Vehicle Driver Rest Area

[7.44 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to talk about a constituent issue which I have raised in the House before. It was to do with a proposed truck stop just outside of Westbury on the Bass Highway. It was the Firth family who were involved in that. The particular paddock State Growth wanted to compulsorily acquire had the highest alkaloid reading in the region. The Firths are highly regarded farmers, salt-of-the-earth people, bright people, and they tried really hard at many different levels to negotiate with the department for there not to be a fuel stop placed on their beautiful paddocks.

I will read into the record the article written in the *Mercury*. The Firths really had to put themselves out there too. They had to have photographs taken of themselves and really champion their cause. They were very supported by their local community against State Growth:

A Tasmanian farming family has vowed to fight to the end against state government plans to forcibly acquire land for a 20-truck vehicle rest stop on their property.

Carol and John Firth first heard about the government's Heavy Vehicle Driver Rest Area Strategy in January this year when they received a letter from the Department of State Growth seeking to arrange for testing on their property.

'We weren't even consulted to start with and then we were just given a project update that it was happening,' Mrs Firth said.

She later learned the department had all but ruled out other options and was intending to acquire 1.4 hectares of the family's land on the highway.

'They won't be putting a truck stop down on Jeremy Rockliff's Sassafras farm. They wouldn't dare,' she said.

It was a fantastic headline, a very good point she made.

She estimated the cost of the loss of the land and future earnings from it at \$120,000.

She has denied permission for the department's engineering consultants, Pitt&Sherry, to conduct tests on her land and is also contacting her local politicians and seeking legal advice. She singled out Pitt&Sherry for special criticism and she stated:

'They just keep bulldozing you and I'm sick of it. I'm not going to be bulldozed,' she said. 'I've said we're not going to do it but Pitt&Sherry just keep going, like asking us to meet the project manager. Well, no, I'm not up to that stage and I'll never be up to that stage,' Mrs Firth said.

She said State Growth fixated on her property from the beginning and dismissed viable alternative sites, such as the industrial area on Birralelee Road.

'The truck stops are there for refuelling anyway and into the future they could plan it so they are recharging the electric trucks.'

She said the state government could save money by building a single large rest stop area in the industrial zone capable of accommodating vehicles travelling east and west on the Bass Highway. She said there were several other viable sites along the highway. 'I just don't think they've looked at it thoroughly,' she said.

In a letter to the family in March, State Growth secretary Craig Lincoln wrote that none of those alternatives were suitable.

'The heavy vehicle driver rest area needs to be located between the Birralelee Road overpass and Porters Bridge Road overpass,' Mr Lincoln wrote.

He said that the alternative sites were ruled out for various reasons, including because they were either too far along the highway, were at the bottom of a hill or contained underground infrastructure such as phone and gas lines.

Subsequent to this article, and subsequent to the pressure we put on in parliament, running a sensible argument that this was not a good site to place a truck rest stop, and trying to have a meaningful conversation with State Growth on behalf of the constituent that this was just ridiculous and not sensible, Mrs Firth has received a letter from the Premier, dated 10 October:

Thank you for your email the 16th of August regarding your request to meet with me to discuss your issue with the planned Westbury heavy vehicle driver rest stop on or near your property. I apologise for the delay in responding to you. The Department of State Growth has advised me that, following a recently completed review of options for the Westbury site, the decision has been made to use an alternative location approximately two kilometres west of your property on the Bass Highway Exton on-ramp. Consequently, I am pleased to advise that there will be no impacts to your property.

How ridiculous that it took six months for this department to finally let this family know that they were sensible from the start and they should not have had to put themselves at risk like this.

Neighbourhood Houses

[7.49 p.m.]

Mr JENNER (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I have had the pleasure of visiting some of the community houses in my division over the past few weeks, and I will take this opportunity to thank these amazing, caring people for all the tireless work they do in our community in providing this wonderful service. Two of these community houses were Dodges Ferry Neighbourhood House and the Neighbourhood House at Midway Point.

There are 35 neighbourhood and community houses operating across Tasmania, providing food and other essential supplies and services to Tasmanians doing it tough - and, believe me, they are doing it tough at the moment. We know that right now, in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis, these places are the difference between someone having a meal or going hungry. That is only half of it. Neighbourhood and community houses are a lifeline for the communities they serve. Whether it be for the meal or the cup of tea or just the chat, these neighbourhood houses are there for their community. The benefits of community and neighbourhood houses, particularly in rural and regional areas, are enormous.

In my electorate of Lyons, which is comprised predominantly of rural and regional communities, neighbourhood houses provide so much more than just the meal and a cup of tea. They have the ability to foster local and social connections in the community and keep that cohesion in places that can otherwise be quite isolated. Social isolation in rural communities can be a significant challenge facing residents, particularly the elderly and those who live alone. The service and spaces that neighbourhood houses provide are vital for people to come together, meet other residents and engage in activities that build a sense of community. It is not

a secret that isolation in large areas contributes to poor mental health. Neighbourhood houses play a significant role in promoting good mental health wellbeing.

Northern Midlands Council has expressed interest in purchasing the old Longford police station with the intention of turning it into a neighbourhood house. They argued that during the severe storms that recently battered the state, it was incredibly frustrating that they could not even offer residents of the Longford community a place where they could come and have a cup of tea and chat to other neighbours going through the same issues. In times of crisis like the intense storms we have just seen in the north, it is essential that these places in the community get together and band around each other. That is how they get through these crises.

It is my hope that the House understands the importance of these neighbourhood houses and the function they serve within the community, and ensures that all neighbourhood and community houses have the resources they need to continue to operate.

Wayne Rattray - Tribute

[7.53 p.m.]

Ms HOWLETT (Lyons - Minister for Racing) - Honourable Speaker, I rise tonight to pay my respects and acknowledge the passing of Wayne Rattray, one of Tasmania's harness racing greats. The Rattray name and the Karalta Racing Stable are some of the most storied and famous in the harness racing code. Wayne, a giant of Tasmanian racing and a stalwart of the Ringarooma and Longford community, passed away at the age of 86 in recent weeks. I send my heartfelt condolences to his wife Gaye, their four sons, Neville, Robert, Kent and Barry, and their many grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Wayne was inducted into the Tasmanian Harness Racing Hall of Fame in 2014. This recognition was a fitting testament to his enduring legacy and the profound impact he had on the sport. His long list of achievements, not just in Tasmania but throughout Australia, earned him this prestigious honour. His journey of great success in harness racing began in 1974 when he drove his first winner, named First Credit. Wayne dominated the Tasmanian harness racing scene during the 1980s and early 1990s, collecting six trainers' premierships. During the 1989 and 1990 season, Wayne became the first Tasmanian trainer across both equine codes to prepare 100 winners in a season. His red and black racing colours were chosen from his days at the Ringarooma Football Club, one of many local sporting organisations with which he was involved. In his early days, he was also a successful tennis player and axeman.

Wayne's wonderful legacy is that the Rattray name, synonymous with excellence in the Tasmanian harness racing industry, will remain prominent in the state's and nation's form guide for many, many decades. Three generations are passionately involved in training, driving, ownership and breeding. Some of his great grandchildren are actively involved in the state's Mini Trot program. Wayne was generous with his time and a keen mentor to many in the industry. He employed numerous young people to help kickstart their careers in the industry, and was always happy to offer advice and mentor those finding their way.

Some 35 years ago, the *Examiner* ran a feature on Wayne. When he was asked the secret to his success in racing, sport and life, Wayne responded with some sage advice:

As true then as it is today, I think I work harder than most and I apply myself to the job.

Wayne, at the time, had put up a sign at the Ringarooma football club, that said:

God gave us two ends, one to sit on and one to think with. Success depends on which end you use the most.

The hard work and dedication of Wayne Rattray is something to which the Tasmanian racing community owes a lasting debt of gratitude. My sincere condolences to his family and loved ones. I look forward to continuing to see the Rattray name in race books around Tasmania and Australia for many years to come. Rest in peace Wayne Rattray: a life well lived.

Potholes

The Overland Track

[7.57 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Earlier today I was talking about potholes. I now have my figures in front of me that came from the question on notice to the Premier when he was asked, 'Can you please breakdown the number of potholes across the state roads by road and the number that have been filled?' What that highlighted was that there were 1956 potholes identified since 26 August 2024, and there were 1728 filled as of 23 September 2024. What this did not point out is that as of 23 September, there were still 228 left to be filled. The Premier doing his nice little media stunt filling one pothole was nowhere near enough because there were still 127 that he probably should have gotten around to.

What this also highlights is why people are so upset about potholes. We have heard earlier today the people of the west coast complaining about the state of the Murchison Highway. It is pretty easy to see why when you look at these figures. The total potholes identified on the Murchison Highway since 26 August was 279. The number filled as of 23 September 2024 was 179. That meant there was still 100 potholes on the Murchison Highway still outstanding. It is no wonder that the people who use the Murchison Highway are particularly upset about the state of the roads. It was really disappointing that it was only today in Question Time, in an answer to another question, that the Premier actually referred to concerns he had about the state of the pavements of the roads in Tasmania. He needs to get on with it. Filling just one pothole will not help. If he went down to the Murchison Highway, there are another 100 waiting for him, and maybe he should get on with it. That is why people are upset with potholes. That is why it is not good enough, and the government needs to step up.

While I am at it, I would also like to talk about an activity that I underwent during the break from parliament. That was my daughter and I - we managed to walk the Overland Track. We hurriedly got in and booked on the day that it was filling up very fast, and communicated with my daughter and my wife. I said to my wife, 'Can you make it? Can you do it?' It was just a little bit doubtful and, but I managed to do it with my 15-year-old daughter Maisie, and we had a fantastic time. It was fabulous. I will point out a few good things about it.

First of all, it was an amazing dad and daughter time because you are with each other walking, backpacking, cooking and doing everything together. It was fantastic.

Every day, I think there are 32 who can set out. I am not sure if 32 started the day we did, but it was probably pretty close to 32. We were the only two Tasmanians. There were people from all over the world and from all over the country who came to walk the Overland Track. The weather was not too bad. We got rained on a little bit but it was still okay. One thing that I was not expecting was the state of the huts. There are three brand new huts and they are sensational. You could swear that they were cut out from an architect's magazine.

The hut at Waterfall Valley is spectacular. It has a big A-frame window that perfectly frames Barn Bluff in the background. The Windermere Hut, which was my favourite, was spectacular; it had a massive window with a view of the lake. Kia Ora was also brand new. It was probably not quite the weather to swim in the lake. The new Pelion Hut is quite big, but there might be some work needed to be done because when we were lying down for our afternoon nap after a walk, you could feel the whole building shaking when people were walking past. There is some underpinning that probably needs to be done but the new huts were sensational. They had lights and they were great places to be. They had gas heating, which was used rather sparingly.

That was the first time I have done the whole Overland Track. I have done bits of it before, but you are meeting the same people day after day and it was great getting to know them and having a chat. Like most social situations, you are a bit frosty day one, but by the end of it, you are very friendly and having a great time talking to people from all over the world and all over the country. It is an icon of the state. We should be very proud of the work that has been done.

There will be further improvements over the years, but I definitely want to do it again. I want to do it with other members of my family. I could not recommend it highly enough. You just have to be quick to get in and book. That is the only issue, because the places fill up fast. All the school holiday ones disappeared like that, especially in the summer, but it is definitely worth doing and I recommend it.

Time expired.

National Carers Week 2024

[8.02 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Community Services) - I will be brief. This week is National Carers Week, and I rise tonight to bring attention to the monumental gift that unpaid carers give our communities in our state and right across our country. Tasmania's 87,000 unpaid carers are among the 2.65 million Australians who provide care and support to a family member or friend who cannot fully care for themselves.

Events will be held across Tasmania this week to show unpaid carers how much they are valued and appreciated. The Tasmanian government has doubled its funding for Carers Week activities for the next three years, and I will say more about that later in this speech.

First, I will tell you about a teenage carer in my electorate who I know and whose story is typical of too many other young people who find themselves taking on a role that should be well beyond their years. Isabella, known to her friends as Izzy, is 18 years old. She was just eight when she and her older sister became carers for their little brother and their single mother

after she had a stroke. Izzy's sister left to study on the mainland when Izzy was 14, and she then became a principal carer for her mother and brother, who has special needs arising from his very premature birth.

Izzy had not recognised that what she was doing was being a carer until her GP explained this to her and was able to point out some of the support and help that is available to carers like her in Tasmania. The doctor has been a great support to Izzy and her family, helping with connections to Carers Tasmania and its service provider, Care to Serve, which delivers the Carer Gateway program in Tasmania.

Izzy does not see what she does for her family as a job or even a caring role; she sees it as an act of love, and she said she would do it all again in a heartbeat if that is what was needed.

All the experience she has gained in a decade as a carer is helping other people. She helps run empowerment programs for people who have been bullied and provides valuable insights from her lived experience to the boards of both Carer Tasmania and Care to Serve. I am proud to say Izzy is a member of my Minister's Carers Advisory Council, and she is a winner of a 2023 Tasmanian Young Achiever award. I congratulate her on her achievements and thank Izzy for her service and her continuing advice, which we value very, very much.

In the 2024-25 state Budget, funding for Carers Week was doubled to \$40,000 a year for three years, including \$20,000 per year for the Carers Small Grants program. I recently had the pleasure of announcing 11 successful applicants for the 2024-25 round of grants. One of the recipients is Rant Arts from my electorate in Devonport for its project offering free mental health and wellbeing training for carers in its local area. Other successful applicants include the Geeveston Community Centre; Jordan River Services; Kickstart Arts; Down Syndrome Tasmania; Mental Health, Family and Friends Tasmania; Fostering Hope Community; the Parkside Foundation; Kingborough Community Enterprise Centre; the Motor Neurone Disease Association of Victoria; and the Polish Association. I congratulate all these organisations and thank Carers Tasmania for its work as the peak body caring for the carers.

The biggest thanks of all, Speaker, and my unwavering admiration goes to the carers themselves for the immeasurable difference they make in the lives of their loved ones in all Tasmanian communities every day. Thank you.

Ride2Work Day 2024

Hobart Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure

[8.07 p.m.]

Ms BURNET (Clark) - Thank you, Speaker. I will make three points and point out that tomorrow is Ride2Work Day around Tasmania, but particularly two breakfasts are occurring in the south at Kingston and Mawson Place. My colleague Mr Bayley will be there again, and possibly Mr Willie. I also hope to see the minister for Transport at the Ride2Work Day because one of the things that occurred over the past few days is the defunding of some integral bike infrastructure at the western end of Collins Street, which was a tactical urban response. Collins Street is one of the main spines for pedestrians and bike riders coming into the city, moving from east to west or west to east.

It was very unfortunate that in July, with great grand fanfare, the Minister for Transport announced that there would be \$170,000 spent on this project in conjunction with the City of Hobart. The state government had been working very hard over the years with the City of Hobart to deliver this project. Lo and behold, three months later, the minister decides to pull that funding last week, all of a sudden, with no fanfare. Last night, the City of Hobart decided to fund the project themselves. It should not be up to a city to do the work that the state government should be doing. They should not have to lead that urban renewal program but here we are.

At the other end of Collins Street, there is a proposed significant 200-metre-span walkway: an active transport link to the proposed stadium. Now, this is unfunded; it is an important part of the stadium infrastructure, but it is unfunded at this stage. The amount of money that is estimated for it to cost is between \$44 million and \$56.5 million. It will be important because it will mean that those people who come down from the north-west or come from the north and want to park in the city to go to any event at the proposed Macquarie Point Stadium will park in the city and walk up Collins Street or ride their bikes along that bridge to the stadium. That is proposed but it is unfunded. We have this unfortunate vanity project and it really needs to be pointed out that those priorities that make the lives better for everyday Tasmanians should be funded.

We have a number of other cycle and active transport infrastructure projects supposedly funded that the minister talked of today and there is \$780,000 worth of funds for smaller projects, and I wonder how many of those will be funded. It is really important that the government reprioritises and makes sure that they are prioritising things that are good social infrastructure and infrastructure projects for everyday Tasmanians.

St. Cecilia School of Music 50th Anniversary

[8.11 p.m.]

Ms ROSOL (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I rise this evening to congratulate St Cecilia School of Music on celebrating their recent 50th anniversary. It was my pleasure to attend a reception at the City of Launceston Town Hall to mark the occasion with a room full of current and former St. Cecilia students and teachers, and yourself, Chair. Over 100 people attended the celebration, which is a testament to the success of the school and the important place it has had, and continues to have, in the hearts and lives of many Tasmanians. It was also a treat at the reception to listen to performances by current and past students. The Launceston community has an amazing depth and richness of musical talent and I have no doubt that St. Cecilia School of Music has contributed to this.

The school was established in Launceston in 1974 by Matthews Tyson. His vision was to provide quality music teaching for the growing numbers of Tasmanians who wanted to learn music. The school started out with three music teachers but very quickly grew to the point of having over 1000 music students taught by 18 fully qualified professional music teachers. Teaching was provided to students of all ages and levels of development.

St. Cecilia has grown and extended beyond teaching music to individual students. It still provides that musical education, but the school has also developed its own progressive examination and assessment system that is recognised and accepted throughout Australia and

around the world. I first came into contact with St. Cecilia while undertaking a beginning level violin exam about 20 years ago.

The St. Cecilia syllabus offers graded examinations starting with beginner, junior and preliminary levels, progressing right through grades 1 to 8 up to diploma level. Students can also undertake concert and recital certificates, and St. Cecilia offers a full suite of examination options in all instruments and results can be registered on the Australian State Education Certificates.

It is the St. Cecilia examination system that has taken the school to the world. Examinations that initially commenced in Launceston are now available in all major cities and regions of Australia, New Zealand, and other global sites including Hong Kong, Britain, Italy and the USA. It was wonderful to see people from several of these locations present at the recent celebrations. As well as lessons and examinations, St. Cecilia School of Music has a number of orchestras that perform around Tasmania, including the St. Cecilia Chamber Orchestra, currently conducted by Michael Stocks, which has a reputation as one of the finest orchestral groups in Tasmania and has undertaken performance tours around Australia and New Zealand. Each of the orchestras provides opportunities for musicians in Launceston to learn and perform with others. I have personally met many people who are members of these orchestras and the challenge, satisfaction, and joy they feel at being part of creating music is easy to see. I also know that the whole community benefits from these orchestras with the opportunity to go along to concerts and enjoy good music.

Music is a gift. Learning music boosts wellbeing and helps improve concentration and memory. It stimulates many different parts of the brain in ways that boost cognitive development and motor skill development in children. Music enriches our lives, lifts our spirits, and draws us together and unites us.

I have outlined a brief history of St. Cecilia School of Music and its contributions to the music scene in Launceston and beyond, but it is more difficult to quantify and describe those less tangible contributions of the school to music and the arts in Tasmania. The evidence was on full display at the 50th anniversary event, with that room full of people enjoying music, warmly connecting with each other and reminiscing about their experiences.

What an achievement, 50 years of contributing to the arts and music community, not only in Launceston but eventually around the world. I am quite biased, honourable Speaker, but I have a feeling you might agree with me when I say lots of good things come from Launceston, and St Cecilia School of Music is definitely one of them.

Warm congratulations to Matthews Tyson and all those who have contributed to St. Cecilia's many successes. Launceston and the world are more delightfully musical because of them.

Tasmania Police Academy Recruits

[8.16 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Minister for Housing and Planning) - I rise tonight to celebrate the 22 amazing constables who have just walked out of the Tasmania Police Academy onto the beat in communities right around our state. We have exceptional people who put their hands

up to be part of Tasmania Police. They are truly some of Tasmania's finest and the latest recruit course that we have had coming through as part of our record police recruit blitz is no exception.

They are extraordinary people. They vary in age between 18 and 42 and they bring a range of different life experiences and backgrounds to their new role as Tasmania Police officers. We have got two lifeguards, some customer service and radio dispatch operators, a horticulturalist and even a camel handler, to name a few. We had some exceptional people on this course as well. A big shout out to Daniel Morrison who duxed the course and to Patrick Verrell who was runner-up dux.

Prior to joining Tasmanian Police, Daniel worked as an estimator. He has been posted to Bellerive and prior to joining, Patrick worked as a radio dispatch operator, which is a fantastic pathway, can I say, for our police officers and for our future police recruits. He has been posted to Bridgewater. There are some people that did not necessarily receive the top awards who I think are absolutely worthy of note as part of this course.

In particular, I will share a little bit about the story of a young man called Ahmed Omer who was one of JCP Youth's first participants and he has just been accepted into Tasmanian Police as a constable and is now out on the beat. We all have immense pride of the story that he has been on and the journey with the team at JCP Youth. Will Smith and his team there do extraordinary work with young people, taking them from a pretty difficult time in their lives oftentimes to really becoming leaders in our community and I cannot think of a stronger example of this young man.

Will Smith, in his post celebrating Ahmed going into this process, said:

Ahmed, to say we are proud of you would simply be an understatement. One of our OG beasts. You've overcome many challenges that many could not even conceive. From arriving in Australia with very little English, to Will and the team having to break up a fight that you were in, through to being a school leader and now having grown into the member of society that you are today. The whole JCP team feel incredibly privileged to have joined you for such a small part of your journey. On behalf of the entire JCP family, we wish you a huge congratulations on this outstanding milestone that you've achieved.

You're an exemplary role model to many beyond your realisation and JCP itself would not be the same without the impact and the value that you've shared and we cannot wait to see you continue to grow, to be challenged and share your unique strengths with Tasmania Police.

Honourable Speaker, Constable Ahmed Omer gets to now share that, on his journey with Tasmania Police, as a Tasmanian police officer making a difference in the lives of Tasmanians in our local communities, being there in some of the most difficult moments for these people, providing leadership, skill, professionalism, dedication, integrity and compassion as well.

We are beyond proud of the journey that he has been on. A big shout-out to one of our extraordinary policing families that we have: Constable Lucy Wilkinson will be following in the footsteps of her siblings, Amelia and Oliver, and her dad, Stuart, who is the head of the

entire north-west region as our western district commander. It is often something that you note with our uniformed services: the legacy of family service that often comes through. Generations of people step-up time and time again, whether it is our police, our military, firefighters, SES, ambulance and others, people who are driven almost by their DNA to serve and then embrace that challenge and embrace that family legacy. I am just so grateful that we have such extraordinary people.

We also welcome our new police dogs, who are always a highlight, Basil, Tilly, and Nicky, who will be serving in communities, sniffing out firearms and explosives in Hobart and Devonport and detecting drugs in Launceston. It is a wonderful thing to have so many people and our furry friends stepping up to serve with Tasmania Police and to keep our community safe.

The House adjourned at 8.21 p.m.

Appendix 1

QUESTION on NOTICE

Question No. 9 of 2024 House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Rebecca White MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Jeremy Rockliff MP

QUESTION:

In August 2020, Tasmanian Alkaloids opened a new medicinal cannabis venture with the help of a \$10 million government loan:

- (1) Has the loan now been repaid in full?
- (2) If the loan has not been repaid in full, when will it be? (23 May 2024)

RESPONSE:

- (1) No.
- (2) It is expected to be repaid by 2030.



Hon Jeremy Rockliff MP
Minister for Trade and Major Investment

Date: Thursday, 12 September 2024

Appendix 2

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Question No. 18 of 2024 House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Cecily Rosol MP

ANSWERED BY: Department for Education, Children and
Young People

QUESTION: In relation to Covid-19, have there been
any lockdowns in Ashley Youth Detention
Centre due to staff sickness from Covid-19,
and if so, how many times has this
occurred?

ANSWER:

I have been advised by the Department for Education, Children and Young People,
that since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, AYDC lockdowns due to
Covid-19 infection have not been necessary.



APPROVED/NOT APPROVED

Hon. Minister Jaensch
Minister for Children and Youth

Date: ¹³ September 2024