

Tuesday 16 October 2018

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

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER - Honourable members, it is my pleasure today to acknowledge children from year 6 at Sacred Heart College of New Town. Welcome to parliament.

Members - Hear, hear.

STATEMENT BY PREMIER

Ms Sarah Courtney - Release from Ministerial Responsibilities

[10.03 a.m.]

Mr HODGMAN (Franklin - Premier) - Madam Speaker, I inform the House that for this week's sitting I will take on questions and duties related to the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Primary Industries and Water and the Minister for Racing, Ms Courtney.

Ms Courtney has requested to step down from her responsibilities pending the outcome of an independent review into a conflict of interest situation that has arisen and that I was advised of last Sunday evening. Ms Courtney has advised me that she and the secretary of the Department of Primary Industries and Water, Dr Whittington, have recently developed a personal relationship.

Similarly, Dr Whittington is also on leave until these matters are resolved. Yesterday I requested the head of the State Service, Ms Jenny Gale, review all relevant decisions made by Ms Courtney.

I have also asked Ms Gale to consider whether a State Service code of conduct investigation is required in relation to Dr Whittington. I have also sought independent advice from respected Commonwealth and state senior public servant, Mr Damian Bugg QC, to determine whether there has been a potential breach of the ministerial code of conduct.

Following the completion of this process, I will have more to say about this matter. Aside from the conflict of interest matter, this is also a sensitive personal matter and I ask that the privacy of all those involved in this matter is respected.

QUESTIONS

Health - Funding

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mr FERGUSON

[10.04 a.m.]

You have given Tasmanians an undertaking that you will this week announce new measures to address what your Government has finally admitted is a crisis in Tasmania's health and hospital

system. Can you provide a guarantee the new measures you have foreshadowed will include plugging the \$100 million health funding black hole, which was revealed in the KPMG report you received last March and is still kept secret? You know that KPMG found a persistent structural deficit of \$96.4 million in 2015-2016, rising to \$100 million in 2016-2017. You know that the underfunding that you have delivered is largely responsible for the crisis Tasmanians face today. Are you going to commit to reinstating that funding this week?

It is a simple question: is the minister going to commit to reinstating that funding this week?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this is what bipartisanship looks like. The Government is an investor in the health system. I welcome the Leader of the Opposition's more recent change of attitude on health and her attempt to be bipartisan. That is a welcome and refreshing approach. No-one has all the answers to the health system. If we could see less of that approach, we might be able to achieve better outcomes for our health system.

The Leader of the Opposition has misrepresented what the Government's track record is in the health system. The language was about restoring funding that the Government had taken out. That is not true. The Government has increased funding in the health system every year that it has been in office. Others in the House are not able to say they did that when they were in office. We have invested in the health system. We are spending almost \$2 billion more on health than in the budget before we were elected in 2013-14. In this year's state Budget, we have put in not \$100 million more but \$400 million more in additional health investment.

We have been rebuilding our health system since our first term of government and we are proud of that. We have employed 90 more doctors. If you want to employ 90 more doctors, you need to provide funding for 90 more doctors. That is what we have done. We have employed more than 370 extra nurses. If you want to employ 370 extra nurses, you have to provide funding for those 370 extra nurses. We have employed 66 more allied health professionals in our health and hospital system. If you are going to employ 66 extra AHPs, you have to provide the funding. That is what we have done.

What have those wonderful staff done? They have opened 120 more beds in our hospital system. Let us face facts and reality -

Mr Bacon - Why don't you?

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Mr Bacon.

Mr FERGUSON - The fact is, we are seeing increasing demand. As the Premier said two weekends ago, we are trying to meet today's demand in yesterday's hospital. We have a plan. We are building new hospitals. We have the Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment in its final year of construction. That is good. Later today I will have more to say about the Government's positive agenda to invest in our health system and support Tasmanian patients and meet that increased demand.

I encourage the Leader of the Opposition when that occurs, to be positive about supporting the Government, delivering the plan that Tasmanians voted for.

Health - Funding

Ms WHITE question to the MINISTER for HEALTH, Mr FERGUSON

[10.08 a.m.]

The Premier told your Liberal State Conference on 7 October that the state of Tasmania's health system was 'far from good enough'. The Liberal member for Clark last Friday, told the ABC that the health system was clearly in crisis and that you, as Health minister, probably needed a significant mini-budget injection of cash. You have built strong expectations for Tasmanians that you will this week announce new measures to address the crisis in Tasmania's health and hospital system, a crisis that the Government now admits to overseeing for the past four-and-a-half years.

Considering the health funding black hole revealed in the secret KPMG Report, how much of that missing \$100 million have you been able to secure from your colleague, the Treasurer Peter Gutwein, to plug the gap and address the health crisis, as you have promised to do.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for more bipartisan support. I say that tongue in cheek.

We have more to say later today. I encourage the Leader of the Opposition to anticipate the statement I will be making on behalf of the Hodgman majority Liberal Government because we have a plan. Tasmanians voted for our plan and Tasmanians expect us to deliver it. The Opposition should expect us to deliver on our plan and our commitments.

While dollar figures get thrown around the Chamber, we are investing \$2 billion more on Health over the forward Estimates than the budget arrangements we inherited. The only government that slashed Health was the previous one, the one over there. The Government you are looking at is the Hodgman Government that invests in the health system.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. Standing Order 45 goes to relevance. The minister was asked how much money he would be injecting into Health. He is bragging about it but I ask you to draw his attention to the details of the question.

Madam SPEAKER - As you know, that is not a point of order. You had a chance to reiterate the question and hopefully the minister can reiterate his answer.

Mr FERGUSON - Madam Speaker, as I have already said, the Leader of the Opposition does not like hearing about the Government that is investing \$2 billion - it is two thousand million dollars. We know, and I agree with the Premier, it is not good enough when we see people waiting for care. Let us put that beyond doubt. That is why we need to do more. There should not be an argument about that.

We are trying to meet today's demand in yesterday's hospitals. I wish the Royal redevelopment was finished two years ago when it should have been. People talked about building the new hospital for 10 years, but we are doing it. We are one year away and in between now and when that exciting redevelopment is complete, which is providing us with an opportunity for 250 more beds, we need to work on other strategies and that is exactly what we are doing.

Ms O'Byrne - Are you providing the opportunity, or are you actually providing it?

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Byrne.

Mr FERGUSON - I hope the member noticed we are doing more across the system in Health with medical beds and mental health beds as well. We have a lot of investments that are supporting people.

Ms White - You cut mental health beds.

Mr FERGUSON - This is the sound of bipartisanship, Madam Speaker. It is only words. If the Labor Party would care to support the Government implementing the plan Tasmanians voted for then we will all be doing Tasmanians the service -

Ms White - Why don't you listen to other people and their input? You don't even consult.

Mr FERGUSON - that we owe them.

Madam SPEAKER - I call the member for Lyons, Mr Shelton.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker, can I ask why on the rotation -

Madam SPEAKER - Sorry, I saw him first but I will go back to convention. I have the pleasure of announcing you as the honourable member for Clark. All members for Denison are now members for Clark. Congratulations. Sorry, Mr Shelton.

Ms O'Connor - It doesn't have quite the same ring to it.

Lake Malbena - National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council Submission

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for PARKS, Mr HODGMAN

[10.13 a.m.]

Despite your Government's best endeavours to date to stall on our Right to Information application, we have a leaked copy of the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council submission to the federal government on the proposal to build permanent luxury huts and allow up to 120 helicopter flights and landings at Lake Malbena in the Walls of Jerusalem. The National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council is a key advisor under law to you as minister on developments in protected areas. This advice is clear that, like the fly fishers and other recreational users of the Walls of Jerusalem, your key advisory council does not support this expression of interest proposal. On 30 July this year it told the federal government -

NPWAC does not support this project progressing at this time and reiterates that contentious projects such as this should not be considered until there is an agreed framework to guide assessment.

Your federal colleagues approved it. Can you confirm the NPWAC gave you exactly the same advice and it was also ignored in approving this highly contentious development?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for the question. First, I categorically reject any assertion of any interference by me, my office or any ministerial officers in relation to Right to Information processes. They are appropriately handled by independent officers and assessed independently in accordance with the relevant legislation.

Second, in relation to the advice received concerning the Lake Malbena proposal, it is true to say there are varying views on this project. It is certainly one that has invited views from across the spectrum and has been subject to a most robust assessment process. It is important for members in this place and indeed the broader community to understand what this proposal has been through by way of assessment. It was one of the proposals that came forward through the expressions of interest initiative we opened up to explore potential sustainable, sensible eco-tourism developments in our wilderness areas.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. At risk of tedious repetition, this is a relevance issue. I ask the Premier, does he have the same advice on the state approval process from his key advisory council on Parks?

Madam SPEAKER - Thank you. I have to disallow that but I will ask the Premier to address the question, please.

Mr HODGMAN - I am going through each of the pertinent issues here with respect to this proposal and the assessment processes it has been through. That is a better way of approaching this rather than picking and choosing what suits those who are opposed to sensible and sustainable development in our parks, reserves and Crown lands.

Proposals undergo a rigorous assessment process and any proposal that is recommended to proceed is then required to go through requisite Commonwealth and state planning and approvals processes. One of the proposals under consideration and assessment is this Halls Island/Lake Malbena project, designed to develop a standing camp accommodation on this island in the TWWHA. The proposal has been publicly available on the website of the Office of the Coordinator-General since 2015. It has been in the planning and assessment phase for a number of years.

Helicopters are proposed to transport guests to and from the eastern edge of the lake adjacent to the island. The TWWHA management plan of 2016 allows for helicopter landings and take-offs from Halls Island on Lake Malbena. The plan was approved by the Commonwealth and accepted by the World Heritage Committee following broad community consultation. The Lake Malbena proposal, the TWWHA management plan and the federal government EPBC process that allow for the proposal's approval and progression to date have all -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. For the second time, the Premier is not answering the question. Did he get the same advice for the state approval process from his key advisory council?

Madam SPEAKER - I cannot accept that as a point of order but I can ask the Premier to continue speaking, and I think he believes he is addressing the question.

Mr HODGMAN - I am, Madam Speaker. I made the point with respect to advice received and views and input available to anyone with an interest due to the extensive consultation and

rigorous processes this proposal has been subject to, which I am outlining. They are pertinent to that very point. The proposal, through the TWWHA management plan and federal government EPBC process, which have allowed for the proposal's approval and progression to date, have all been subject to extensive public consultation. Parks and Wildlife has been working with the proponents on this matter for over a year. It is a sensitive and appropriate development at the site, which ensures impacts can be mitigated or avoided as part of the assessment process.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. I believe the Premier has misled the House.

Mr Hodgman - You just do not want to know the truth.

Madam SPEAKER - I am sorry, that is a very serious accusation.

Ms O'CONNOR - That is right and I ask him to clarify it. He said this project has been through extensive consultation. It has not.

Mr FERGUSON - Madam Speaker, on the point of order, the member has not raised a point of order. What she has just said can only be put forward in a substantive motion.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, it might be coming. The Premier is being misleading.

Madam SPEAKER - I am going to uphold that point of order because those accusations can only be made in substantive motions. I urge you to refrain from doing that again. Thank you.

Mr HODGMAN - Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was asked specifically about the advice I have received in relation to this matter. When I provide that advice to the member for Clark, she takes exception to hearing it because it does not suit her. There has been a voluntary referral of this proposal to the Australian Government under the EPBC act. That was a voluntary move taken by the proponents and it requires further process. There is public consultation. The Commonwealth Department of Environment and Energy has determined that the project is not a controlled action under the EPBC. It has been assessed by the national authorities and it means the project can proceed on that basis. It has not been found to pose a threat to matters of national environmental significance. Now that the EPBC process is complete, the proponent may progress the development application to the local council and following that process. If the development application is successful, the Parks and Wildlife Service can finalise the reserve activity assessment.

Ms O'Connor - Of course it will be. It's a tick and flick now, isn't it? It's a permitted use.

Madam SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, I give you a first warning.

Mr HODGMAN - I make those points to point to the fact this proposal has been the subject of extensive process and consultation. I know there are people in the community, including the Greens, who will not be supportive of projects like this that continue to keep Tasmania at the front of the pack in the ecotourism space. There will be those who express that negative view to me, but when you consider objectively the lengthy processes this has been through at a state and Commonwealth level, in my view that should give Tasmanians confidence that this is one of those projects that will make Tasmania the ecotourism capital of the world that we should be.

Tasmania - Economic Performance

Mr SHELTON question to PREMIER, Mr HODGMAN

[10.21 a.m.]

Can the Premier please update the House on Tasmania's economic turnaround and the work being done by the Hodgman majority Liberal Government to take Tasmania to the next level?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question and the opportunity to talk about Tasmania's strong and positive economic conditions now, and to reflect that six or seven months ago the Tasmanian people elected a majority Liberal government for a second term to continue to deliver the plan we had started and the plan that is delivering positive results. It is a plan all about keeping our economy strong, which is important because it supports many Tasmanian businesses and provides more job opportunities for Tasmanians. It also ensures we are better able to manage our budget and put more resources into supporting essential services, such as our schools and our health system, to employ more police to keep our communities safe, to keep cost of living pressures down, and to invest in the infrastructure our growing state needs.

Tasmania is now a very different place from what it was four or five years ago. We have turned what was a basket-case economy into one of the nation's strongest performing economies: 15 300 more Tasmanians back in work and business confidence at record levels is something Tasmanians should be proud of. We never seek to claim credit for that but we are a government that has done a lot to turn around what were the lowest levels of business confidence in the country under the members now interjecting.

Mr O'Byrne - Name one thing you have done.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Mr O'Byrne.

Mr HODGMAN - We have had a massive turnaround in Tasmania's economic performance and we have also done one major thing, and that is to fix the budget we inherited that was in deficit. It was important that we did so and it is important, despite what some might suggest, bizarrely, that we spend money we do not have and what are very modest surpluses moving forward. I know Tasmanians will remember things like the fires and the floods this state went through recently that had a massive impact socially, financially and economically on many communities. If it were not for the surpluses we had available in our budget we would not have been able to respond as we did to those crises and unexpected shocks that can occur. That is at the heart of good budget management.

It is also why we are able to invest more into essential services. It is true to say, as the minister has outlined and will shortly outline further, that we are investing more into our health services, more than ever before, not only what we have budgeted but also where there are additional peaks in demand or points in our health system where we need to do more. We will respond because we are able to with this strong budget position.

It is not this Government that has cut staff, shut down wards, closed facilities or reduced support. As the minister has outlined, we have 100 more doctors, 500 more nurses, 70 more allied health professionals, and 200 of these have been employed since March. When anyone in this place

or outside it asks what we are doing to respond to increased demands in our health services, we say look at the additional people we have put into our health system: valued employees to work with us and to rebuild our health system.

It is important to not only reflect on the fact that Tasmania is now a lot different from what it was four or five years ago but, more importantly, where we are going. I fundamentally believe Tasmanians are more interested in where we are going and what we are doing, not where we have been.

As we have outlined, health will continue to be a major priority for this Government, and it is wrong and disingenuous for anyone to suggest otherwise, given our track record and the fact that we have also committed to putting 1300 more staff into our health system over the next six years, we are opening the new Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment that we commenced on time to deliver that additional capacity, as well as major investments across the state, including saving the Mersey, which was under threat under previous governments.

We are accepting responsibility for the challenges in our health system. It is true to say that demand has risen dramatically in recent years, and we are responding to that. We are always open to any sensible ideas and suggestions but we have not received many from the opposition party to this point. In fact, what they put forward when they were tested by the Tasmanian people in our democratic process that is the state election, they were found wanting, so you will understand why we are reluctant to suddenly accept any idea that the Opposition might come forward with. They have shown in this place and outside that they are more interested in political stunts and game-playing than actually contributing sensibly to improvements in our health system.

In addition to this, we will keep on with our effort in improving education standards. It is true to say that they have improved during this term of government. We will have all our schools provide years 11 and 12 by the end of this second term of government.

Madam SPEAKER - Minister, we are up to five minutes and 26 seconds.

Mr HODGMAN - Thank you, Madam Speaker, I will conclude. There is much to talk about in education, infrastructure investment and energy - there are great opportunities there. I make the point that while we accept there is much more to be done, we were re-elected as a majority Liberal government six or seven months ago to continue delivering our plan. We will do that because it is delivering positive results for our state.

Mental Health - Hospital in the Home Program

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mr FERGUSON

[10.27 a.m.]

You told the media and all of Tasmania on Sunday that health is finally your key priority, after ignoring the health and hospital system and plunging into crisis over the past four-and-a-half years. You also told the ABC on Sunday that you would announce a 'very strong plan' for mental health. Today you have revealed that the 'very strong' plan involves providing mental health beds inside patients' homes, instead of delivering on your election commitment to build a new ward with 10 beds at Mistral Place in Hobart.

Can you confirm that your election commitment to build new beds at Mistral Place has now been abandoned? When did you first find out that it would not be possible to deliver those beds at this location? Can you also guarantee that your plan for mental health will provide 15 mental health beds at what is still the rubble of the Peacock Centre? When will those beds be delivered? Additionally, will you commit to finally providing funding for capital works at Millbrook Rise in New Norfolk which, absurdly, is sitting empty, to provide treatment to mental health patients as a step-down facility?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. This Government has a strong record of investment in our health system. We are very proud to be continuing this investment with this budget. We have done the hard work over the last four years and have made some tough decisions. We have rebuilt funding for Health. Our investment in Health has increased from \$5.8 billion in 2013-14 to \$7.6 billion in 2018-19 - almost \$2 billion more over the forward Estimates. That includes an additional \$465 million into Health in this year's Budget brought down in May.

As we announced during the election, it is clear that we need additional mental health beds to take pressure off the Royal Hobart Hospital emergency department. Given the technical challenges presented at Mistral, as noted by the Chief Psychiatrist during budget Estimates and as I have acknowledged in this House, it is clear that we need to find a solution to deliver more mental health beds in the shorter term. This week we are letting Tasmanians know exactly how we will create the extra beds, as members opposite have been asking me to do, after detailed work and advice.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr FERGUSON - I am not sure they want the answer, Madam Speaker, but I will continue. The number of mental health-related presentations at the Royal should not be lost on anyone here. It has increased by 35 per cent since 2013-14. That is a big increase, and that is why we will open 12 new mental health hospital-in-the-home beds in the Hobart area based on clinical advice of the Department of Health and our Chief Psychiatrist, Dr Aaron Groves.

Hospital in the Home is an innovative and safe model through which patients receive hospital-level care in their own home.

Members will remember the LGH Hospital in the Home service, which was cut. We have restored it. It is widely appreciated by the community and health professionals. I am advised that evidence shows this approach provides the same quality of care as traditional hospital-based care for medically stable patients. In some cases it results in superior outcomes.

The immediate benefits of these mental health beds, Hospital in the Home beds, will be felt by the Royal Hobart Hospital as additional bed options means reduced pressure on our staff and patients. It is expected this will employ approximately 15 new full-time equivalent staff and, more importantly, will provide care to an estimated 300 patients each year.

Ms O'Byrne - Fifteen staff?

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Byrne.

Mr FERGUSON - We have worked hard -

Ms O'Byrne - They are not getting full care, are they?

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

Mr FERGUSON - We have worked hard in mental health with the recent launch of the Peer Workforce Strategy, new child and adolescent units in our hospitals under construction and continual investment over the past four years. There is much more to be done to meet growing demand. That is what we are doing. We are getting on with the job. I will have more to say about mental health later today, but we will not be lectured by the one party which slashed mental health, cut half a billion dollars from Health and sacked a nurse a day for nine months.

If members want to know who is working in the interests of Tasmanians, including mentally vulnerable Tasmanians, look to the Liberal Government, because we have opened beds and we have employed 800 more health staff. Mental health for us is not a political belief; it is what we are doing. It is not a political game or strategy or weapon. We are investing.

Dr Broad - No, you are not. Everything is fine.

Mr FERGUSON - Not everything is fine. Nobody says that, but what we are doing is recognising a 35 per cent increase in demand. That requires people working together, a government that will invest and listen to clinical input. That is precisely what we are doing. We will never stop listening and we will never stop working for Tasmanians.

Mental Health - Hospital in the Home Program

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mr FERGUSON

[10.32 a.m.]

Your announcement today that you will deliver care for mental health patients at home rather than promised beds at Mistral Place is a panicked, reactionary, white-knuckle response to pressure from within your own party to deliver for Tasmanians suffering from mental ill health. Who did you consult with on the development of this policy to treat mental health patients at home? Is it not a fact that you are under so much pressure to save your job that you have again failed to consult with the people who know best at the frontline and the plan that you have suddenly come up with, instead of delivering beds has come as a surprise to everyone?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I have answered that question, but I will repeat the answer to the question. I have taken advice on this from our chief psychiatrist, a trusted and respected clinician. We should rely on and be confident in that advice.

Ms White - Mental Health Council? No. ANF? No. AMA? No. Medical Staff Association? No.

Mr FERGUSON - The people who are now rudely interjecting -

Madam SPEAKER - Sorry, minister. I remind the Opposition that I understand your passion for this particular issue, but I ask you to be respectful. The minister is trying to answer the question.

Mr FERGUSON - The Labor Party had Hospital in the Home. They did not cut it because they did not believe in it. They cut it because they cut half a billion dollars out of health. We have reintroduced Hospital in the Home -

Ms White - You have not spoken to anybody who delivers services like this.

Mr FERGUSON - and the chief psychiatrist Dr Aaron Groves - please do not politicise him. He is a trusted person -

Ms White - You are the one who is doing that, minister.

Mr FERGUSON - He is an eminent clinician in his field. I said in my previous answer to not prejudge that. I have said I will have more to say on mental health -

Ms O'Byrne - This is question time. You can say it now.

Mr FERGUSON - If the Labor Party is going to politic around this it will be extremely unhelpful.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Mr O'Byrne and Ms O'Byrne you are both on warnings. Mr Bacon, you are on your second warning.

Mr FERGUSON - The Government is investing in mental health. Do not forget we promised 25 beds for mental health and Labor promised only 10 beds.

Ms O'Byrne - You are not delivering them. You knew Mistral Place could not be done.

Mr FERGUSON - The Government is building 25 beds -

Mr O'BYRNE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. Standing Order 6. Who did he consult? He clearly has only consulted one person. He should finish his answer and sit down.

Madam SPEAKER - It is not a point of order. You have asked a clear question and the minister, hopefully, will attempt to answer it.

Mr FERGUSON - I will have more to say later today, but I do not want to hear the Labor Party politicking on mental health again. The Labor Party is trying to make this political, trying to make it about personality politics.

Ms O'Byrne - You promised beds you knew you could not deliver. You lied.

Mr FERGUSON - We are investing in mental health. The member opposite who called me a liar is the person who slashed mental health.

Mr Bacon - Is that what the coroner said about you?

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Mr Bacon, you are on your third warning. The next one you go out the door. Ms O'Byrne, you are on your second.

Mr FERGUSON - Madam Speaker, I will have more to say later today. I encourage members opposite to anticipate that because the Government is investing in mental health.

I ask the Labor Party, not only to stop politicking on mental health but also reverse Labor's position of opposing rebuilding the Peacock Centre.

Ms White - Talk to clinicians.

Mr FERGUSON - That would be a constructive, genuine demonstration of the bipartisanship that you are saying you will work toward. With that, I refer the member to my upcoming statement.

Lake Malbena - National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council Advice

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for PARKS, Mr HODGMAN

[10.36 a.m.]

We now know that your key parks advisory body advised the federal government not to give EPBC approval to the Lake Malbena proposal in the Walls of Jerusalem National Park. We have a copy of that advice which we seek the leave of the House to table.

I move -

That this advice be tabled.

Madam SPEAKER - Convention is that normally you would give more notice.

Ms O'CONNOR - In the interests of openness and transparency, will you commit to tabling the advice that the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council provided to you on the flawed opaque state approval process?

Can you explain why the advice of people with expertise in parks management and protection has been ignored by two levels of government in order to allow the degradation of wilderness values at Lake Malbena in the Walls of Jerusalem National Park?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for the question. I will not delay question time by reiterating the steps and processes that have been undertaken on this proposal at commonwealth and state level.

I will take advice and provide a response at a later time. I will not do anything that will compromise good process and that allows a proposal like this to be assessed at a state and Commonwealth level to be subject and available for consultation and the views of many.

Not all the advice and views I have received are supportive of this project, but I have confidence in the process, state and Commonwealth, that has recommended the proposal proceed.

GST - Deliberations and Council on Federal Financial Relations Meeting

Mr HIDDING question to TREASURER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.39 a.m.]

Can the Treasurer please update the House on GST deliberations and the Council on Federal Financial Relations meeting held two weeks ago in accordance with his commitment made to parliament?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his interest in this important matter. The position of the Government has been clear. Our position has always been that we would not agree to any changes to the GST distribution model that are not in Tasmania's best interests.

On face value, the Commonwealth proposal appeared to be a good deal. The new distribution model put forward by the Commonwealth, based on its modelling, would leave Tasmania \$112 million better off through to 2026-27 while leaving in place horizontal fiscal equalisation - HFE. In fact, the federal government has always said Tasmania would not be any worse off. However, modelling prepared by treasuries around the country, led by Victoria, indicates that under a number of scenarios Tasmania could be worse off.

Prior to the Council on Federal Financial Relations meeting, all state and territories treasurers signed a letter through the Board of Treasurers calling for a 'no worse off' guarantee to be provided by the Commonwealth. At the recent CFFR meeting in Melbourne I strongly advocated that a 'no worse off' provision be included in the proposed Commonwealth GST distribution legislation to ensure that no state or territory could receive less GST in future than the current system would provide. Accordingly, it is disappointing that the Commonwealth Government has to date not agreed to such a sensible amendment in its proposed legislation.

As I have stated on a number of occasions, the Tasmanian Government cannot and will not support the legislation in its current form and strongly urges the federal Treasurer to reconsider his position. A legislative guarantee such as the one proposed in the meeting and supported by all states and territories would ensure that the new GST model will always be a good deal for Tasmania regardless of whether economic conditions change, which does occur. It is important that all states have legislative protection to ensure future Commonwealth governments, no matter the party or the economic conditions prevailing, will live up to the commitments made. For example, in circumstances where Western Australia's revenues from mining increase or where Queensland, due to its strong resource base, became the second strongest state, Tasmania could be left worse off. That is why we are seeking a 'no worse off' guarantee and why we will continue to campaign for it. We have had consistent commitments from the federal government to this effect and now we want them to include those commitments in legislation.

During the last sitting of this House last month, I agreed to provide an update on the treasurers' conference and the GST modelling by the Department of Treasury and Finance following the Melbourne meeting. Following question time today I will table the report prepared by the Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance which contains analysis of the Productivity Commission's inquiry into horizontal fiscal equalisation, the Commonwealth Government's response as well as the outcomes for the Melbourne meeting.

The report explains the analysis undertaken by the Department of Treasury and Finance and outlines other economic scenarios which demonstrate the importance of a 'no worse off' guarantee. The modelling is similar to that undertaken and in accord with that developed by other states and territories. I have already released some of this modelling two weeks ago, as did other jurisdictions following this meeting. The report I will table today will satisfy the commitment I made to the House last month and I will also arrange for that report to be tabled in the Legislative Council.

As the Opposition knows, the issue of Tasmania's GST distribution has been an important one for all Tasmanian governments for a number of years now. I have already briefed Tasmanian Liberal senators on our report and the report I am releasing today will now be available to all other Tasmanian senators and it will be up to them whether or not they support a legislated 'no worse off' guarantee when the legislation is being considered. I want to repeat and make clear that the Government will not accept anything that is not in Tasmania's best interests.

Mental Health - Hospital in the Home Program

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mr FERGUSON

[10.43 a.m.]

Can you detail the criteria for patients who will be eligible to receive hospital-in-the-home care under your new plan? Can you understand that key stakeholders and unions rightly have many questions about your plan, particularly regarding the types of patients who will be eligible, given they were not consulted before you made your white-knuckle announcement today?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I have answered the question already. The Chief Psychiatrist, Dr Aaron Groves, provides advice to me and to the Government, as does the Department of Health. I advise Ms White that Dr Groves chairs the Mental Health Integration Task Force, a key action under Rethink Mental Health which I hope is still bipartisan although I am not sure if it is anymore. The whole exercise is about integrating our mental health services so they are not siloed under the old model. The Mental Health Integration Task Force has a very broad base membership and my advice is that this model is consistent with that direction. I will have further to say about that later today. I will conclude my remarks -

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Madam Speaker.

Mr Ferguson - Oh, seriously.

Ms O'BYRNE - Do not 'Oh, seriously' me; I am raising a point of order and I have every right to.

Madam Speaker, the minister, in a number of answers, has said, 'I will have more to say later today.' The reality is that this is question time. If the minister has answers he can provide then his obligation is to provide them to the House now and not at some later date. We can only assume that his ministerial statement is on health - we do not have that advice - but when asked a question the minister, who has information before him -

Mr Ferguson - This is a speech.

Ms O'BYRNE - Excuse me. Madam Speaker, I am being interjected on in my point of order.

Madam SPEAKER - I am afraid it is not a point of order. I hear your frustration. The minister has committed to the House that he will be detailing his health policies this afternoon.

Mr FERGUSON - Madam Speaker, I am not a clinician and I will not be -

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - As I was saying, I am not a clinician and I do not have the expertise to select patients for this. Clearly, Dr Grove's advice to government is that the patients who would be selected and eligible for Hospital in the Home will be clinician selected.

Same-Sex Marriage Legislation - Update

Mr BROOKS question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Ms ARCHER

[10.46 a.m.]

Can the Attorney-General please update the House on legislation to be tabled that will finalise changes to influence same-sex marriage in Tasmania?

Members interjecting.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question and interest in this important legislation. I ask the House for a bit of respect around this issue because there is great sensitivity - and I certainly have that sensitivity - around the issue. I am not quite sure why there is this angst around the Chamber this morning.

Today in Parliament I am pleased to be tabling the Justice and Related Legislation (Marriage Amendments) Bill 2018. The bill represents the final step in the process to implement the federal government's amendments to the Marriage Act that allowed same-sex couples to marry. Updating our laws to support the new Marriage Act is an important and necessary step to deliver on the historic decision made last year to allow same-sex couples to marry. The bill is important to allow consistency and to ensure that the spirit of this significant reform is accurately reflected in our own state-based legislation.

While the bill's importance should not be understated, the details are largely administrative in nature and consistent with the federal debate. These amendments must be -

Ms O'Connor - Why are you weakening the Anti-Discrimination Act?

Ms O'Byrne - Rule out doing that. Rule it out now.

Ms ARCHER - These amendments must be brought through our parliament as a high priority as we are working -

Ms O'Byrne - They don't require you to amend the Anti-Discrimination Act though, do they?

Madam SPEAKER - Ms O'Byrne, you are on your third warning. The next one means out the door.

Ms ARCHER - These amendments must be brought through our parliament as a high priority as we are working to a deadline of early December for commencement, as I have stated in this House on numerous occasions, to ensure we fulfil our obligations to implement the Commonwealth law.

Included in this bill is the removal of the forced divorce provisions in the Births, Deaths and the Marriages Act 1999, which requires that a person applying to register a change of sex not be married. Such provisions are now clearly obsolete.

In tabling this bill I want to speak to issues that I understand are of importance to many of us in this place. Members will be aware that a relatively new group, Transforming Tasmania, has been campaigning for reform with regard to how sex and gender are dealt with within our state-based legislation, including with respect to official documents such as birth certificates. One aspect of the reforms advocated for includes the removal of the current surgical requirement before an individual sex can be changed on a birth certificate. In addition, Transforming Tasmania is advocating for the removal of gender markers on birth certificates, as well as other policy change. We acknowledge these issues are of significance to many in our community but also strongly believe that such reforms deserve thorough consideration and consultation. With this in mind -

Ms O'Connor - You pick and choose your consultations, don't you?

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Please allow the minister to be heard.

Ms ARCHER - Thank you, Madam Speaker. With this in mind, the Government has asked the Tasmania Law Reform Institute to consider a referral to examine potential reform for the state and provide recommendations to the Government on matters relating to sex and gender in Tasmania's legislation. The request asks for work to be undertaken and completed within six months to ensure there is timely consideration of issues we know to be of importance. I acknowledge there is a desire for reforms to be wrapped up in the bill I am to table today; however there is good reason to keep these reforms separate.

Ms O'Byrne - What, the hard right of your party?

Ms ARCHER - Madam Speaker, I am explaining that point. There are three jurisdictions in Australia that have acted to remove the surgical requirement for a change of sex on birth certificates, namely Western Australia, South Australia and the ACT. None of those jurisdictions have made these changes at the same time as fulfilling their obligations to implement administrative changes as a result of changes to the Marriage Act.

Ms O'Byrne - That doesn't mean you don't do it.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please. I would like to hear what the minister has to say.

Ms ARCHER - Each has standalone legislation and each takes a different approach to the reform. I also understand the ACT is currently in the midst of reviewing their act, which highlights

this area of reform is evolving and requires careful and detailed consideration. Western Australia is also considering further legislative responses and has similarly asked their Law Reform Institute to do this work. We believe these reforms should not be rushed to meet the time frames of our implementation of the bill. I am to table it today to comply with strict time lines, but equally without providing a firm time frame for potential reform to be worked through. It is important to remember the Government has at no stage ruled out reform in this area. We are mindful of the issues faced by the LGBTI community and have a record of positive policies and reforms to support the LGBTI community, including legislation to expunge historic homosexual convictions.

We believe the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute is best placed to examine the models used for such reform, to assess the broader policy areas proposed for possible law reform and provide recommendations to Government. The TLRI is an appropriate body to facilitate a consultative and thorough report to inform Government policy. This is a specialist area of law reform. It is not widely or uniformly implemented in Australia and we want to make sure changes made in Tasmania are best suited to our own legislation and communities. Each and every person in Tasmania has an interest in how their defining personal characteristics such as sex and gender are dealt with in a government setting, be it on primary identity documents or in policy more broadly. We must make sure any changes are undertaken in a respectful, considered and consultative way.

We do not have the luxury in the time required to do that in the context of the bill soon to be before us. I am concerned that the subsequent amendments required to fully implement same sex marriage are not undermined by amendments focused on discrete, different reforms, however well-intentioned. I hope members will actively engage with the processes undertaken by the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute when they do their important work in this area.

Mental Health - Resources

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mr FERGUSON

[10.53 a.m.]

Nurses are taking industrial action across the state including stop work meetings because, amongst other things, your failure to adequately resource the hospital system has resulted in nurses regularly working at least 16-hour shifts. At least one nurse worked 24 hours straight at the Royal Hobart Hospital. Hundreds of nurse positions remain unfilled.

Today, you have announced a white-knuckle response to your abject failure on the delivery of mental health beds and services. How can anyone have any confidence, given the current state of nurse staffing on your watch, that your plan to deliver mental health services to Tasmanians in their own homes will be adequately resourced?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I do not want to see mental health being politically kicked around the way it has been this morning. It does not help anybody. I have a few things I want to say, but the member is playing on the issue of industrial action, which relates to the current EBA negotiations. We understand that.

Ms White - How are you going to staff these beds? Nurses are already working 24 hours straight.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Opposition.

Mr FERGUSON - Given the hundreds of extra nurses this Government has employed, including nurses who were sacked by the Deputy Leader of the Labor Party, we are disappointed any time industrial action occurs. Why drag the mental health reform project, Rethink, which has been universally supported, into the mud?

Ms White - How are you going to staff these hospital-at-home beds?

Mr FERGUSON - If I could be heard.

Madam SPEAKER - Yes, please.

Mr O'Byrne - You need a break, don't you?

Member Suspended

Member for Franklin - Mr O'Byrne

Madam SPEAKER - Mr O'Byrne, you have had three warnings. You are out the door. I have marked down three so please leave, thank you.

Mr O'Byrne - How long for, Madam Speaker?

Madam SPEAKER - You can leave until the end of Question Time.

Mr O'Byrne withdrew.

Madam SPEAKER - Please proceed, minister.

Mr FERGUSON - Nobody is helped when mental health services and the need to link our services, consistent with the Rethink Mental Health actions, are dragged into politics. We are about helping people. That is what the Hodgman Liberal Government stands for. We are about increasing services and linking our services. Those members who want to get exasperated, I remind them we owe a duty to give people waiting too long in emergency departments the support they need and deserve.

The Government has taken advice. The Government went to the last election with a very strong plan for 25 additional mental health beds. It is four times more investment than Labor promised and is an artefact of history. We need support from the Labor Party to deliver on Tasmanians' expectations that we deliver on our plan. If the Labor Party does not want to support that, that is a matter for the Labor Party but the Tasmanian people will be far better served if the Labor Party supports good investments and good clinical decision-making so that patients can spend less time in the emergency department.

The suggestion that it is a white-knuckle response is very disrespectful to the good people who have worked on solutions to support patient care. On the one hand, the Labor Party say we need urgent responses. On the other, when the Government brings in a response that means not 10 beds

but 12 and not another year away but only months away, they say it is white-knuckle. This is playing politics with the concerns of vulnerable people.

This is not a criticism of members opposite but we are years behind other states integrating our mental health services. Some have said 15 years and we have a lot of work to do. It is not the case that the Mental Health Council has been calling for more support in the community?

Ms White - You didn't consult them on this, minister. I would not verbal them if I were you.

Mr FERGUSON - We had, at the last budget the year before last, 100 packages of community care. The Labor Party did not complain about that but they are now complaining about this. We remain committed - it was mentioned in a previous question by Ms White - we remain committed to the Peacock Centre rebuild. I am surprised Ms White brought up the Peacock Centre rebuild in her earlier question.

Ms White - When are you going to deliver those beds?

Mr FERGUSON - All the evidence I have is Labor opposing it. You are uncomfortable with this but I invite members opposite to stop playing politics. We expect your scrutiny, but put aside the politics because the number of mental health patients and their families you are helping today is zero.

Madam Speaker, I say through you to the Leader of the Opposition, the announcement I have already indicated around Hospital in the Home is only part of our investment in mental health. We are bringing forward the Mistral Place commitment in a model that is safe, innovative, clinician-directed and will be delivered even sooner.

Ms White - You talked to one person.

Mr FERGUSON - Your criticism of that stands in stark contrast to your demands for urgency and that hangs on your record.

Health - Funding

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mr FERGUSON

[10.59 a.m.]

AMA State President, Dr John Davis, has shared his views with Tasmanians on your failure to deliver adequate funding for the health and hospital system and your failures as the Health minister. Dr Davis said -

The AMA is calling for an end to this ad-hoc funding which has failed to address the underlying inadequate capacity and staffing requirements to meet the daily operational needs. A whole of government commitment is needed to fund health care adequately and put an end to the day to day crisis management.

Why do you again arrogantly fail to listen to Dr Davis and others and again make an ad hoc, white-knuckle announcement in response to the health crisis, thinking that you know best rather than working with clinicians to respond strategically?

Madam SPEAKER - Before we get the Minister for Health to answer that question, I sincerely apologise to Mr O'Byrne. I made a grave error of judgment and may have damaged his reputation because I accused him of having three warnings when in fact it was Ms O'Byrne who has had three warnings and I did not read my writing clearly. Please forgive me and I expect some lovely respectful behaviour in return.

ANSWER

Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Government listens. We never stop listening and our engagement with the Australian Medical Association is second to none.

Opposition members laughing.

Mr FERGUSON - That is just fake laughing. That is fakery.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. There will be no more fake laughing. In fact there will be no laughing whatsoever, thank you. I remind the members on my left that we have two members on three warnings and two on one warning. I would like to make sure you stay in the House for the rest of question time, so please be respectful.

Traffic Congestion in Hobart

Mr SHELTON question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.01 a.m.]

Can the minister please update the House on how the Hodgman majority Liberal Government is delivering on our plan to combat traffic congestion in and around Hobart?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. There is no doubt our Government recognises the challenges with traffic congestion in and around Hobart, which is a product of a growing economy, increased population and, as a consequence, more cars on our roads.

We took a very strong plan to the election for the Greater Hobart area and the south-east to tackle congestion and improve the safety and productivity of our roads and the liveability of our communities. This plan includes the establishment of the first ever future-looking Greater Hobart transport master plan to drive infrastructure projects that will benefit commuters and public transport users over the next 10 to 50 years. We look into the future of how public transport will be accommodated in Hobart's CBD and what a central transit hub might look like, perhaps an underground transit centre as an example. We need to get the best out of our existing network and are working on projects right now to improve traffic flow and to make bus travel more attractive. We are getting on with the job of implementing our master plan.

On the approach to Hobart, at the airport roundabout, we have a daily bottleneck during peak times, and members would recognise that. Today I am pleased to announce that phase 1 of works on the roundabout will begin next Monday 22 October. The tender has been awarded to Tasmanian civil construction company Andrew Walter Constructions, a company that has built high-quality

projects across Tasmania, including the recent upgrade of the Rokeby Main Road which eastern shore residents will know well.

Further, this week I will be tabling legislation to give effect to our takeover of Davey and Macquarie streets. We have committed some \$16 million in improvements, including the creation of clearways, bus priority lanes, making traffic signals more efficient and other practical measures to cut travel times. The bill will enable cars parked, causing delays in busy clearways, to be towed away, just as they are in other capital cities.

Improving traffic flow on Davey and Macquarie is a key part of our plan to manage congestion in the city and dovetails with our longer-term project to add a fifth lane to the Southern Outlet. The next step in the Davey and Macquarie takeover will be substantial public consultation and the appointment of a dedicated team to drive that consultation, resulting in traffic improvements.

We are also delivering on our commitment to put a new Derwent River ferry service between Bellerive and Sullivans Cove, and over the next six years we will make unprecedented investments in road and public transport infrastructure. In the south-east this includes a suite of projects from Hobart Airport, works to a Sorell bypass, and a new intersection at Midway Point to address traffic growth in the region, and we have already started planning and consultations for these projects along this important corridor. We will also provide more travel options to and from Sorell and the Southern Beaches region by significantly increasing bus services.

We have a plan. This Government is getting on with the job of building the infrastructure our state needs for the twenty-first century.

**MACQUARIE POINT DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
AMENDMENT BILL 2018 (No. 50)**

**WATER AND SEWERAGE LEGISLATION (CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND
PRICING) AMENDMENT BILL 2018 (No. 53)**

First Reading

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

**JUSTICE AND RELATED LEGISLATION (MARRIAGE
AMENDMENTS) BILL 2018 (No. 47)**

First Reading

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

TABLED PAPER

Lake Malbena - National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council Advice

[11.13 a.m.]

Ms O'Connor (by leave) tabled the submission from National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council (NPWAC) to Environment Assessment Branch, Department of the Environment regarding Wild Drake Pty Ltd 2018/8177.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Health

[11.14 a.m.]

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

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

Given that this is such a topical matter for so many Tasmanians and has been for such a long time, I was disappointed by the answers, or non-answers, provided by the minister in the House today. He has dismissed serious questions on issues, particularly in relation to mental health, because he is giving a ministerial statement at a later hour. It is not appropriate for the minister to deny answering questions in question time because he is about to make a statement at a later date. We are not informed of what ministerial statement contents are, or the topic, so for us to wait and see is simply unacceptable.

We know that there is a \$100 million black hole in health. That has been confirmed by the RDME Consulting report that reviewed the KPMG review, a secret report the Government received in March last year. The minister refuses to publicly share that report. It would provide much greater detail about what is happening in the Tasmanian health system and the chronic under-funding that has led to the crisis in the Tasmanian health system.

It is not okay for the minister to come into this House and lecture us about the bipartisan approach he wants us to take. The way he goes about that is not genuine. You cannot come into this House and tell everybody how it is going to be and then expect us to fall into line and call that bipartisan. That is a dictatorship.

We genuinely want to work with the Government to find solutions to the health crisis in Tasmania. I wrote to the Premier on Friday outlining 10 measures the Government could take right now to ease pressure on the public hospital system and provide better outcomes for patients and support our staff to do their job. I am yet to get a response from the Premier. I note comments in the media over the weekend that labelled it a stunt. The minister then comes into this House and patronisingly lectures me about failing to provide bipartisanship when the first response to a genuine letter is for it to be dismissed as a stunt. I stand by everything in the letter to the Premier and I expect a response from him on this issue. It is the most important issue for many Tasmanians.

The matters we raised today in this House demand answers. The minister could not articulate the criteria for assessing patients who will be eligible to access the Hospital in the Home program that he has announced in the media today. He has provided no further details on it. He has not indicated whether there will be more funding to support the rollout of this initiative and has not provided details about where the staff will come from. He suggested that 15 full-time staff is all that will be required to support 12 patients at home. The maths would indicate that is not enough staff. Even if you are just doing twice daily visits, which would be a minimum for a person under this program, 15 staff is not enough - unless he is expecting them to continue to work overtime and double shifts, continuing to do the 16 hours straight, 18 hours straight, and 24 hours straight they have been doing at the Royal Hobart Hospital. When did it become acceptable for this Government to expect nurses to work 24 hours straight because they are not properly staffing the roster and they are not properly resourcing the hospital?

Ms Standen - That is dangerous.

Ms WHITE - That is dangerous for the patients and for the staff. That is not a safe work environment.

We have real issues here with recruitment and retention. The minister continues to ignore the very genuine request from the ANMF to work with them to provide appropriate pay increases to staff, which will assist with recruitment and retention. Two stop-work rallies have now been held - one at the Royal Hobart Hospital and one at the Launceston General Hospital. The minister was at neither. No Government member was at any of those rallies. There is another one on Friday. It is an opportunity for the minister to show up. The following Wednesday there is another in the north-west of the state. All nurses, health workers and allied health professionals want is for the Government to listen to them and work with them. The Government does not.

Take this announcement today as another example. Who did the minister consult before he made this announcement of 12 Hospital in the Home beds for people with mental ill health? One person. Was that person a nurse, someone who is actually going to deliver that care? No, it was not. We know that the minister has not spoken to the ANMF, the AMA, HACSU, the Mental Health Council of Tasmania and he has not spoken to the Medical Staff Association of the Royal Hobart Hospital. He has not spoken to any of the groups on the frontline who will be delivering the services for patients who have mental ill health. It is a disgrace that the minister then comes into this House and demands that we listen to the advice of clinicians when he is not. He will not go and see the nurses, who for 100 days now have been standing on the pavement outside the Launceston General Hospital protesting about the conditions of the emergency department there. The minister is apparently too busy to pop down to his local hospital and say hello to those nurses and ask how he could help them do their jobs so they can better care for patients.

There is a \$100 million black hole in Health. There are multiple secret reports the minister is hiding. The minister's own Premier says he is not doing a good enough job by acknowledging at their conference on the weekend that the health system is 'far from good enough'. Last Friday the Liberal member for Clark said on the ABC that the system was clearly in crisis and the minister probably needed a rest. We agree because this minister does not care about what clinicians on the front line say. He has not sought to plug the \$100 million black hole. He is making knee-jerk, short-term, white-knuckle reactionary responses to the problems in our health system.

As to the announcement today, the fact that nobody knew about it before he promoted it in the media is indication enough of that. He cannot tell us which patients will be eligible, has not been able to demonstrate if there will be more funding to support the resourcing of these beds, has declared he has abandoned the promise he made to the people of Tasmania to open 10 more beds at Mistral Place, cannot say when the extra beds at Peacock Centre will open, and refuses to open more acute mental health beds.

Time expired.

[11.21 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Health) - Mr Deputy Speaker, that was a poor effort from the Leader of the Opposition. We are interested in solutions, and so should the Labor Party. I will not spend any of my seven minutes critiquing what the Leader of the Opposition said line by line but suffice it to say the Leader of the Opposition has verballed people who are not here to speak for themselves and misrepresented the Government's character on the way we have been implementing our plans.

Ms Standen - Tell us who you have been speaking with. Who have you consulted with?

Mr FERGUSON - I would appreciate it if I could have my turn to be heard in this House, as I provided the Leader of the Opposition.

The Government acknowledges that the health system is very busy but it is certainly in better shape than when we inherited it. We have made great gains since coming to government in 2014. Have a look at the record - 120 more beds, including opening beds that Ms White closed down on her caucus Labor Party committee.

I hear queries about recruitment and retention. We have recruited over 800 FTE frontline health staff in our health system. We have provided over \$100 million of state Government elective surgery funding since coming to office in 2014. No member should forget that Rebecca White, the Leader of the Opposition, called on this Government to dump that policy and leave the bureaucracy alone. That is what sits on the record.

Ms White - That is rubbish.

Mr FERGUSON - It is not rubbish. It is the truth.

Ms White - It is rubbish. You're verballing me now.

Mr FERGUSON - The Government's record is about providing more support and shortening waiting lists. If members really want to have an informed debate they ought to bring in the fact that our ED presentations are very high and acknowledge the challenge that is posed by increasing demand and acuity on our health system. Don't turn a blind eye to it in your relentless demand for negative, partisan politics.

We are experiencing increasing demand but all jurisdictions are experiencing increased demand. I have had a look at some of the news headlines from other states around Australia. Tasmania is not on its own here.

Ms White - Where are you spending it?

Mr FERGUSON - Increased demand has nothing to do with GST, Ms White. Increased demand tells us -

Ms White - It means you can spend the money where it's needed though, doesn't it, minister?

Mr FERGUSON - No, I am not going to engage in that way.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Ms White.

Mr FERGUSON - It is an interesting sign that the Leader of the Opposition is so unstructured. The Leader of the Opposition wants people to believe that she is all about health and it is her first priority, but the record shows it is not. The Leader of the Opposition politicks about health. She needed to do her health policy seven times and claimed in the election that health would be her priority as premier, but as soon as the election was over Ms White ran away from it. I have stuck with it because we are about taking responsibility.

We have a strong plan for health that Tasmanians voted for. They did not vote for you, Ms White; they rejected you. You achieved the third-lowest vote in your party's history. They rejected your seven versions of your health policy. You failed to win and your ungracious speech on election night said it all. You are in sour grapes territory. You think you should have won but you did not win. Will Hodgman's team won. Tasmanians voted for our plan. Our plan recognises there is more demand.

Ms White - Your own colleagues are not voting for you.

Mr FERGUSON - Yes, I see the grin. How do you support people when there is increased demand? You need to open more beds, and that is what we are doing - not motels. The Government is getting on with the job of rolling out our six-year, not \$100 million plan, but \$757 million plan.

Ms White - Yes, over six years.

Mr FERGUSON - That is correct, thank you, Ms White. Finally an honest statement.

Ms White - Most of it is not in the budget, minister. You're a joke.

Mr FERGUSON - You are being very unstructured and very rude over there.

As to the figure represented in the media and others about a funding black hole, let me remind members that that was advice from March-April, before the May Budget which was \$65 million over four years - not the six years, the budget period. Even then we know there is still more to do because of that increased demand. We are a government that gets that, but we are not playing on people's fears, as Ms White is attempting to do again. Unlike Ms White, I am not running away from the Health portfolio. We are taking responsibility and we have seen so many people receive their surgery, people who were languishing on the waiting list for a decade.

I want to acknowledge the Greens members who are not exactly the Government's friends and do their job to scrutinise and give us a hard time, particularly when it is deserved, but they have been far more constructive with their input, no doubt recognising the challenges. That is what we need. You should give the Government a hard time if we mess up or fail to do what we said we would do.

On mental health, I am very pleased we are opening more beds, because we have increased demand. I told the House this morning there has been a 35 per cent increase. Ms White did not see that coming. No-one saw that coming, but it is a reality. It is no-one's fault. No-one is to blame, but when we have increased demand we need to increase supply and that is what the Government is doing. That is exactly what our system needs. Over the next six years Tasmanians can look forward with confidence to a range of key developments for our system. I have talked about mental health. Inpatient child and adolescent mental health, which the state has never had - being built right now. Record investment.

Time expired.

[11.28 a.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, although this MPI was listed as health, this has moved into a discussion about mental health. We can all accept that one of the key aspects of concern that has been raised about the situation for people accessing Royal Hobart Hospital

emergency department is people in acute mental health distress who have been left waiting at different times throughout the last year for hours and often days. There have been documented occasions where people in severe distress have been forced to wait in the emergency department for numbers of days.

Ms White - Six.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, six days - thank you, Ms White. Earlier this year, people were repeatedly having to wait for that time. We clearly have situation where the system is utterly broken for the people who are most vulnerable and who most need it. This has had a terrible impact on the staff who have had to experience the vicarious trauma of working in an emergency department where day on day they can see the ambulances ramped up outside. They are aware of the frustration and concern of the ambulance drivers, the real distress of nurses and clinicians, who are looking at the massive queue of people and who do not have the appropriate facilities to care for people. These are people who are trained to care. They are highly expert and they are ready to do their job. It is incredibly distressing for them and most distressing for the patients and their families waiting in the emergency department.

It is incredibly important that we do not only look at the acute hospital environment; that is one component. The biggest component is the real failure of this Liberal Government over the last four-and-a-half years to put money into preventive health. It is because of that failure and the \$210 million cut that went out of the Health budget in 2014 that all of the critical support services and community services that were doing the work in the community - to remind people to go to their checks for different chronic diseases for prevention, to support people who needed that extra little bit of help, to be there for people in mental health distress, to provide care for the carers, to provide respite service - have been cut to the bone or dismissed and unfunded altogether.

We have a skeleton of hardworking, dedicated people in the community who, for want of a tiny bit of money from this Liberal Government, have been kept with the barest minimum staff. I speak to people like this all the time. I go out into the community. I went to Huonville a couple of weeks ago. The Huon Valley Council ran a Health and Wellbeing Day and it was amazing. It was packed. The Town Hall, outside the Town Hall, and the library were packed full of services doing such hard work. I thought I would be there for an hour-and-a-half, I could not get out in three hours and I could have stayed the day talking to people.

The experiences of people from organisations like Grow, Flourish, Move Well Eat Well, Stronger Together, the Men's Shed, Suicide Support, mental health carers, Lifeline, Colony 47, Link Youth Health Service and headspace - they are only some of the organisations I had a chance to connect with, going from table to table. Each of those groups has been starved of the money they need to keep staff going at a bare skeleton level relative to the demand, relative to the need.

While we focus on the hospital system we are taking our focus away from the preventive health and community system. We have to do both. I am disappointed in Ms White for her leadership on preventive health. We all need to be pushing hard on Mr Ferguson, the Minister for Health, to remember his duty to his Health portfolio. If he takes it seriously, if he is an intelligent person, he will understand the evidence; you cannot put money into the acute sector and expect to see any dent in the number of people who are coming to our hospital systems if you are also not putting money into preventive health.

While the minister may be gaining some traction in the area of mental health he has dropped the ball on preventive health generally. The 'best health in Australia' by 2025 aim has gone by the wayside but that is the thinking we need right now. That is the sort of leadership we need for the next three-and-a-half years in this term of Government. Mr Ferguson should be opening himself to taking up that baton because the Mental Health Council implored governments to commit to developing seamless mental health services and to publicly commit to working toward preventive health and early intervention in their public statement the week before last. It is not enough to publicly commit without the money behind it. I look forward to the announcement today and I hope it is a serious injection of money into solving the issue in the acute health sector and into the community services.

Mental health carers, for example, did not see any budget increase last year, yet all the patients that end up in psychosis at the emergency department might be there for five hours or three days and then they will go home. When they go home they will be in the house with their parents, their in-laws or by themselves every other day. It is the every other day, if they do not have some support, some respite for their carer, they will bounce straight back into the emergency department - the worst possible place for a sick person. We need that support for the carers who are doing the work in the community every day.

Time expired.

[11.36 a.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon) - Mr Deputy Speaker, first and foremost, this is not about politics, it is about the health and wellbeing of our communities and that is what I am motivated by. Dr Woodruff highlighted the importance of community-based care and I want to talk about that today. I also want to highlight that this week is National Carers Week and it is important to acknowledge that as part of this discussion about health and to acknowledge the role of carers in the community and the support they provide to our health system. It is unpaid care. They provide support to their family members and friends who often have a disability, mental illness, chronic conditions, a terminal illness, or alcohol and other drug-related issues or are frail and aged. We really do owe a great deal to those people for the contribution that they make to our health system as well.

I am prepared to stand here every day and speak about the crisis in our health system. That is a very important part of our job, holding the Government to account and advocating for the needs of Tasmanians and those who work in our health system each and every day. It is not only the Opposition highlighting the crisis we see in Tasmania in the health system. It is being highlighted by clear and direct comments from clinicians about lack of beds and the ability to undertake procedures, industrial action, ambulances ramping, patients resting on floors in accident and emergency, and staff shortages leading to double shifts, which is all leading to increased pressure on our staff and our staff workloads. To top it off, we have the worst-paid nurses in the country. How can we attempt to attract new medical, nursing and allied health staff to Tasmania to work within the current scenario we are seeing in health in this state?

Having worked as a health professional, I understand the importance of valuing our staff. This can be achieved in part through remuneration but it also comes through meeting with the workforce and stakeholders to better understand the pressures they face each and every day. I understand Tasmanians' health needs continue to change and we have an ageing population and high incidences of chronic disease, which is leading to an increased demand in our health services across the acute and primary health services. It is time to look at well thought out and consulted solutions to this problem. A strong economy is important to fund these services but it concerns me that despite

economic growth in Tasmania, and the KPMG report and Deloitte reports highlighted this, we have still have a \$100 million black hole in the Health budget in Tasmania and significant under-investment.

Capital investment is important but it should also be accompanied by operational investment to ensure services can be maintained and improved. A budget surplus does not mean much to the nurse who has worked a double shift, or to the mum sitting at A&E with their kids waiting to be seen, or the patient who has had to rest on the floor in A&E. You have to think about what it means for the people of Tasmania and for their experiences in accessing the health system and whether it truly is meeting their needs.

Earlier this week, we called on the Government to work with Labor to address the crisis in our health system. That is right - the health system - and Dr Woodruff touched on this as well. It is important to highlight that the health system spans right across acute care, Allied Health, community-based services including mental health services and initiatives aimed at early intervention and prevention of chronic disease in this state.

Whilst I acknowledge the hospital sector takes up a huge amount of resource and intervention from government around the current situation we are seeing, we should not forget about the importance of the community sector and investment in the community sector. It goes to the heart of the issues we are seeing now within our acute care setting. It is that we have under-invested and we will need to invest more into community based services in future. It is incumbent on state governments to advocate to their federal colleagues the importance of them, too, investing in primary health care initiatives where we are seeing demographic trends such as ageing populations and people living with disadvantage in regional communities in particular.

We wrote to the Premier about a couple of areas earlier this week. They are about the importance of the round tables and consulting with all those who are providing care in our communities and in the acute sector. These include the AMA, ANMF, HACSU and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. It is important we understand the views and pressures our frontline staff are experiencing and that they have an opportunity to be involved in policy and initiative development.

I will talk about ramping up preventative and primary health care programs in Tasmania. I have touched on this in my address today and it is something I feel incredibly passionate about, particularly in rural and regional Tasmania where people do not have access to specialists, have long waits to see specialists and do not have access to a tertiary health system. It is even more important for those people that we keep them out of hospital and that they are provided with a good level of care in their local community.

I would like the minister to talk more about the plan and time line for the implementation of services for acute mental health patients; provide greater detail on the program announced today. I would like to understand whether that is a step-down program, what the criteria will be for those patients who are admitted through that program and the staffing of that. I would like to know if wrap-around services will be provided in those people's homes to make sure they are monitored and cared for in more than one visit a day by a visiting RN, which has happened in the past with the Hospital in the Home program. It has been more around acute intervention and administration of medications, antibiotics and the like. I want to understand more about the implementation of the program and when we would expect it to commence.

Time expired.

[11.43 a.m.]

Mr HIDDING (Lyons) - Mr Deputy Speaker, this Government is committed to building a better health system in Tasmania. We are in the fifth year of turning around a massive ship. It is the biggest ship going within the government sector. The minister did a sensational job in his first four years to rescue the Royal Hobart project and many other elements of Health that were, in public policy terms and practical management terms, in the toilet. I acknowledge the minister for his ongoing performance and his agreement to continue in his role because there had been such a dislocation and stress on this agency for so long. It is good to have the same minister continuing with this massive shift of the direction of this ship of the health system.

We have already made great gains, with 120 new beds since coming to Government in 2014. That is a lot of new beds in a system that needed them, without question, and we have recruited over 800 full-time equivalents of frontline health staff to support our health system, providing over \$100 million worth of additional funding for elective surgery since coming to Government in 2014.

We heard from the previous speaker, who said she was very happy to stand up and speak every day about the health crisis in Tasmania but people know the truth about this. They know there is a situation in Health and that is a massive increase in demand, presentations and acuity levels. In one of the examples we heard today, the minister spoke about a 35 per cent increase in presentations in mental health at the Royal Hobart ED alone. I imagine there would be a similar kind of increase in the north and north-west. A 35 per cent increase in mental health presentations since 2013-14 is a massive issue to deal with and we are dealing with it. This minister is about delivering better care for Tasmanians. He cares for Tasmanians and we are caring for Tasmanians and will continue to do so.

Increasing demand in acuity is being experienced by jurisdictions both nationally and internationally. There are all sorts of reasons for that. I am not a professional in this area and I will not speculate as to what is behind it. There is a strong body of work to understand why there has been this increase in presentations and acuity. That is a concern. It is not only the flu that they are presenting with; in our case it is meningococcal and things like that. We are looking at situations that are terribly stressful and dangerous for everybody involved.

A couple of things need to be cleared up here while Tasmanians are listening to the incessant chatter about Health and the white-knuckle ride and the rest of it. They know our staff in those hospitals and right across the health service, a huge number of public servants in Tasmania connected with this health agency, are wonderful people. They are doing a great job and sometimes under trying conditions but they are professionals and they do it very well. I hear from people who say they were in the Royal Hobart Hospital, in the emergency department and it took a little while but the staff were wonderful and they looked after them. This continual running down of the problems the Royal Hobart Hospital ED reflects on the staff and the people in charge. I extend my personal thanks to all those people who are frontline workers in these places who do a sensational job and they should be proud of themselves. We are proud of them and we receive great letters and communication from people saying things such as, 'We spent hours in the ED yesterday but the staff were wonderful and when we were seen we received great service, great advice and we know what to do next'.

The people I speak to, and I have a very large family, say they never feel as though they should not be there. That is a key thing and is acknowledged. Our frontline workers never make people

feel as though they should not have made the call to go in. They encourage them that it is right thing to do. If you are concerned about your health you should present and you should do it next time. That gives the confidence to people to know that with certain ailments and conditions, particularly with heart disease, these matters do not present themselves very clearly. People worry about being silly, wasting the hospital's time, yet the doctors and the frontline staff at the hospital encourage people and say, 'You are doing the right thing. Let us determine whether you have something going on right now that we need to intervene in'.

It is important to recognise that the frontline workers and the entire staff in the health system, whether they are in planning or administration and so on, are all doing their part to provide the very best care we can provide for Tasmanians. There is no shortage of commitment to funding in this Government. Budget after budget, this minister has gone to the Treasurer, to a budget committee I used to sit on, and he has brought in strong cases supported by strong evidence that funds are required. Almost without exception, he has won the argument every time. With very strong representations, he has strong support in Cabinet for funding and it is no surprise to me the consistent increase in funding is continuing and it is very necessary.

We have already made great gains since coming to Government in 2014. The one thing that strikes me every time I hear from the other side about Health, about the Royal Hobart Hospital; the Royal Hobart Hospital could almost have been opened by now. It could have been opened two years ago but the project was in the toilet when we came in. It was not a buildable project. You splashed \$10 million on a frolic on the waterfront and delivered nothing.

Time expired.

Matter noted.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Rebuilding the Health System

[11.51 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Health - Statement) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to update the House on the progress of our reforms to rebuild Tasmania's health system, what we have delivered to date, and how we will address the future challenges we face as a government and as a community.

Upon coming to government in 2014, we commenced a most significant overhaul of Tasmania's health system - the One Health system. We knew that this would be challenging and mean facing some hard truths about the state of our health system but we stayed the course and eventually achieved agreement on the model. Establishing this support took genuine engagement and many, many conversations with staff, stakeholders, and most importantly, the Tasmanian community, but we now have the plan, we have the direction, and we have the vision.

In 2014 we reviewed the Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment and began the long process of rebuilding health services to ensure Tasmanians could access the care they needed. We have ploughed in millions of dollars to address long waits for elective patients, achieving a reduction of 2900 days for the longest waiting patients, or 80 per cent.

We funded the North-West Cancer Service, built helipads, set up bus services to link the Latrobe and Burnie hospitals, established the new integrated maternity service in Burnie and, importantly, lobbied the Australian Government hard to deliver certainty for the Mersey Community Hospital and its staff and patients. We also established the Community Rapid Response Service - or hospital-in-the-home - in Launceston and provided long-term funding certainty for the John L Grove rehabilitation service in the north.

Importantly, over the past four-and-a-half years, we have opened 120 additional beds, including 22 new beds opened in July at the Repatriation Hospital in Hobart, and have employed an additional 100 doctors, over 500 more nurses, 70 more allied health professionals, 51 extra paramedics, and have increased nurse graduates by 76 per cent.

These investments - over 800 FTE staff and more health services for our system - do not just happen. They are a direct result of our strong financial management, which has enabled our investment in Health to increase from \$5.8 billion in 2013-14 to \$7.6 billion in 2018-19 - almost \$2 billion more on Health over the forward Estimates.

We are also listening closely to what our frontline staff are telling us. The very first bill passed by this parliament this year has delivered the next stage of our health governance reforms, strengthening local hospital leadership and bringing the health system under a single point of accountability. These important changes in how we govern our health system, combined with the Government's clear commitment to putting on more staff, delivering more resources, and opening more beds, will set up our system to meet tomorrow's demand. It is through listening to our staff and the Tasmanian community that we have strategically and methodically delivered these improvements for our health system.

In this spirit, I will be conducting another round of public forums to discuss our health system directly with Tasmanians. These will cover the three regions of our state, starting with next Monday in Hobart at the Grand Chancellor. I will then be in Launceston on Tuesday 23 October at the Tramsheds, followed by the Burnie Civic Centre and Devonport Entertainment Centre on Wednesday 24 October. I have done these forums regularly since becoming Health minister in 2014 and welcome the direct feedback about what Tasmanians think is working and what they think we need to do better.

Make no mistake, every single member of this Government knows there is still much more to be done. We know that our staff are working their guts out at the coalface. We know that our patients deserve better. We take responsibility for delivering that as a government, which is why we are working hard every day to employ, build and serve.

It is no secret that demand for acute health services has been growing at a significant rate. Our staff are doing a remarkable job under what at times can be significant pressure. Hospitals all over the country are facing similar challenges in meeting demand that is outstripping the capacity. Indicative of this growth is the sheer numbers of patients that now need to be seen during a demand peak.

As the Premier noted two weeks ago, 12 years ago the Royal Hobart Hospital emergency department treated, on average, 108 patients per day. In 2018, we now need a hospital that can treat up to 220 patients a day. Between 2016 and now, annual demand on our EDs has risen by more than 7000 patients, but it is not only the number of patients that has grown. The complexity of

patients our hospitals are seeing has increased, meaning that we have more patients coming through the front door needing longer stays and a higher level of care.

In 2017-18 there has been 15 per cent growth in emergency department presentations that converted to admissions, and 6 per cent growth in emergency surgery. This is a significant jump, putting pressure on patient flow and bed turnover. At all of our four major hospitals, but at the Royal Hobart in particular, we are finding more and more that we are attempting to meet today's demand in yesterday's hospital buildings.

Last year, due to increasing demand from an unprecedented winter flu season, we flexed up, recruited more staff and invested an additional \$63 million into the system. Our strong financial position enabled us to respond. It is for exactly this reason that this year's Budget contained not only record spending on Health - an additional \$465 million - but also sensible surpluses across the forward Estimates so we can meet challenges that arise, whether they be in respect of demand in our hospitals or natural disasters like floods or bushfires.

The budget includes the rollout of our election commitments, including the recruitment of another 478 staff over the next four years for new and improved health services. We have higher demand and are investing accordingly to meet that challenge again this year. We have continued to grow our health services, with almost 220 staff appointed since March, including more than 130 nurses and 20 doctors.

Every year of our Government we have invested even more than originally budgeted, employing more health staff and providing more health care. This year will be no different due to the demand we are experiencing. We can afford to do this because of our sensible financial management and the strength of our finances, which means we are able to respond whilst ensuring that the budget will remain balanced and retain the capacity to respond, should other challenges emerge.

It is indisputable that demand is increasing and we must do more to meet the health needs of Tasmanians. We are committed to doing just that, and a big part of this is delivering the long-anticipated Royal Hobart Hospital Redevelopment next year. That is why we made, at the last election, the largest commitment for investment into Health that this state has ever seen. The Government has committed to fully staff and open 250 additional hospital beds at the newly refurbished Royal Hobart Hospital and the Repatriation Hospital. This will take some time and needs to be carefully planned as part of a considered process to ensure the bed mix is meeting our community's needs.

The fact is there are several sections of the existing spaces at the Royal that need work. This is why we have set aside almost \$30 million to redevelop wards and units at the Royal, to ensure that they meet modern standards and deliver the best possible clinical spaces for our staff and patients. The bed openings will be staged and managed as we complete these crucial works, with all 250 beds to be open and fully staffed by 2024. This is an investment of almost \$300 million over the next six years - a huge boost for our system's capacity in anybody's terms - and it is estimated the new beds will provide medical care for over 26 000 more Tasmanians each year, including elective and emergency surgery.

As I have already mentioned, the Government is committed to working closely with clinicians and stakeholders to plan the best clinical mix of beds across the site. In April this year we established the Clinical Planning Taskforce to lead clinical planning for the new hospital beds and

to guide the next stage of the redevelopment on the Royal precinct. That taskforce is now working to update the overall RHH site masterplan, which will include consideration of proposals and consultation with staff and key stakeholders on the best use of the new 10-storey K block tower and the development of other parts of the hospital site.

This process will ensure that any decisions taken are properly and fully informed, with appropriate professional support and due diligence, to ensure the very best interests of patients are at the forefront of any options considered. The secretary of the Department of Health will finish this work by February 2019 and any recommendations will then be considered by state Cabinet.

To assist the secretary, I can today announce that a southern reference group has been formed to help drive this work and ensure there is direct input from clinicians and health stakeholders. This group is co-chaired by the Chief Medical Officer who chairs the Clinical Planning Taskforce and the executive director of operations of the Royal Hobart Hospital.

The group will see medical and nursing clinical directors and professional leaders from the Royal Hobart Hospital working alongside representatives from the Australian Medical Association, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Association, and the Health and Community Services Union. It will provide specific expert and local input into master planning for the Royal Hobart Hospital precinct, with the key players representing our staff at the coalface all at the table as part of a comprehensive process of clinical stakeholder consultation.

It is important that we thoroughly consider how we continue to develop the Royal Hobart Hospital to ensure we are planning for its future and maximising the opportunities. However, we must also be dynamic and responsive as we implement our plans, and today I can announce that we have accepted advice from the Clinical Planning Taskforce to make some significant amendments to the configuration of K block that will greatly improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the new facility.

We will improve the layout of level 10 of the new hospital building so that the whole floor is fitted out for general medicine and respiratory beds. The plan was previously for the floor to be occupied by a broad number of different specialities, but the change, as specifically recommended by Royal Hobart Hospital clinicians, will deliver several key benefits:

- (1) By grouping a greater number of general medical beds on the one floor, patients will receive more efficient and effective treatment because they are cared for on one designated ward, not multiple wards. Our hardworking medical staff will not need to move from ward to ward to look after their patients, and the nursing staff providing care will be able to focus on a set group of patients and conditions. The outcome of this is that patients will be more likely have a reduced length of stay, meaning they can get back home sooner and recover faster in their communities.
- (2) Patients will be able to move more rapidly from the emergency department into ward beds, helping reduce waiting times for care, relieve pressure on our ED staff, and improve patient flow throughout the whole hospital.
- (3) Space adjacent to the emergency department will be freed up, providing much-needed future expansion space, with the movement of current beds to the new general medicine floor. Again, this will likely mean more space for the ED to flex into in cases of demand

peaks, reducing pressure on ED staff and ensuring more care is able to be provided to more Tasmanians.

RHH local management will work closely with staff as these changes take place, following completion of the redevelopment next year. To facilitate these changes, the Acute Rehabilitation Unit will remain at the Hobart Repatriation Hospital. In addition, neurology and stroke will remain in A block. We will continue to work with staff and ensure that these important services are accommodated appropriately. These changes are strongly supported by the clinical and nursing workforce and leaders at the Royal as well as the Australian Medical Association. Where other changes arise out of the masterplanning process, these will be considered through Cabinet and with regard for budget planning.

Importantly, the changes I am announcing today are all accommodated within the current RHH redevelopment construction program and budget. There will be no impact on the timeline for practical completion, with the redevelopment remaining on track for August 2019.

Tasmanians have been waiting a very long time for this day to come - since 2006, when a new Royal was first floated - and it is exciting that we are now on the home straight, less than 12 months out. Once completed, there will be a service commissioning process to ensure occupation of the brand-new wards and units is undertaken in the most structured and strategic way.

Again, I thank the outstanding staff at the Royal, who have been so patient and have been essentially working in a construction zone for so long. We know how difficult this period has been, but there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Boosting mental health has been a significant focus of this Government. We have all seen the pressures that have arisen and the way demand for mental health services has grown, especially in the south of the state. There has been a 35 per cent increase in mental health-related presentations to the RHH ED between 2013-14 and 2017-18 from 4822 to 6508. The acute inpatient unit at the RHH has been experiencing increased rates of occupancy, operating at about 98.2 per cent occupancy as at 31 March 2018, and has experienced bed block on a number of occasions during 2017-18.

This is why at the 2018 election the Government committed to open 10 new mental health beds at Mistral Place, as well as 15 beds at a rebuilt Peacock Centre in North Hobart, which was destroyed by fire. Today I can announce that the Government has reworked our plan and will now deliver an accelerated mental health beds commitment.

We will be taking immediate action to recruit and open 12 new mental health hospital-in-the-home beds in Hobart in response to increasing demand on the emergency department, and in response to increasing pressure on the acute mental health inpatient unit at the RHH.

Hospital in the Home, or HITH, is an innovative model utilised throughout the country, through which patients receive hospital-level care whilst being accommodated in their own home. Evidence shows that this approach provides the same quality of care as traditional hospital-based care for medically stable patients, and has superior outcomes in some cases.

HITH staff are highly skilled and trained and are able to provide clinical interventions and services at inpatient intensity, within a community environment. The HITH staffing model consists of staff from a range of disciplines and providing services within a multidisciplinary model, and

our Chief Psychiatrist has significant experience with helping to implement this model in other jurisdictions. Noting current demand at the emergency department of the RHH, a staff member of the HITH would be expected to attend the ED each morning to identify those patients who would be more appropriately treated by the HITH team. We are aiming to have these HITH beds open by the end of March next year, which is a shorter timeframe than pursuing the Mistral Place option, and it means we are able to get on with the job of delivering much-needed services sooner. The Government will review the ongoing operation of HITH once the construction of all new mental health facilities is completed.

We have acknowledged that we need more mental health beds to take pressure off the Royal Hobart Hospital emergency department, which is why our election policy proposed that the 10 beds already accommodated the top floor of Mistral Place be mirrored on the bottom floor, following consultation with staff and services.

The Department of Health and Tasmania's Chief Psychiatrist commenced work on how the Mistral Place commitment could be operationalised immediately after the election. Some months ago, however, the Chief Psychiatrist noted that there were challenges with our Mistral Place plan, and unfortunately it was not looking as straightforward a project as it first appeared. The Chief Psychiatrist has now briefed Cabinet on the outcome of this work, and I can today advise the House of our decision.

The Government will construct a brand-new 12-bed dedicated mental health facility as St Johns Park in New Town to assist with the management of demand for mental health services, increase patient flow and deliver more access to mental health care. This is a bigger, better facility than our initially proposed Mistral Place expansion, delivering two more beds and a better environment for clients. We will invest an estimated \$9 million of new funding over and above our election commitment funding to ensure we do this right, making a total construction budget of approximately \$11.5 million, which will be confirmed once planning is complete.

This new facility provides a longer-term solution to increased demand for mental health care and treatment and is in addition to meeting immediate needs through the mental health hospital-in-the-home program. It also is intended that the facility will be designed so that there will be opportunities to expand capacity at the site in the future.

This is an exciting project with huge potential to develop truly joined-up service models as part of the clinical planning for the facility. Consultation on this facility will therefore commence as soon as possible, with construction to be completed in 2021.

People have been on occasion waiting many hours and sometimes days in the RHH ED for a bed to become available in the acute inpatient unit. The Government does not accept that this is good enough, but we also do not accept that there are simple solutions that can be implemented in isolation to address these issues.

I have said on several occasions that, as a government, we do not want to see any Tasmanians waiting too long for care. The Rethink Mental Health plan, which is universally supported and has been embraced by key mental health stakeholders, continues to chart the path forward for Tasmania towards an integrated mental health system that has the right supports in place at all levels of acuity.

The direction in Rethink is based on strong evidence about what a modern mental health system should look like, as well as the consistent advice of mental health stakeholders that we must focus

more on the community. It is therefore important that the House and the community is clear on exactly what improvements are coming up under the Government's \$95 million plan for mental health.

There will be 12 brand-new mental health hospital-in-the-home beds operating in southern Tasmania within the next six months. Tasmania's first-ever child and adolescent mental health facilities are now less than 12 months away, due to open in Launceston in September next year after the first stage of the 4K redevelopment is completed. These beds will service young Tasmanians across the north and the north-west, providing high levels of care closer to home for these precious young people and their families - a huge step forward for our system.

The new adolescent unit at the Royal Hobart Hospital will follow within six months after, providing more specialist child and adolescent mental health facilities for vulnerable Tasmanians, along with the new mental health unit as part of the redevelopment, subject of course to consultation through the Clinical Planning Taskforce. Then later, in 2020, the Peacock Centre will provide 15 more beds, before the 12-bed St Johns Park facility at New Town is completed in 2021.

All up, this means that within just three years there will be the 27 more mental health beds available in our system, plus the child and adolescent mental health facilities delivering capacity we have never had before in our state. These important services are all about building a better mental health system with more staff, more support and more options for Tasmanians experiencing mental ill health.

The clear advice is that these new beds will take pressure off our acute mental health services and provide better care outcomes for Tasmanians, as there will be more access to mental health care at a more appropriate level. We are proud to be delivering these crucial improvements and will continue to work closely with mental health staff, stakeholders and consumers to make sure we are meeting the needs of our community.

The Premier confirmed two weeks ago that the core team of six new medical specialists who will operate Tasmania's first ever integrated medical and search and rescue helicopter service have now completed their training in pre-hospital and retrieval care. These consultants have been completing this intensive training alongside our dedicated flight paramedics and will be permanently stationed out of the airport from February 2019. We have brought forward funding to boost the service sooner, so that the team is in the best possible position to ramp up to full capability in mid-2019.

Now that these specialists have been trained, they are also able to train other members of the service, which is the first time Tasmania has ever had this level of training capacity. The new service will dramatically improve response times and the expert advice is that it will save up to nine lives in Tasmania every year.

All up, we will be recruiting an expected 30 additional specialist paramedics, doctors, nurses and support staff, and with the addition of helipads at the Mersey and Royal Hobart Hospital, all four of our major hospitals will be connected to an integrated aeromedical service for the first time, saving vital time which can be the difference between life and death for critically unwell or injured Tasmanians.

Further support for our ambulance service will come via the secondary triage service, which will be commencing next year. This initiative will help ensure patients who do not require

emergency intervention or transport to an emergency department are connected with a more appropriate health service. This has the benefit of ensuring more paramedic resources are available for emergency calls, meaning paramedics are more able to attend to the most urgent call-outs. It is estimated that, once fully operational, the secondary triage service will assess almost 22 000 calls per year, and has the potential to divert up to 16 000 patients to alternative service providers.

At my direction, the secretary and chief executive of Ambulance Tasmania have been consulting directly with ambulance staff all over the state on the best locations for new resources under our commitment to deliver 42 new rural and regional paramedics over the next five years. They have done a fantastic job, listening to paramedics from Sorell to St Helens, and we remain firmly committed to delivering these much-needed paramedics in the near future. I will have more to say soon on the first rounds of recruitment and where those placements will be, but all of these paramedics will provide vital support for their colleagues in more populated areas, as they will ensure less need for these paramedics to go out of area to collect patients.

Finally, I am pleased to confirm that in the coming weeks we will be commencing recruitment for the \$11.1 million Community Rapid Response hospital-in-the-home teams in southern and north-west Tasmania. These teams will ease pressure on hospital presentations, diverting and delivering care which can be safely delivered in the community or in the home, especially for those who have chronic and complex illnesses and are frequent hospital and ED users. All up, it is estimated that more than 30 new allied health professionals and nurses will be recruited to operate the service, providing around 20 000 appointments and other services over the next three years.

In conclusion, the Government has a strong record on delivering more resources for our health system, doing whatever we possibly can to boost services and provide more access to care. We have acknowledged that our health system is under pressure from rapidly increasing demand and we know there is more to be done, but Tasmanians can be assured the Hodgman Liberal Government is committed to listening to health professionals, key stakeholders and the Tasmanian community as we deliver on our plan.

To build a better health system and boost the capacity of our hospitals, the facts are that we need to build the facilities and plan properly for the services that are needed. As I have outlined today, we are doing just this. This Government will never stop working to deliver the health system that we know Tasmanians deserve. We have the plan and we have put the funding in the Budget. As a government we have the will to do better and the drive to do more. Now it is a matter of delivering.

[12.20 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the statement be noted.

It is interesting that we have a ministerial statement from the embattled Health minister, Mr Ferguson. We have come to this point following events that have occurred over the past few months where patients have been waiting hours, indeed days, in the emergency department, ambulances have been ramped and staff are under enormous pressure, to the point where they are taking industrial action. A cynic would wonder whether the pressure on the minister has forced him to come into this House and provide an update on what he is actually doing in his portfolio.

Nurses are taking industrial action: they are calling stop-work meetings. It has been going on for 100 days. The minister has the audacity to talk about his recruitment strategy when he is not paying nurses in recognition of their work. As of next year, unless this Government scraps the cap, Tasmanian nurses will be the worst paid in the country. How do you expect to recruit and retain a workforce when you are offering such poor conditions?

This ministerial statement contains a number of matters. The most glaring one is that it is an admission of failure by this minister. He has failed in his portfolio. He has failed his workforce and he has failed patients right across Tasmania. What he has delivered today is an admission that he will not be relieving pressure on the hospital system for at least six months. The first one to be delivered will be the Hospital in the Home program for the patients who are mentally unwell. He has not consulted with those at the front line about it. He had not spoken to the ANMF, HACSU, AMA the Mental Health Council of Tasmania before he announced it today. They will be very interested to read the minister's comments today and find out what the criteria will be for admission to this program and how they will be funded to deliver it. There is no new money attached to this program. The minister has spoken about money for the Hospital in the Home program, but that is money already in the Budget. Can the Government tell me what new money there is for the 12 new beds the minister announced today for Hospital in the Home? How is the minister going to staff those positions properly and safely to make sure patients get the care they need?

When this initiative begins in six months there are questions about whether it will free up hospital capacity. Assessing patients in the emergency department to determine whether they are eligible for the program and so do not have to be admitted to hospital is commendable, but because they are not in a bed you are not freeing up beds. We will wait and see whether this initiative will help ease pressure on the hospital.

The initiatives you have announced for beds in Mistral Place and the new initiative at New Town will not be coming online for 12 to 18 months. This is not immediate relief for the pressures our staff and patients are facing daily in the hospital system. It is a reactionary response from this minister following the pressure brought to bear by members of his own party and by the workforce who are taking industrial action. They are asking this Government to make health their number one priority.

The Government has not responded to the KPMG report, the one you continue to keep secret. It is the \$100 million black hole that is putting huge pressure on the hospital system. Patients are not getting the care they need. Elective surgery waiting lists are blowing out again. Emergency department wait times continue to grow. Ambulance response time continues to grow. All of the data is going in the wrong direction under this Health minister.

The minister acknowledges that in the redesign he is working on with the clinical planning taskforce for K block there is opportunity to change the layout. I hope the minister considers increasing the number of acute mental health beds. We welcome the minister's moves regarding the configuration of level 10 of K block. That is something the medical workforce has been calling for. They have also called for more acute beds to be accommodated in K block. The clinical planning taskforce the minister announced today should be given the opportunity to examine how you can include more acute mental health beds in K block. I put that on the record as one of the things we think this Government should be giving more serious consideration to because clinical advice indicates we need more acute mental health beds.

We need to provide community support, but it is not enough. Having 10 beds cut, from 42 to 32, has proven to be problematic. Bed block means patients cannot get through the ED into the ward when they need to. I hope the clinical planning task force can have a look at the configuration of the ward and the layout for acute mental health patients.

The initiatives announced by the minister today also speak about assistance for the ambulance service, which has been under huge pressure. The minister talked about additional recruitment. I remind the House that there is a wages cap in place. If the Government is serious about recruiting to fill vacancies or new positions, then it needs to properly remunerate staff.

The Government is facing industrial action across much of its workforce. The AEU could take industrial action later this month because it does not think this Government will negotiate in good faith. We have had industrial action taken by the health workforce. In this ministerial statement the minister is claiming record presentations at the emergency department by comparing figures from 12 years ago. Of course you are going to see an increase from 12 years ago. You need to make sure that what is happening now on site and the work underway to open the new K block with the 250 beds to be fully operational with staff by 2024 can meet projected demand. Is the minister doing the work to understand projected demand on the hospital by 2024? What does stage 2 need to look like? How involved will the clinical planning taskforce be?

We need to have strategic collaborative responses to the pressures in the health system. I reiterate our willingness to work with the Government. Short-term knee-jerk reactions are not going to cut it.

Time expired.

[12.28 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Madam Speaker, I thought I would have a few more moments to prepare but no one on the other side jumped. That is interesting.

In his statement the minister has admitted he has failed our community, failed those people trying to access appropriate health services, and is still failing those patients and those people in the community who have significant mental health requirements that are not being met. The Leader of the Opposition has indicated there is a lack of additional funding. The minister failed to answer questions during question time. The fact that a minister would have answers and choose not to give them is one of the greatest disrespects I have seen in this parliament. The last time we saw that was when Mr Groom walked to the dispatch box and said, 'I knew the answer but I did not want to tell you, so I did not'. That is what we got out of Mr Ferguson. It is simply not acceptable.

There is no \$100 million that is going to pick up the structural deficit. In fact out of the 14 pages, six pages of the document are about self-congratulation. Six pages talk about what a great job the minister thinks he is doing, remembering he is the happiest health minister in the country.

Mr Ferguson - How many pages would yours be?

Ms O'BYRNE - I do not know what it would take to make you realise just how significant the problem you have presided over has become. You took a health system that had survived the global financial crisis. You have apparently increased funding in this golden age that Tasmania is going through but it is clearly not going into Health. Access to our hospitals has become harder. Outcomes for patients have become worse under this minister. That is what we have had. This

minister says, 'you had 10 years'. We had a global financial crisis and we did not do to the health system what this minister has managed to do in four-and-a-half years.

In four-and-a-half years he has completely gutted our health system and its reputation. We have accreditation being stripped from us time after time. We have senior, well-respected clinicians leaving the state because they simply cannot work under this minister. We have hundreds of unfilled nursing positions. That is the situation we have. This minister is quite happy to say to those staff and unhappy nurses that in 12 months you will be the lowest paid nurses in the country. How does he expect us to recruit these positions? Why is he shocked that we cannot fill the nursing vacancies? We cannot fill them because he has made this health system a place that people are struggling in and people who go to work feel desperate.

I have spoken to those nurses who stood outside the ED in Launceston. They have been protesting for 103 days. I have never seen the level of desperation and pain those staff are going through. This minister does not listen to them. He keeps talking about being the minister who listens and will listen to the community. He clearly only listens to himself in the mirror because if he listened to the AMA, ANMF and those people on the front line, we would not be where we are today. We know that because this minister, by not funding some of the announcements in here, is doing what he has always done. He issues edicts to those in Health: 'You will now provide this service', and he does not give them the funding and the capacity to deliver it, therefore putting more pressure on a hospital system that is struggling under his watch.

He removed local decision-making, the capacity for local hospitals to respond to their day-to-day concerns and he should take responsibility for that. That has been a fundamental issue in their ability to manage and respond to situations. It is his direct interference and his failure to genuinely listen that has made the system as difficult as it is.

The challenges in Health have been obvious for some time. It was not only a couple of weeks ago that nurses, doctors, health professionals, allied health and paramedics were screaming for support. They have been screaming for support for months. When will this minister and this Premier start caring? They start when they have a bit of bad media. That has been the driving influence. They want this off the front page. They want announcements that will take things off the front page because they are driven entirely by a media strategy.

If you genuinely wanted to make the changes, you would be adopting those recommendations that are coming from the staff. They have given lots of suggestions but the minister refuses to take them on board, and they are to do with the way we conduct discharges over weekends. It is about having enough senior staff and enough allied health staff so that you can conduct discharges over weekends to move people safely through the system. It is about funding and the beds he has nominally opened. He talks about the 122 beds he has opened. When you start counting them, it is hard to find where they all are but they are not all staffed. Hospitals have simply had extra beds and no additional resources to deal with them and this minister knows that. It is all well and good to say, 'I have opened 4D', again and again but when you talk to the staff, they will tell you that you do not staff those beds and that there are still beds not open in that ward. Do the right thing. That is the concern we have. This minister says he is committed to listening but he has not listened at all.

The time line in this document causes me some significant concerns. We have an absolute crisis in mental health and the first beds that will be available will be the Hospital in the Home beds, which will not be available until March or April next year. It says, 'within the next six months'. I

do not know what that means, but within the next six months could be March or April next year, given that the termination facility that is supposed to open in October will not be open in October because the bloke is not very good at deadlines.

What is unclear is who exactly out of those patients presenting will be able to attend. The Hospital in the Home Program is a tried and tested model and it deals with people who have chronic but manageable conditions. It allows them to avoid coming into the hospital regularly for ongoing treatment and to keep them sustained and escalated. It is a good model. We did everything we could to manage things during the global financial crisis. The model itself is good but it is not a model that deals with what this documents says. This document says it is going to take the pressure of acute inpatient beds. It cannot do that if the patients who will be in them are those people who are already capable of being supported through a community health model. This model does not deliver what you said. This minister is, once again, lying to this community.

[12.35 p.m.]

Mr HODGMAN (Franklin - Premier) - Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak on an important update on the progress we are making to rebuild Tasmania's health system. Members opposite will often be critical on various fronts and of us being upfront with the size of the challenge we inherited, the challenge that is improving our health system and recognising there is more to do.

This is being done courageously by a minister, who commenced what was the most extensive consultation process in 2014 to understand and inform Government, which is what needed to happen. I was with the minister at a number of community forums and he will be at a number in the coming weeks, as he has outlined, continuing to listen to experts around the state who can contribute to improving our health system.

I am reluctant and reticent to always need to point to what life was like when we came into Government but it is impossible to ignore. I will not, being gifted the extraordinary opportunity to respond to what a former Labor health minister did to the health system we inherited, miss an opportunity to point to some of the remedial work we have had to undertake, including re-opening wards you shut. How on earth could that have ever helped our health system? We are recommencing the Hospital in the Home program, which you acknowledged is a tried and tested program and yet you cut it when you were in government. These are material facts that must be acknowledged as pertinent.

Any suggestion the rebuilding of a health system can be as simple as all that belies common sense. Most Tasmanians would appreciate when you have a Government that is investing more than ever before - re-opening facilities that were closed, finding new, modern and innovative ways to provide better services in our community and provide record levels of funding, there are still people on waiting lists, there are still people in EDs needing treatment sooner and there are challenges in our health system that have been outlined very clearly in recent times and over a protracted period - that the increased demand in our health system continues to grow year after year. If it were that simple that it could be fixed like that, as some might suggest, it would have been done by now.

Things have improved under this Government and it is not true for the former Labor minister to say they have not. We reduced elective surgery waiting lists to the lowest ever in history. They have improved under us. There were people waiting for a decade when we came into Government. They were on waiting lists for a decade and you say they have not improved. They have but we

recognise there is a lot more to be done. We will not be lectured to by an opposition party who are trying to find excuses for their failures. Our health system has improved and there is a lot more we need to do and that is why we are making these significant investments.

We are also consulting and engaging. It is not true for anyone to suggest the minister or the Government does not listen to health experts. It is frequently the case that we have these meetings and processes, by which we can understand the best way to apply the additional funding we are putting into our health system and how we can best employ the additional staff now working in our health system. That is another improvement on what we inherited. There are more staff in our health and hospital system as a result of our budget commitments over the last four-and-a-half years and that will continue. As we have outlined, we will respond to peaks in demand. We had an extraordinary flu season last year, which was described as perhaps the worst ever in our history, which we needed to respond to and we did. We have had additional challenges over the last 12 months and we have refined our processes to improve service delivery, where we are told by experts, including in the mental health space, how we can do it better, more affordably and efficiently, and best provide for people who require treatment.

I am delighted that a positive contribution already has come from the mental health carers, who issued a statement a short while ago. Their CEO, Maxine Griffiths, says it is 'a positive move toward contemporary models of care for Tasmanians experiencing mental illness'. That is a more objective and constructive response to what we are now doing to relieve pressure and provide better service and treatment for people with mental health needs in our hospitals at the acute level, but also in a community setting, which has also been acknowledged as an appropriate model.

I want to assure Tasmanians that this Government continues to treat Health seriously as a number-one priority for service delivery, as it has been since 2014 when we embarked on what was a difficult and challenging conversation with our community which required us to consider how our hospital network could better work and what changes might be needed to the services provided in those hospitals. These decisions were put into the too-hard basket by the former government which would not address clinical concerns at the Mersey Hospital that we were told, when we came into government, were unsafe.

We have improved service delivery at that hospital as well. Yes, we have reconfigured the services that are available and we have added more to that hospital which now ensures its ongoing viability and its importance in our health system. We inherited a system that had the Mersey hospital not only on a financially unsustainable pathway but also a clinical one. We were told that it would require some changes and difficult decisions were made. That was an example of courage and a preparedness to show leadership, to engage and listen to our experts, and that is what we will continue to do.

[12.42 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, there is much to say about this announcement by the minister and I will return to the Premier's reference to mental health carers and the comments by Maxine Griffiths. They are pertinent to this whole area, especially as we have just had Carers Week.

I cannot help bringing my gaze to one of the big silences in this document, which contains some very welcome announcements and I will go to those. What is screamingly silent is the voice of patients, the voice of consumers and the voice of the community. From the figures the minister has provided us we know there has been a more than doubling in the number of patients accessing

the Royal Hobart Hospital in the last 12 years and a 15 per cent increase in people who have moved from the emergency department to inpatients in the hospital in the last year.

This is presented by the Government as though it is a justification for why we need to put more money into acute and clinical settings, but it is evidence of the desperate need to reset the balance and put an equal focus on preventative health. While the minister is paying attention to the issues with the hospital, the beds and the front page, the driver for that - the attention to chronic illness in the community, support for people, education, public health, all the cuts that have happened in the preventative health area in this state under this Liberal Government - that is the primary reason, as well as the demographic factors of this state, that we are having more people accessing acute hospital services. It is something we can fix. We can put downward pressure on the number of people going to hospital in a way that will keep them well for longer. People can have a happier and healthier life by having care in the community.

This provides essentially what I hear as a continuation of a siloed approach which has a focus on a clinical task force. I hope the minister can perhaps give more detail in his response - if you would provide one, minister - about whether the Clinical Planning Task Force he has established would have a voice for the consumer. I know the minister was at a health conference about three or four years ago where there was some important work presented from New Zealand and everyone at that health conference was signed up - clinicians, I think the minister, doctors and nurses and everybody who spoke - to the importance of having patient-led recovery and the so-called consumer voice. Let us talk about them as people - the person representing people as the patients but not as the doctors.

We have to always remember that when we are in a clinical environment we will necessarily be looking at clinical solutions. We have to do the clinical solutions right but we have to understand if you go to a surgeon, you are going to end up down the surgery pathway. If you go to a car mechanic, you are going to end up down a mechanical pathway. That may not be the best or the only approach. It may not be the cheapest one and the one with the least complications. Obviously it depends on the situation. We need to have the services for when people need that particular work done, but it is also true that in the clinical task force setting, we need to have the voices connecting clinicians outside to the community, making sure there are allied health people on that committee. Will there be the people in the sector and the community speaking about all those other services on the clinical task force?

As this statement says, there has been a 35 per cent increase in people accessing mental health facilities at the Royal Hobart Hospital in the last year. This speaks to a failure in the system and what I believe Maxine Griffiths was referring to, the importance of moving into community-led recovery and community support for people. On that note, I draw the minister's attention to the fact that the mental health carers have, I understand, something like \$200 000 in their annual budget. They asked for some more money last year and did not get an extra shekel - or dollar. Let us remember that this \$200 000 is a pimple on the \$11.5 million that will take until 2021 to get 12 beds for people. It is a tiny amount of that money. Meanwhile, between now and 2021 those people will be cared for in their homes by their families in the community.

If the minister, with a stroke of his pen, increased that to \$11.3 million, that would make a massive difference today to those people with mental health distress and also to their carers, because we know it has a huge impact on their ability to go to work. It also has an effect on their own personal mental health, working and living with somebody every single day doing that care and

when it gets too much sometimes they end up in psychosis at the ED. That is the sort of important work the minister could do in addition to the other things he has provided here.

[12.49 p.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Treasurer) - Madam Speaker, the contribution of the previous member was probably one of the more useful and constructive contributions we have heard on an issue like health in this place for some time. I hope we see more of it. What was really interesting with this is the minister has brought a statement to the parliament and he has outlined a plan, which has already been endorsed and welcomed by the mental health carers with its contemporary approach. All we heard from the other side was a personal attack, more whingeing and carping. We have the current Health minister and we have the former Health minister in the parliament. This Health minister has employed more than 800 new staff over the last four-and-a-half years, including 500 nurses, 100 doctors, 70 allied health professionals, more than 51 paramedics, and he has opened 120 beds. Calvary Private Hospital in Launceston has less staff than this minister has employed and around the same number of beds. What he has injected into the system over the last four-and-a-half years is another medium-sized hospital to meet the capacity. Over the four years, as we have outlined, we will be spending more than \$2 billion than what was being spent when we first came to Government.

If I contrast that with Ms O'Byrne and her performance, she closed wards, did not open beds, and cut \$100 million a year out of the Health budget, as opposed to putting \$2 billion more in over the forward Estimates. At the Royal Hobart Hospital, which under their watch they were promising would have been built a couple of years ago, there was not funding for any of the new beds and no funding for any of the staff included in the budget. That is a statement of fact. There was not one dollar in the budget to employ people if those beds had been built.

We have more whingeing and carping from that side with no ideas. We heard, even from the Greens, some constructive comment in terms of what we are trying to do here. There are demand issues with the system. Last year, we had an unprecedented flu season. Demand rose and we were flexible in the support we provided to Health in the budget. We will do the same again. That is the way the budget works. We sensibly forecast reasonable and sensible surpluses across the forward Estimates so that if there are demand pressures in Health, or if there are other emergencies such as bushfires or floods, we have the capacity to respond. What has happened as a result of last year's flexibility is that demand has not abated. We will spend more this year than was budgeted, as we did last year. Over the last two years, as the minister has explained, there have been more than 7000 presentations to our EDs over and above what there were a couple of years ago.

This minister is doing a great job as Health minister, with 800 more staff and 500 more nurses. The Leader of the Opposition could not even construct seven minutes in respect of the statement. She wandered off into education and wage issues. We are having no trouble recruiting new staff. There are 800 more of them in our health system as a result of our sensible wages policy. Is that side of the House prepared to accept the facts? No, they are not. All they want to do is to whinge and carp. I have said in this place on many occasions that whingeing is not a policy and complaining is not a platform. It simply is not.

Again, the minister brought out a comprehensive statement as to how he is going to ensure we meet the need for mental health beds. It is a very sensible, contemporary approach ensuring we have 12 mental health beds in our community already funded in the budget. We will use the funding we had already placed in the budget for Mistral Place and that funding will fund these beds. The minister has also announced today an additional \$9 million toward the \$11 million build at St Johns

Park, where we will have 12 new beds. At the same time, the 15 beds at the Peacock Centre will be coming within two years.

Time expired.

Statement noted.

MOTION

Section 19 of the Public Account Act 1986 - June Quarter 2018

[12.57 p.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Treasurer) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House approve, in accordance with subsections 11(7) and 12(4) of the Public Account Act 1986, additional Recurrent Services and Works and Services expenditure in 2017-18 for the purposes detailed in the Section 19 Return for the June Quarter 2018.

The Section 19 Return for the June Quarter and the Section 12A Supplementary Estimates are a routine administrative procedure for the Government. As honourable members would be aware, I tabled the Section 19 Return for the June Quarter 2018 on 20 September 2018. This motion seeks Parliamentary endorsement of additional expenditure, which has previously been approved in accordance with the requirements of the Public Account Act 1986 during the June quarter 2018. While the act provides the Treasurer with the power to approve additional expenditure during the course of a financial year, it also provides for Parliament to subsequently approve this expenditure. This requirement is stated in subsections 11(7) and 12(4) of the Public Account Act.

As members would be aware, the Legislative Council has already debated and approved this expenditure in their last sitting. As members would note, it is generally the case that the majority of orders made under the provisions of sections 10, 11 or 12 of the Public Account Act are made in the June quarter of a budget year. This reflects the established practice of agencies being required to seek to manage additional costs during the budget year prior to requesting additional funding towards the end of the budget year if considered necessary.

It should be noted that the preliminary outcomes report, which was released on 12 August, includes estimates of these expenditures and reflected that the budget position had improved from the estimate included in the 2018-19 Budget. The net operating surplus increased to \$97.9 million, an improvement of \$22.6 million from the budget estimate of \$75.3 million.

Requests for additional funds approved in the June 2018 Quarter totalled \$24.1 million. It should be noted that this amount represents the lowest level of expenditure presented in a Section 19 June Quarter Return for the past six years. It should also be noted that, in some instances, the provision of additional funding under sections 11 or 12 will not impact on the overall budget position. For example, additional expenditure may reflect the receipt of Australian Government funding or be funded from the proceeds of asset sales. Similarly, transfers of funding made under section 10 will not impact on the budget position, as increased expenditure in one area of an agency is matched by savings in another area of the agency.

Of the total requests for additional funds approved in the June 2018 Quarter of \$24.1 million, RAFs totalling \$7.8 million have no net impact on the budget position as they are matched by offsetting amounts. The major offsetting amounts in the June 2018 Quarter include -

- \$6 million for agency asset sales proceeds;
- \$1.7 million to reimburse Housing Tasmania for the payment of Stamp Duty Relief to Affordable Community Housing Alliance Tasmania Ltd for properties transferred in the Community Housing Stock Leverage Program; and
- \$69 000 from the Australian Government for the National Skills and Workforce Development Specific Purpose Payment.

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

MOTION

Section 19 of the Public Account Act 1986 - June Quarter 2018

Resumed from above.

[2.30 p.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Treasurer) - Madam Speaker, the request for additional funds approved in the June 2018 Quarter, which do not have offsetting funding include -

- \$4.3 million for costs associated with the October 2017 fire event at St Helens and additional wildfire fighting costs;
- \$3.2 million for ministerial and parliamentary support costs;
- \$2.5 million for a Nature Conservation Act Compensation Payment; and
- \$2 million for fire suppression activities undertaken on Parks and Wildlife Service managed lands.

Additional information was requested in the Legislative Council regarding the \$3.2 million for Ministerial and Parliamentary Support. I will now provide that information for the benefit of members. The funding reflects -

- additional funds for the Opposition Leader of \$150 000;
- additional funds for the Leader of the Tasmanian Greens, \$20 000;
- estimated termination payments, \$1 250 000;
- additional funds for ministerial offices, \$1 680 000; and
- additional funds for electorate offices, \$100 000.

Members will note that such additional funding is routine following an election period.

For the benefit of the House I will provide information regarding questions asked and answered in the Legislative Council. I will also provide some additional detail on RAFs requested during the Legislative Council's debate, and provided in that debate's closing remarks.

In the Department of Premier and Cabinet, members questioned the Special Energy Bonus. As way of background, due to higher than expected returns from government energy businesses, the Government decided to pay a bonus to all pension concession cardholders, including age pension, disability support pension, parenting payments, carer payments, wife pension and DVA pension concessions and Commonwealth health cardholders. This bonus was to help support cost-of-living increases. The Government-decided payments will be made directly from Aurora Energy for Aurora Energy account holders and directly from the Government for non-Aurora Energy customers. Each eligible customer received \$125.

In the Department of State Growth, members questioned the cost of Output 1.3 and the costs of the audit. The cost of the audit was \$297 440.

In the Department of Primary Industries, Parks Water and Environment, members questioned the \$2.5 million compensation payment to a landowner. In response, I note that the Forest Practices Authority refused certification of a property near Marrawah in the north-west of the state on the basis that the proposed forestry activities would impact an undifferentiated wetland community listed as threatened under schedule 3A of the Tasmanian Nature Conservation Act 2002 and potential habitat for the dwarf galaxias listed as vulnerable under the Commonwealth Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. The dwarf galaxias is a tiny freshwater fish endemic to south-eastern Australia, where it occurs in Tasmania, South Australia and Victoria. In Tasmania, it is classified as vulnerable under the Tasmanian Threatened Species Protection Act 1995 and is considered a 'priority species requiring consideration' under the Tasmanian Regional Forestry Agreement 1997.

In the Department of Health and Human Services, the request for additional funds of \$1.7 million is to reimburse Housing Tasmania for the payment of stamp duty relief to a community housing provider for properties transferred in the Community Housing Stock Leverage Program. The stamp duty relief was then passed on to the State Revenue Office by the community housing provider.

In addition to information on requests for additional funds that have been provided in the June 2018 Quarter, the section 19 return also includes information on transfers that have been approved under sections 10(1) and 10(3) of the Public Account Act. These transfers have no impact on the overall budget position as they involve the transfer of funding between outputs within an agency. Separate to the quarterly section 19 return, section 12A of the Public Account Act requires a return to be tabled annually that details supplementary estimates of all expenditure from the Consolidated Fund that is authorised under sections 10, 11 and 12 of that act during the financial year.

For the benefit of the House I will also provide some additional detail on transfers requested during the Legislative Council's debate and provided in that debate's closing remarks. In the Department of Education, the transfer between Output 2.1 and 1.3 to allocate funding for the George Town and Queenstown Child and Family Centres corrected an administrative error causing the centres to be reflected against the wrong outputs. The variation has nil impact on the net operating balance.

In Finance-General, there was a transfer of \$335 000. The lower expenditure for miscellaneous ex gratia payments was due to lower than expected funding requirements. Interest is paid on some special deposit and trust fund accounts and the increased cost reflects higher balances in these accounts and the resulting impact on the interest cost. This cost is partially offset by increased interest revenue for the Government from its investments.

In the Department of Justice, there was a transfer of \$200 000 to Births, Deaths and Marriages. This was due to the same sex marriage reforms in addition to the changes in Australia Post delivery time frames and the need to increase the use of priority postage. The operating costs of Births, Deaths and Marriages increased in 2017-18. There was a budget overrun of \$200 000 as a result, which was funded by two transfers. Savings of \$100 000 from the Tasmanian Industrial Commission were applied to assist with the budget shortfall. The majority of those savings arose due to the need to utilise Fair Work Australia commissions for appeals being less than anticipated. Savings of \$100 000 from the Monetary Penalties Enforcement Service arose from salary and other administrative savings throughout the year.

In the Department of Justice, savings of \$500 000 in Worksafe Tasmania, as a result of salary and other administrative savings generated during 2017-18, were transferred to the Tasmanian Prison Service, which saw an increase in prisoner numbers in 2017-18. In the Department of Justice, savings of \$210 000 in the Tasmanian Planning Commission were applied in two separate transfers; \$100 000 was transferred to magisterial court services and \$110 000 was transferred to the Planning Policy Unit. These savings resulted from salary savings and commissioner costs due to the use of in-house expertise and the commission changing its staffing structure for the reduction in funding from 2017-18 onwards.

In the Department of State Growth, \$150 000 was transferred to Passenger Transport for the relocation of the bus mall. The relocation of the Hobart Bus Mall was a one-off, unforeseen expense during 2017-18. The Minister for Infrastructure endorsed the transfer of funds from Output 6.2 to address this additional expenditure. The costs associated with the relocation included reprinting and replacement of bus stop and customer timetables, a customer information campaign alerting passengers to changes and service planning costs.

Madam Speaker, the motion seeks parliament's approval of the additional expenditure that was approved for the quarter ended 30 June 2018. I have provided more information than normal on the basis that the section 19 return was debated in the upper House and a series of questions were asked in that place and it is important to place that information on the record.

[2.38 p.m.]

Mr BACON (Clark) - Madam Speaker, I note what the Treasurer said in adding more information than he normally would. I ask the Treasurer, was that in addition to what was put on the *Hansard* in the other place? I have a series of questions and some other comments to make. It appears it is not further information to what is already noted by the upper House.

Mr Gutwein - I would have to check.

Mr BACON - Some initial information from the Treasurer would be interesting to see. It has come to light in recent times that \$140 million was provided to move the sewage works at Macquarie Point. If the Treasurer has some indication as to where in the budget that money is coming from or the timing of when that money will be required, that would be appreciated.

The Treasurer added extra information on the breakdown of the \$3.2 million in additional funding that was only \$150 000 for the Opposition and only \$20 000 for the Greens. There seems to be an unusually large amount provided in termination payments. We have \$1.25 million there. The \$1.68 million for ministerial offices seems to be different from the way the Treasurer couched it in his contribution. Can Treasurer provide further information on which ministerial offices have overrun their budget, why it is such a large amount of money, and a breakdown, particularly with the termination payments?

There have been public comments about specific termination payments that were made following the election. At least one of the termination payments was paid to someone who the Premier said had resigned before he changed his language. It has a sniff about it, so we would like more detail from the Treasurer about the estimated \$1.25 million in termination payments. Which ministers have overspent their budget? What is the explanation for the additional funding for electorate offices of \$100 000?

There is \$5.9 million in the return of proceeds from the sale of assets previously held by the department. The sale proceeds will be expended on maintenance across a number of school sites. What schools are these and why has that provision not already been provided?. The \$1.7 million reimbursement to Housing Tasmania for the payment of stamp duty relief looks like it goes to only one community housing provider. I thought there were a number of different housing providers in this scheme. Why was it not foreseen by the Government that the money would be required to be paid back to Housing Tasmania? Was the obligation to pay stamp duty not identified in the original policy intent of the Government?

There is also - and it is only a small amount of money - \$14 000 reflecting increased community activity by the Legislative Council. Could we have some detail on that? I am not sure if that was covered in the upper House. I did not see it when I briefly read the *Hansard*. There was \$40 000 of additional funding for the Joint Select Committee on Future Gaming Markets. What was that money was used for? There was some travel by the committee but also legal advice and research.

Mr Gutwein - Yes, there were consultants and some other external advice.

Mr BACON - I am interested in the timing of that. Why is it occurring now rather than when the committee was in session? It reported in September or October last year.

Mr Gutwein - The RAF was asked for at the end of the year. That would be the timing, but we will get some advice.

Mr BACON - Then there is one under 2.2 Principal and Subordinate Legislation. It is a request for additional funds of \$27 000 that reflects increased employee costs associated with senior lawyers and equivalent specialists. There was a very curious one. I asked colleagues whether they had seen anything like this before. I have not. There was a request for \$30 000 for the Tasmania Golf Club to assist in the removal of damaged trees at the club. This money was paid through Sport and Recreation. Is there a Government policy on damaged and dangerous trees? Is it normally dealt with by local council? Is this the usual practice?

Ms O'Connor - Private owners are usually responsible for those costs.

Mr Gutwein - There was extensive damage during the storm. That is my recollection.

Mr BACON - Was there a program where we identified damage across the state and then sought to put in place measures to remove dangerous trees? Did other people have an opportunity to access these funds? Was there a request?

Mr Gutwein - It was a request made.

Mr BACON - Who made the request? I would like some detail on the \$30 000.

A large amount of money - \$885 000 - was for provision of independent legal advice to the Energy Security Taskforce relating to Basslink. Why were these services not provided by Crown Law? Why was independent legal advice required when Hydro Tasmania had its own lawyers and has sought their legal advice on ongoing issues with Basslink? What did that legal advice deal with?

There was \$98 000 the Treasurer spoke about to fund the bonus payment for energy costs to all pension card holders. The upper House questioned what that \$98 000 was for, given that, as the Treasurer said in his contribution, Aurora Energy was responsible for making those payments. Was the \$98 000 for the letter I received signed by the Minister for Energy and the Premier?

The Treasurer added more information to the \$2.5 million for the endangered miniature fresh water fish. The \$2.5 million was for a compensation payment to a landowner at Marrawah under the Nature Conservation Act, the Treasurer said. Is this a discretionary process? Once your forest practices plan is knocked back by the Forest Practice Authority, do you then have to apply for this compensation? Is it given as a matter of course, or is there some discretion? If there is discretion, who makes that decision?

Mr Gutwein - I will get some detail.

Mr BACON - That would be very much appreciated.

Ms O'Connor - Is it a Liberal mate?

Mr BACON - We know the answer to that is undoubtedly 'yes'. Whether we can get to the bottom of that, Ms O'Connor, when you have the least transparent government in Tasmania's history, it is an opportunity for the Treasurer to provide some detail. Transparency for a change would be appreciated. I will not hold my breath. Today might be a good day to put out any bad news the Treasurer has. I would like to know what process occurred in this example.

With those few comments, I will await the Treasurer's response.

[2.48 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Speaker, we note that in a relatively short period of time since the election, there have been very significant shifts of public fundings across and between agencies, out to private enterprises.

There is a significant budget impact here. On page 3 of the section 19 return in column 3, subsection 11(2), we have a total sum of a bit over \$21 million. It says on the explanatory notes, 'The Budget impact of some of these additional costs has been offset on a whole-of-government level by increased Australian Government revenue or by asset sales'. I understand that this is an

explanatory note but given the substantial quantity of public funding we are talking about here, I think the Treasurer -

Mr Gutwein - Whereabouts are you?

Ms O'CONNOR - We are on page 3, the columns, and it is column 3, which is the second footnote that talks about offset by increased Australian Government revenue. Could you please detail if that is simply the GST distribution funds or by asset sales? It would be appropriate for you to detail to the House what those asset sales are because, as we know, even though the Premier came to government saying that his would not be a government that privatised assets, it has gone about doing just that at a pace.

It is about to flog the Treasury building, it has given away title to at least 500 Housing Tasmania properties and it has flogged about 29 000 hectares of public plantations. There is a big question mark hanging over the privatisation of public lands. We know that there is privatisation of public marine waterways, shared waterways, through the rapid expansion of fish farms. There is privatisation of public protected areas through exclusive use arrangements with private developers.

I would put it to you and the House, Madam Speaker, that this is the most privatising, corporatist government in Tasmania's history, so could the Treasurer please tell the House what asset sales have contributed towards that bottom line and whether any of it involved public Crown land through a process which is, as we know, opaque?

Moving on to table 2 and some of the funding transfers that have been detailed here, I see that the rubber continues to meet the road in having to provide extra resourcing to prison services in Tasmania because the Liberals' tough-on-crime policies are filling our prisons with people. You can harrumph away there, Minister for Corrections, but it says here in the table:

Savings of \$500 000 resulting from salary and other administrative savings generated during 2017-18 have been transferred from WorkSafe Tasmania to meet the cost of sustained increase in prisoner numbers during 2017-18.

Ms Archer - All across the nation.

Ms O'CONNOR - Ms Archer says this is happening all across the nation. She needs to table the evidence of that. We know from Tasmania Police's annual report of last year that under Liberal policy, crime rates in Tasmania went up by 10 per cent in the space of a single year, so there is obviously something wrong with the policy framework here if we are creating an environment where more and more people are going to prison.

Ms Archer - It'd be so good under the Greens.

Ms O'CONNOR - Would you like to say that out aloud, Ms Archer?

Madam SPEAKER - Yes, Ms Archer, could I ask you -

Ms Archer - I said it would be so good under the Greens - we'd have people let out of prison.

Madam SPEAKER - Ms Archer, could I ask you to abide by the same rules we apply to every other member of the parliament? Thank you.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Madam Speaker. In fact a Greens minister for corrections took up the 'breaking the cycle' work that had begun by former Labor minister, Lisa Singh, who is now a senator. He introduced a change management process at the prison, brought in Brian Edwards, who made a huge difference to the culture and the operations of the prison. In fact, not only were the numbers of prisoners within the system going down but recidivism rates were improving, so the evidence speaks for itself in terms of management of the correctional system in Tasmania.

I note here also that there has been savings of \$340 000 resulting from salary and other administrative savings transferred from Victim Support Services and the Safe at Home program to meet increases in demand experienced by the Guardianship and Administration Board, the Mental Health Tribunal and the Office of the Public Guardian. Invariably when there are section 19 returns brought into this House, one of the integrity or probity bodies will have had to come to government with a request for additional operational funding. This is a very good example of systemic and sustained underfunding of these important bodies so that each year they have to come back to government just so they can continue to operate effectively in the interests of the people of Tasmania.

It has happened to the Office of the Ombudsman and to the Integrity Commission. They have been to the office of the Equal Opportunities Commissioner, as I recall - and I am happy for the Attorney-General to correct me on that - but our integrity bodies should be properly funded. We should not have an Ombudsman's office where you can send off a right to information review in 2014, as now Senator Nick McKim did in relation to the expressions of interest process for development in protected areas, and there is still not an answer because there is a huge backlog in the Ombudsman's office for examining agency and ministerial decisions on RTI applications. As we know, ministers understand that obtaining a review of a right to information decision is going to take years and in all likelihood they will not be the minister when the decision comes down, so we are dealing with a system that has been undermined by a government that has no commitment to its transparency and accountability unless it suits them. They are underfunding the integrity body, the Office of the Ombudsman, and delegating decisions so that they cannot be internally reviewed. I can hear you sighing heavily, Ms Archer, but these are the facts.

I note that the Tasmanian Planning Commission has a cumulative cut to it of \$210 000 and that is salary savings in the first instance in table 2, and that money has gone into the Planning Policy Unit. Let us be really clear about what has happened here: the independent statutory planning body, the Tasmanian Planning Commission, has had money taken away from it and that money has been put into the department and the advisory capacity for the Minister for Planning. This is undermining and eroding the independent planning system in Tasmania. It is diminishing the capacity of the Tasmanian Planning Commission to do its work effectively and it is a continuation of the erosion of independence in our planning system that has been happening over the past five years, where we have gone from having one of the most robust, fair and independent planning systems in the country to having a planning framework that is being written by and for developers with explicit intent to shut out public appeal rights and concerned constituencies in relation to planning decisions.

We also see here a savings from the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner to again go back in to a political and government agenda. It says here \$40 000 is saved from the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner transferred to assist with meeting the costs of increased resources required to implement the Government's legislative reforms. Why should the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner pay for that? That is a very reasonable question, so perhaps the Treasurer could address his mind to that. What are these legislative reforms that require taking money away from

the Equal Opportunities Commissioner? Why is an independent statutory office having its funding cut to support the Liberals' legislative agenda, flawed as it is?

Also, could the Treasurer please explain why \$100 000 has been taken out of the Monetary Penalties Enforcement Service to assist with meeting the cost of increased use of priority postage due to changes in Australia Post delivery time frames following the same-sex marriage reforms? Why is the state paying for that? Why is the state compensating Births, Deaths and Marriages for a federal policy that was too gutless to let the federal parliament do its work and institute marriage equality? A political decision at the federal level was made to send it out to a plebiscite, which caused division and psychological damage in our community and now the state is being made to pay Births, Deaths and Marriage \$100 000 for a federal plebiscite. It is very hard to understand and perhaps the Treasurer could explain that.

We see here in a continuation of column 2, after \$110 000 had been taken out of the Planning Commission and put into the Planning Policy Unit, there is also \$100 000 taken out of the Tasmanian Planning Commission to put into the Magistrates Court. Why is the Magistrates Court not being given sufficient, ongoing, recurrent base funding so money is not having to be taken from the Planning Commission and put into the Magistrates Court? This section 19 return has a whole lot of robbing Peter to pay Paul imbedded in it.

In the Health and Human Services output, Housing Tasmania has requested \$1.7 million as reimbursement for the payment of stamp duty relief to a community housing provider for properties transferred under the community housing stock leverage program? The notes here say there is a zero dollar impact on the budget. Was that for the transfer of title? Can the Treasurer please give the House more detail on whether that relates to title transfer or management transfer? If it is stamp duty relief, logic would tell us it is related to title transfer. Can the Treasurer give us some details on what community housing provider and how many properties were subject to this stamp duty relief, which means it is in your portfolio and do not fob it off to your colleague?

Mr Gutwein - If we have the information I will provide it.

Ms O'CONNOR - I also have questions about the \$30 000 assistance to remove damaged trees at the Tasmania Golf Club. Who owns the Tasmania Golf Club?

Mr Gutwein - It is a community organisation that made a request after a bad storm, as I understand it.

Mr Hidding - All the trees had died through lack of water and they were about to start falling on people's heads. It was very dangerous; a massive stand of dead trees.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. In table 4, Parks and Wildlife Management, there is the sum of just under \$2 million allocated to the Parks and Wildlife Service for fire suppression activities. This is déjà vu. Why are we dealing with another request from Parks and Wildlife simply to be able to perform its basic statutory land management duties in the lands it manages? We are in a period in which the intergovernmental panel on climate change dropped the most bombshell-depressing report last week, which tells the people of the world they have 12 years to save the planet, yet the Parks and Wildlife Service is still having to come, cap in hand to government for fire management resourcing. I hope the Treasurer agrees we can do better than that and there should be substantially increased resourcing to the Parks and Wildlife Service, to Forestry Tasmania for its fire fighting

capacity, and to the State Emergency Service. We need resources put into fire prevention, community protection and landscape and natural resource protection as a priority.

As to energy policy and advice, I note in the paperwork it says, 'This Request for Additional Funds of \$885 000 reflects consulting expenses to provide independent legal advice to the Energy Security Cabinet Committee relating to BassLink'. In the old days, we used to have that sort of expertise in-house. In the old days, in the former department of infrastructure, energy and resources, in saying the old days it is only five years ago, there was policy advice capacity of a highest standard. Many of the good policy people went out of what was then known as DIER, now it is State Growth, so we lost a breadth and depth of advice and experience. It is hard to escape the conclusion that spending nearly \$1 million on consultants in seeking advice on energy issues points back to the 400 people who lost their jobs in the Department of State Growth and the economic development, infrastructure, energy and resources restructure. State Growth lost a huge number of quality staff and policy expertise and the taxpayers of Tasmania are paying for that through increased consultancy fees.

Could the Treasurer please tell the parliament why Government went out for independent legal advice, purchased advice, presumably legal advice, when we have here the office of the Crown Solicitor, the Solicitor-General? We have in-house counsel in a number of government agencies. Why are we paying for legal advice when we have impartial advice of the highest quality available to government? Why is the Government outsourcing legal advice and policy advice?

Finally, the House should know details of the compensation payment to a landowner under section 41 of the Nature Conservation Act 2002 due to the presence of threatened species or threatened native vegetation on their property. It raises a whole lot of questions. First, while I recognise there are provisions within the Nature Conservation Act for compensating landowners for decisions that are made by government that might impact on their capacity to profit from their land or manage their land, if a landowner is informed there are threatened species on their property, whether it be threatened flora or fauna, why should the taxpayers pay \$2.5 million or really, any amount of compensation to a private landowner for that? If a private landowner did not already know they had threatened or vulnerable species on their property, they were operating in ignorance or had chosen not to understand the nature of their property. To then come to government and demand or request an extra \$2.5 million, it is a huge sum of money. Maximum transparency on that compensation payment is in the best interests of transparency, accountability and the taxpayers of Tasmania.

[3.09 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, what has been highlighted by my studying of this return and the Hodgman Government's request for additional funding from Tasmania's Public Accounts is a shameless lack of transparency and openness. The Treasurer went to the March state election with what he claimed were costed commitments, only to betray Tasmanians within six months. This is exactly why Labor established the spending scrutiny committee to hold this secretive Government to account. I am humbled to chair this committee and I am determined to bring this Government to account.

Treasurer, how do you justify an additional \$3.2 million spend on ministerial offices? The obvious spin to this would be that it is an attempt to shift responsibility for new cost to opposition parties, where staffing expenses have not increased significantly since the election. The bulk of that spend has come from your own ministerial office upgrades.

There is also the recruitment to replace your communications director - the \$45 000 golden handshake, I believe. I come to that from a few different angles. First, for many Tasmanian families, \$45 000 is their annual income. It is an awful lot of money and most Tasmanian families would really appreciate \$45 000 as an addition to their family income. I am also aghast at this payout and the understanding that the behaviour is such, which is a clear breach of professional conduct.

Referring to my 10 years' history as an HR professional, I was aghast that this did not warrant an automatic termination of employment. The fact that allegedly there was a decision not to renew the employee's contract due to this behaviour, I might say that the director looked more like a scapegoat than anything else. I cannot swallow the story that there was no directive by the Liberal Party, by a campaign strategist, to actively troll opposition candidates' Facebook pages. This was your head of communications and I will never believe that that was not a deliberate political strategy. The severance pay also sets a precedent to ministerial staff that if you get caught, we will need to be seen to be moving you on but we will look after you; we will make sure that you receive \$45 000, an average Tasmanian family's basic income, for your good work trolling all those Facebook accounts.

What that director actually did, as far as I am concerned, was entrapment. I was trolled by that director of communications during my own election campaign. I chose not to contact the police to report the matter but I will never forget and will certainly push for laws to provide protection against online bullying, entrapment and intimidation. Your previous director of communications asked me to provide my thoughts online about another Labor candidate who was at that time receiving quite a bit of negative publicity. Luckily I did not participate in any banter with that person on Facebook but I was enticed to make derogatory comments about another candidate during an election campaign by your director of communications. I find it offensive that that person was then paid out \$45 000 for their time.

I will never find that good enough and the excuses provided to be good enough. The behaviour was rewarded and it also infers duplicity and a government so intent on winning power that they will sell out morals and sense of decency at any cost. It is the job of the Premier to determine poor performance and unprofessional conduct amongst his staff and this payout disguises a bigger issue that this overspending is being used as hush money.

The Treasurer needs to tell Tasmanians how they also spent a further \$3 million for other staff and expenses in ministerial offices as well. This is a major overspend. It is a lot of money; \$3 million is a major overspend, especially in such a short period of time. When we have so many people in our communities struggling to meet the basic cost of living on a daily basis, this shows again a complete lack of understanding of how Tasmanians are living whilst your Government is spending money on plush furnishings and new drapes. The spending scrutiny committee will hunt down all overspending undertaken by this Government.

With one of the highest levels of youth unemployment, young people taking their own lives, the highest percentage of family violence in some areas in Australia, a lack of rehabilitation services, and a very poor health system that is underfunded by \$100 million a year, we cannot afford to waste money on expensive spin doctors, expensive furniture, junkets, hush money, redundancies, expensive bottles of wine, alcohol allowances and, quite simply, white-knuckle panic strategies.

I also think it is time for you to be honest and tell people what happened with the cost of the botched energy bonus payment to pensioners and concession card holders. Suddenly it cost another

\$98 000. That was around Christmas time and what you fail to understand is that many people in Tasmania, especially pensioners, have a very strict budget for their Christmas period. Many were told they were going to be receiving those payments and they catered for that within their Christmas plans. Those cheques, which cost another \$98 000 to be sent via snail mail, threw a lot of people's Christmases into disarray. Many people were short because those cheques arrived so late. If you are going to try to do things to help the public, at least have an understanding of how the public operates.

Moving onto output 2.1 - Premier and Cabinet, management of government processes - I am interested in how much the royal visit by the Earl of Wessex cost the Tasmanian taxpayer. For your own information if you are not aware who the Earl of Wessex is, he is Prince Edward, the Queen's fourth child. There is a group allocation of \$39 000 in which the Earl of Wessex's visit is identified as part of that extra budget allocation. I have done a bit of investigation into the Earl of Wessex - and this is not a personal swipe - apparently he is worth about \$40 million in his own personal wealth and has access to a family wealth of about \$100 billion. I also ask how much it cost the taxpayer to have the Earl lay a plaque at the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens, play real tennis, and then host an event which raised money for Australia Tennis, a very worthwhile cause, and also the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, also a very good cause. I would like to know how much the Tasmanian taxpayer had to cough up to entertain one of richest men in the world to lay a plaque at the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens.

This is another indication of how out of touch this Government is with the reality of how Tasmanians are living. This additional allocation of funding is grotesque and inappropriate at a time when there are many people in our community who are struggling to even meet the basic costs. This Government would prefer to fund royalty, I would say, Treasurer, than look after the people of Tasmania.

[3.18 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, I have come to understand that these section 19 June quarter returns that come before us are an example of how clever this Treasurer is at doing a sort of smoke-and-mirrors hiding of movement between agencies. He has developed a particularly clever form of language that is a catch-all that hides a whole lot of stuff he would like us to be silent and deaf about.

The Health and Human Services reallocation of agency overheads, so-called, has some very substantial movements from areas which we know are already underfunded relative to the express need that is continually not met by this Liberal Government's health priorities into other areas in the health system to plug gaps in the Minister for Health's attempt to deal with the devastating gouging of \$210 million in 2014 of which only \$100 million was returned. There has been a long-term \$110 million deficit in the health system and we can see what that has led to in terms of health service delivery. We have seen the mismanagement of the health system under the Minister for Health and the huge cuts to preventive health. We have been standing still under this Liberal Government when it comes to preventive health. I would like the minister to explain how the public health services of the Department of Health has found \$700 000 to transfer outside the health system. As I read it on page 5, the money has gone into either the Tasmanian health organisation in the north - \$70 000 - or to housing services or to children's services system management. We have \$700 000 moved out of public health services into other agencies. How is that possible given there is so much within the public health system that is being not funded?

Treasurer, why was \$1.4 million taken from ambulance services last year? Why was it taken out of the ambulance service into either housing services or children's services system management?

On page 6, under the Justice output, \$110 000 has been transferred from the Tasmanian Planning Commission to the Department of Justice. The Treasurer, as Planning minister in the previous government, eroded the independence of the Tasmanian Planning Commission. The Tasmanian planning scheme legislation has removed the independence of the Planning Commission and placed a lot of the final decisions with the minister, so it is not surprising that the Government has reduced the resources of the Tasmanian Planning Commission and brought more staff into the Department of Justice so they can be under the wing of the minister. About \$110 000 was stripped from the Planning Commission under salary savings. What we know is there is one less person working at the Tasmanian Planning Commission.

Anyone who has anything to do with councils will know that the Tasmanian Planning Commission has a massive body of work to move through. In addition to its responsibilities as an independent planning arbiter on such things as Cambria Green, every council in Tasmania will be bringing or has already commenced bringing the state-wide planning provisions to the Planning Commission for public hearings and decisions. This will be going on for at least two years. Why have we moved yet another staff member out of the Planning Commission and also, on page 8, another \$100 000, another person, from the Planning Commission has been transferred to the Magistrates Court to plug one of the gaps that the Government decided was necessary to plug in their constant underfunding of the Magistrates Court?

Can the minister explain salary savings of two positions at the Tasmanian Planning Commission when it has more work to do? It is a case of robbing Peter to pay Paul.

How can there be salary savings made in Community Corrections? Anyone who talks to the staff or understands what they do knows they are incredibly overworked. There was \$250 000 removed from Community Corrections last year and transferred to the Supreme Court. Another \$520 000 was removed under salary savings. So six or seven salaries, \$770 000, was taken from the Community Corrections last financial year. Their total budget last year was \$12.06 million. They have lost about 8 per cent or 9 per cent of their budget. How can savings be made in Community Corrections when under this Liberal Government more people are being criminalised and there are fewer opportunities for rehabilitation. Restorative justice is being underfunded. The movement of people to work and to employment and to housing outside of prison when they are released is underfunded or not funded at all. Recidivism has increased under Liberal corrections ministers over the past couple of years.

Finally I want to make a comment about the energy policy and advice - \$885 000 is a very large amount of money. Why do we need to purchase independent legal advice? Do we not have the capacity within government to provide legal advice? Why does it need to be independent? Independent of whom? Given that it was advice to the energy security cabinet relating to Basslink I expect in relation to the contract for supply and the price we paid Basslink after the energy crisis, why does it have to be independent? Also, will we be claiming that under insurance or will it be covered in the negotiations with Basslink about the price adjustment for our rental agreement across the period during the energy crisis? Will that \$885 000 be recouped?

The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery lost \$641 000 from its budget in the last quarter and the Arts, industry development, lost \$645 000 in that period. Those monies were moved, not into other areas of the Arts but into Transport, Forestry Policy and Reform and Mineral Resources. I

need to make the point that this is a sector that is so underfunded it is a particular form of cruelty to take money from the weakest, most vulnerable and in many ways the productive part of our economy that has the least ability, by virtue of how the arts industry functions, to make a loud noise about this.

Arts industry and development in Tasmania is critical. It seems this Government is moving more and more to a centralised 'pick one big industry' approach to fish farming, to forestry and to tourism, and they are doing the same thing with the arts. We all love MONA and we know that MONA produces so much of value for Tasmania but anybody who understands how innovation works knows you have to fund organic groups, small groups, regional groups and schools. You cannot only fund the end result of years of creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship because it has not been done in a vacuum. We are reaping the benefits of a highly creative society which was, until the Liberals came in and made such devastating cuts to the community arts sector, a place that has welcomed and supported community arts. Unless we turn that back again and see a reinvestment into community art development, community groups, community-run and owned organisations and funding of theatre in Tasmania - the devastating cuts to theatre in Tasmania is so sad to expect -

Ms Archer - I have just announced more funding.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, minister you have announced more funding but it is impossible for anybody to want to apply to take that pathetically small amount of money. It is absolutely clear you will not get a high quality product so you are driving people in the community into smaller numbers.

Ms Archer - So \$400 000 is a pittance, is it?

Dr WOODRUFF - It is sad to see you have given up on the Arts in Tasmania. That is effectively what has happened. You have decided to pick one winner and everyone else, if they want a career path in theatre in Tasmania, they get on a plane to Melbourne. That is really tragic.

Ms Archer - I don't think so. Get your facts straight.

Dr WOODRUFF - I have my facts straight, Ms Archer, and I have spoken and listened to people in the community. They cannot believe that you have done what you have done. Theatre in Tasmania is something we have all been proud of, yet people can only see an opportunity that is a ticket to Melbourne, Sydney or New York. That is not what we want for our creative arts industry. When you take \$1.3 million out of the Arts and give it to Transport, it shows there is no vision for the future about sustaining the Arts in that area. I would appreciate the Treasurer explaining what the savings were in those two Arts areas.

[3.35 p.m.]

Mr BROOKS (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, I congratulate the Treasurer on delivering yet another great budget outcome. Without stating the stark contrast of what we saw previously under the former failed minister - who has now fled the Chamber and I would not blame him either, I would be embarrassed by his record - section 19 reflects requests for additional funding and transfers between outputs, which is the standard way since I have been in this place. This is in reflection of those made in the June 2018 quarter. It is a routine budget management process that allows for management of expenses that arise during the year. It is no different to a business where we have a budget, as you would know as a very successful businesswoman in your own right,

Madam Speaker, and bringing that experience to the parliament is something many of those opposite would not have a clue about. You have your budget, you have your actuals and there is always a variance. There is always change, even from quarter to quarter or month to month or when those accumulated expenses, cost or revenues hit the books. There are some unaccounted-for activities or outcomes and governments are a little bit different to businesses because we do not plan in business for bushfires but there is a requirement for that.

In the tabling of the section 19 return it is important to know the June 2018 return is the lowest level of expenditure for June quarter in the past six years. It means we are focused on the outcomes and also the bottom line. The bottom line shows what and where that is. What the tabling of the section 19 and 12A documents allows for is transparency. This is the public's money and this is the people's money. It is not our money, it is not my money and it is not the Government's money. It is the Tasmanian community's money and they want to know where it is going, as they should. There will always be differences of opinion on priorities and where it is wasted according to some, and where it is not wasted according to some. There is a general recognition the economy is going a lot better and the numbers stack up. We still need to be very careful with taxpayers' money. That is ultimately our job. It is our job to invest taxpayers' money as best as we see fit and stick to the things people voted for.

Health has been a topic of debate for some time and, without reflecting on a previous debate of this House, we spend 30 per cent of the state's money on the health system. It is a lot of money. Much of the state's money goes into the health system and we still have more work to do. We all recognise that; the Premier has outlined it and Madam Speaker also raised it. We all agree and acknowledge there is much more to be done and this Government is focused on that.

The budget impact of the expenditure included in the June 2018 return has been largely reflected in the Preliminary Outcomes Report 2017-18 issued last month. I would like to go through some specifics and some things in the section 19 return. The June 2018 return includes a \$4.3 million reimbursement to the Tasmania Fire Service for costs associated with the October 2017 fire event at St Helens and associated wild firefighting costs. I am sure the member opposite, Mr O'Byrne, who was minister for fire and emergency management at the end of his last term would understand these things fluctuate. These things require demand, and in Emergency Services they cannot say, 'No, we're not going because we haven't got the budget or we're at our level'. There are always adjustments because there has to be. It is an essential part of what a government delivers, and that does not mean that we waste money or do not try to manage it and plan for this, but it is very important that we ensure that those services are provided.

It also includes approximately \$2 million for fire suppression activities undertaken on Parks and Wildlife Service-managed land. We have had previous debates around this and it was raised by Dr Broad in a previous debate - without reflecting on that debate because that would be against standing orders, as you would know, Madam Speaker - but it is an important aspect that we learn from the past and put in mechanisms and strategies but also tools. I am not going to say tools in a tool bag or toolkit because I am a tradie so I understand it, but also I think people get sick of that term. That is my personal opinion but it is an important aspect that we learn from that and fire suppression activities are part of our management of that risk.

It also included \$640 000 to assist the shellfish industry against recovery from Pacific Oyster Mortality Syndrome or POMS. My mother, being of English heritage, will probably take offence at what I just said so we will move on from that, but it is an important aspect of the Government's ability to respond to these circumstances, and that is really what this return is about. It is about

giving transparency to the community on where additional expenditure has gone that is a variation either to the budget or to the outputs that were selected, because a budget is a projection and there are actuals that come from that. As you would know, not only just in business but even in community organisations, when they have a budget it is based on what they think will happen but there are always those variances. There will always be variances in business, in community sectors and in government, but it is about how you manage them and how you plan for them that is important. I congratulate Treasurer Peter Gutwein for his financial management and being able to prepare for these sorts of events because it is crucial that we are vigilant in our capability of responding to that.

There is \$210 000 included to meet the increased cost for security services provided to Parliament House and Parliament Square. Unfortunately, in the age we are in now there is a requirement for that. We have seen some tragic circumstances, not only within Australia but also around the world, where security is required and at the end of the day that costs money. Everyone would understand that.

The June 2018 return also includes approximately \$6 million to return the proceeds from the sale of assets to the Department of Education for use in maintenance across a number of school sites. That has been raised and I have no doubt the Treasurer will cover in more detail some of those questions asked. Also raised was the increase in ministerial and parliamentary support. I have no doubt the Treasurer will cover that as well. He will have some facts to put on the table that those opposite may find interesting.

Mr Bacon - There's a first time for everything, Adam.

Mr BROOKS - That you will find financial management interesting?

Mr Bacon - That you are going to say something that anyone would find interesting.

Ms O'Connor - No, he's talking about the Treasurer.

Mr BROOKS - Madam Speaker, I just wanted to make a very brief contribution -

Ms O'Connor - Not brief enough.

Mr BROOKS - No worries. The day I start worrying about what Ms O'Connor thinks then I am probably in some trouble.

Madam Speaker, I congratulate the Treasurer on this initiative delivering as required. This Government is about transparency and openness. I know those opposite find that funny because they were part of a government that hid and buried everything. They did not just burn the barn down when they got the hay out of the barn as required, they also sold the farm as well.

[3.45 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, it was an interesting contribution from the member who just resumed his seat. The one point I did take from his contribution was the fact that that this is the people's money, not his money, was completely lost on him, given most of his contributions in this House. Anyway, we will let that go.

There are a couple of questions I have relating to my portfolio areas. I have four points to make. One is in relation to the moving of the money from the Planning Commission to the Planning Policy Unit. We know this is one of the most significant issues confronting not only economic development in our state but it is one of the major issues that comes across my desk as a local member where people raise issues around the planning system within Tasmania and the lack of the capacity of the Tasmanian Planning Commission to respond in a timely manner to matters referred to them on issues surrounding planning.

It also raises a number of questions from the interaction I had with the Minister for Planning during the Estimates process around the Planning Policy Unit, where he referred to a number of new things he was putting on that unit's desk. I said this was clearly an increased workload of that unit, so would he be allocating money to that unit, and he said 'No, we don't believe we require it.' I asked how he was going to manage that and he said they were coming together with a work program which would be communicated. I am not sure if he meant communicated externally or within the public domain, but that was his response.

With this \$110 000, I have two concerns: first, that it undermines the capacity of the Tasmanian Planning Commission but it also contradicts the views of the minister during Estimates saying he was of the view that greater resources were not required. Now, clearly, money has been transferred across but it is manifestly inadequate, given the former minister of the time - you might be familiar with him, Treasurer - had said that the statewide planning system had been completed years ago. You have now achieved it, yet in your own documents you are saying it is yet to be implemented because it requires extra resources. I would like a greater level of explanation about how the Tasmanian Planning Commission will respond to losing that amount of money and also what is it for? What is the Planning Policy Unit proposing to spend it on? Is it an extra allocated resource? Is it an extra person? Is it a research piece? Is it consultants? Is it advice? That is the kind of information we require from the minister.

Regarding State Growth and Infrastructure, it seems it is a fairly common thing to do to move money from one project to another on the basis of timing, so we have no major questions about that. An overarching comment would be that we are very keen to make sure all the commitments that were given to the community are achieved. I know there is an ebb and flow but we will be keeping an eye on that. We do not have a major question regarding that, but it is interesting to note the \$150 000 moving from metropolitan general access services across to passenger transport. In the description you refer to the available money from access services as a result of lower than expected growth in fuel cost. That is a point in time. I know companies and GBEs lock into longer-term contracts, particularly if fuel is a major cost of the organisation. Given the spike on fuel costs for the general public, will that have an impact on the metropolitan General Access Services budget - that you may have assumed there would be lower fuel costs at that time but that on assessment the fuel costs remain the same - are you putting the General Access Services budget under risk because you made an assessment the fuel cost will be at this point, but given that there has been a spike on fuel costs, will it increase? If they have locked in to long-term contracts it will not. That is the point of clarification we seek.

In my sport and recreation portfolio the question the member for Clark, previously Denison - it does not sound right but I understand the reasons and completely support it.

Ms Archer - It is my mother's maiden name so I might change my name.

Mr O'BYRNE - There is a point of contact there. That is nice.

I know it is in part echoing other members' contributions and questions on this but this is a highly unusual announcement or request; the request of \$30 000 to a golf club under Sport and Recreation. I am not reflecting on that golf club but I know, as all local members do, golf clubs, bowls clubs and other organisations regularly request funding for various matters and they are either under a certain funding program or a grant program. In many cases money such as this could have been dealt with in other ways, either in existing budgets that can be transferred within -

Mr Hidding - This turned into somewhat of an emergency.

Mr O'BYRNE - It seems on interjection from the member for Lyons, I notice you made an informed interjection with Ms O'Connor, the member for Clark; you have a lot of knowledge of this. I am assuming this is a request from you. I do not want to verbal you but I am assuming you are more across it.

Mr Hidding - The Premier asked me as his parliamentary secretary to go and look at it.

Mr O'BYRNE - It is interesting. How this was handled? Why has this been dealt with in this way when golf clubs, bowls clubs and other sporting clubs have had grants given to them in other ways, such as election commitments and the Premier's discretionary fund.

Mr Hidding - Go and have a chat to them.

Mr O'BYRNE - This is the first time we have seen it, through this legislation, allocated this way. As Mr Brooks, the member for Braddon, said in his contribution, this is not our money, it is the people's money. These are legitimate questions we need to ask. Is this going to be a precedent that has been set where clubs are able to do this via this way? If it is not going to happen this way, why did this one club get an exemption or a free ride? That is a legitimate question. I am not saying they are not worthy, I am not casting aspersions, but questions on process and transparency are legitimate.

The big one in my portfolio of energy is the energy policy and advice to the Energy Security Cabinet Committee relating to Basslink. Questions have been raised. I will reiterate those questions. Why was external advice sought? Who was it sought from? Where they specialists in this legal area? Were they a firm that dealt with this matter? This is a large sum of money. The Tasmanian Government plunged the Tasmanian community into an energy crisis by its own actions and the minister at the time, the embattled, failed minister, Mr Groom, who was effectively on the wagon, trying to sell the gas power station.

This Government plunged Tasmania into an energy crisis and we are still paying for it. The cost of bringing those diesel generators up to the highlands and across the state in trying to keep the lights on for residential consumers across the state and major industry could have been catastrophic for the Tasmanian economy. We paid for it then and we are still paying for it because of the incompetence of the government. We need to find \$885 000 for a piece of advice. We want to know who that was paid to, why the advice was sought, why it was required, external from the advice of your GBEs, external of the advice of the Solicitor-General, and the Tasmanian people need to know.

We are still yet to see a whole range of pieces of advice. There is a special letter that is floating around that is in the public interest and should be in the public domain. We understand the Treasurer is continuing to refuse to release the advice he received on the Tamar Valley Power Station. Is that

related to this? Is that the reason why that letter has not been released and is this the advice to protect you from releasing that letter? We do not know. There is a lack of transparency around this but \$885 000 for a piece of advice on a catastrophe of your creating is a significant pinch on the Tasmanian purse. The Tasmanian people are still waiting for answers about how you got yourselves into that circumstance around the Tamar Valley Power Station. We see yet another bill, another clip of the ticket coming through as a consequence of your Government's incompetence around this. The Tasmanian people deserve a greater level of transparency and information around that \$885 000 piece of advice. I urge the Treasurer to provide all the information so we can respond. If there is nothing to see we will move on, but where there is smoke there is fire.

On matters of planning, bus fuel costs, the golf club and the energy advice, we seek information from the Treasurer to clear those up.

[3.57 p.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Treasurer) - Madam Speaker, I thank members for their comprehensive list of questions. There are probably, across the board, almost 100 questions that were asked, many of them on similar subjects. Rather than try to deal with them by member, I will work down the list. As the matters come up that you had interest in, I will do my best to answer that question with the advice I have to hand.

First, Mr Bacon, there were questions as to the *Hansard* from the upper House. That was repeating at the start what was provided on the basis that not everybody takes the time to refer to the upper House *Hansard* and they raised a range of matters.

You raised Macquarie Point. Work undertaken by Macquarie Point and TasWater began two years ago. There was a cost of \$2.5 million that was expended in attempting to get a P90 statistical estimate cost on the wastewater treatment plant. That came in at around \$140 million.

Mr Bacon - You are quoted as having committed that money.

Mr GUTWEIN - To quote Miles Hampton from yesterday, 'TasWater will fund what their customers would have reasonably been expected to pay'. He expects that will be somewhere around a third of that cost. The remainder will be funded through either developer contributions, the sale of land at Macquarie Point or a government contribution. We are working through that process at the moment and obviously that will be reflected if not in the mid-year - it will depend whether we have final details - then certainly in next year's Budget. The timing of the removal of the wastewater treatment plant, according to Mr Hampton yesterday, will be between three and four years to remove, but our expectation is that I would like to see work beginning early in the new year once the new arrangements with TasWater have been established.

A few members raised the breakdown of the RAF for the MPS. I provided the breakdown, which was \$150 000 for the Opposition, \$20 000 for the Greens, \$100 000 for increase in lease costs and setting-up costs for electorate and ministerial offices. As to the cost of \$3.2 million, which I have to say was the estimate - I expect it will come in less than that - in terms of the costs associated with the additional costs for ministerial offices. What has to be remembered is that another ministerial office was established as well. Vanessa Goodwin's office did not exist for a period of time, for obvious reasons, and then it was re-established.

In terms of the termination payments of \$1.25 million, that is dwarfed somewhat by the level of termination payments that occurred at the last election. That was around \$1.7 million, but at the end of four years people burn out and move on. I provided what detail I can there.

Mr Bacon asked for a breakdown of the asset sales and I am happy to explain the \$5.971 million. Asset sale proceeds for Campania District School was \$440 000. In fact I think these are not the sale. These are -

Mr Bacon - Is this where the money went?

Mr GUTWEIN - On page 12 of the section 19 returns, the proceeds from asset sales include the sale of land in Bellerive associated with the former Howrah Beachside Kindergarten of \$3.4 million, and the sale of the former Adult Education site in Weld Street South Hobart for \$922 138. I am happy to provide where funding was spent. Some of it is more of a capital nature than maintenance in terms of the size. Campania District School, \$433 000; Cape Barron Island School, \$122 000; Ouse, \$183 000; Zeehan for some teacher housing; \$14 743; the Northern Support School, proceeds of \$4.188616 million were provided; Tasmanian Archives and Heritage office, \$100 000; and then a minor works program of \$917 000.

My advice is that in terms of Education, where they are selling assets on a rolling basis generally, it is not uncommon that the properties sold are usually requested that they can be spent on their own capital or maintenance programs ongoing.

Ms O'Connor - Treasurer, you are not telling the House that they were the only two assets sold in that quarter?

Mr GUTWEIN - No, I am not saying that. In fact I am certain there would have been a range of properties such as police houses, et cetera - the normal business of government that occurs. I do not have a full list but I presume there would be dozens of smaller properties that have been sold.

Ms O'Connor - Where is that information available?

Mr GUTWEIN - I expect in the annual reports for each department. I expect properties that have been sold would be captured in each annual report each year. It is not uncommon for police houses, school houses and those things -

Ms O'Connor - Chunks of Crown land.

Mr GUTWEIN - If any Crown land is being sold through any processes that would normally be entertained.

The housing stamp duty relief costs were foreseen and it was the Government's intention to make the asset transfer program cost-neutral for the housing providers. I do not have a breakdown with me about who received an ex gratia payment and who paid the stamp duty that was provided on those but I am happy to -

Mr Bacon - The wording looks like it is saying there was only one.

Mr GUTWEIN - The note is not clear and we have been looking to get some clarification on that. I thought there were a couple of community housing providers that took part in that program.

As to Basslink, it was specialist advice. At the moment I believe it is fair to say the Government is engaged in an action with Basslink looking for compensation. It was important through that process, and this is very complex. The legal matters are such that we do not have in-house counsel who spend their time working on instruments or Basslink cables and those sorts of matters, so we sought advice. We do not have that with us but I am happy to provide it at the end of the day. My view would be they received a payment from government for that specialist advice. There is nothing secret there but I will need to take some further advice on that.

There was \$14 000 in the Legislative Council for increased committee activity, which you might have presented as increased community activity -

Mr Bacon - I thought that's what it said.

Mr GUTWEIN - No. This is due to an increase in costs involved in committee activity, but there might be a spelling mistake. We took it as 'committee' and not 'community'. It involved the Government Administration A inquiry into King Island shipping and freight services, travel to King Island for four members and two staff, and the Joint Select Committee into Future Gaming Markets also travelled around the country. That was the additional \$14 000.

Mr Bacon - I was on the phone, so I kept those costs down - looking after you. It does say 'committee', I apologise.

Mr GUTWEIN - There was a question about the \$40 000 for the future gaming committee. That request was made by the chair very early on in the piece and I remember we agreed to that forthwith. We took the view that if the committee was asking for those additional funds it required those funds.

Regarding the breakdown of the \$98 000 for the bonus payment for energy costs, there were a number of non-Aurora account holders who were entitled. There was \$98 000 spent. The breakdown was \$4000 in administration expenses, advertising of \$19 000, and the payments to non-Aurora account holders was \$75 000, separate to what Aurora paid.

The Nature Conservation Act compensation payment was raised by a number of people. Further detail I have is that the processes are underpinned by the Tasmanian Nature Conservation Act 2002 which has been in place for a long time. I understand that under previous governments, payments were also made. The owner of the land has at least 23 management obligations outlined in the covenant which include: to not allow exotic species to become established; to use weed management for feral management for feral animal control; measures to use reasonable fire management practices; to maintain fences; and to observe any threatened species management prescriptions issued for the land by the minister.

What this act enables is for a landowner to make application.

Mr O'Byrne - Who makes that decision?

Mr GUTWEIN - The decision under the act is made now by the responsible minister for the Nature Conservation Act. It is made by the Environment minister.

Ms Archer - The Nature Conservation Act is now with me.

Mr GUTWEIN - As Attorney-General?

Ms Archer - As Minister for the Environment.

Mr GUTWEIN - So the process is under the act that was introduced in 2002.

There was a question raised about remuneration and conditions for senior lawyers, some \$27 000. I will read the note I have here -

The Premier authorised a determination regarding remuneration condition and conditions for senior lawyers. The effect of this determination is that there are revised provisions for officers that were previously associated with legal practitioner level 5 and legal practitioner level 6 classifications.

Both of these classifications have been translated to an SES 2 classification. The new classification for a legal practitioner for level 5 and 6 is now equivalent to SES 3.

It was dealt with under the determination by the Premier.

There were some questions on funding for Births, Deaths and Marriages. There was funding from the Tasmanian Industrial Commission to Births, Deaths and Marriages of \$100 000. Following the same sex marriage reforms there was an increased demand for services which necessitated changes to the Births, Deaths and Marriages IT system. There have been changes in Australia Post delivery time frames which has resulted in the need to increase the use of priority postage.

In terms of transfer of \$335 000 in Finance-General, as has been the case in previous years transfers are made by agencies at the end of the financial year. This reflects the requirements of agencies to manage the budget allocations internally where possible and is an important principle underpinning good financial management.

Regarding a number of the transfers that have been raised, I will make this general comment, especially where there was comment made about transfers from the Tasmanian Planning Commission. Agencies will not make those transfers until late in the year. They will make a determination as to whether or not they will spend their budget. If they cannot spend their budget, it makes perfectly good common sense for those funds to be used elsewhere. All departmental heads are expected to manage their agency in that way.

I will touch on the Tasmanian Planning Commission and explain that when we came to Government, the Tasmanian Planning Commission provided a regulatory service and policy advice to government. There was no policy advice arm within government. The PPU was established. Simon Overland thought that a conflict existed within the TPC as it had to implement the planning laws but also provide planning advice to government. He thought that was a conflict that should be separated.

Dr Woodruff - Was that Mary Massina's view as well, in her role?

Mr GUTWEIN - No. Mary Massina was not involved in that decision. The TPC now has a regulatory function as opposed to a regulatory and policy advice function.

Mr O'Byrne - That is not the source of the question. We understand the history of it, but why the transfer between them?

Mr GUTWEIN - Late in the year, if an agency has not been able to spend the funds allocated to it, it makes sense that those funds are either banked by the agency or returned to Treasury. If there were additional funds available in any agency then it is incumbent upon the secretary if they want to utilise those resources to meet other costs, rather than putting in a request for additional funds that they make those transfers. It happens -

Mr O'Byrne - Beginning of the year though.

Mr GUTWEIN - This is the June quarter. This is the last quarter of the year. It is when agencies will make a determination as to whether or not they have unexpended funds.

Dr Woodruff - Or when ministers do not sign off on funds being spent. When serial inaction funds have been set aside like they were for mental health and they were not spent they were rolled over.

Mr GUTWEIN - If I could make the point in terms of the Tasmanian Planning Commission. I do not believe when I was Planning minister that I signed off on what the Planning Commission was spending its money on. They would employ a certain number of planners, they would employ a certain number of consultants and they would conduct their business under the act. That was a matter for them.

Mr O'Byrne - Where does the request come from if you have separated the reason for the transfer?

Mr GUTWEIN - If the Policy Planning Unit had a greater level of workload during the course of the year under normal circumstances a request for additional funds would have been made. If there is under-expenditure in the TPC then the money is transferred. That is how it works. Likewise, in circumstances where other issues of transfers were raised from Community Corrections to the magisterial court services. Where there are unexpended funds towards the end of a financial year, then they can be allocated to different outputs by the relevant minister. There were questions regarding Parks and Wildlife wildfire suppression expenditure. The funds were used directly for firefighting. The expense relates predominantly to a fire located - and members would recall this one because it was quite a big fire - near St Helens between mid-October and late December of 2017. Approximately 30 Parks and Wildlife staff worked with Tasmania Fire Service and Sustainable Timber Tasmania to manage the blaze. As the fire near St Helens was largely on PWS tenure, it was expected that as it was on its land that it reimburse TFS and STT for the expenditure incurred. That \$1.8 million occurred. Ms O'Connor raised a number of issues regarding fire suppression and fire management. We were the first government to put \$9 million per year into a fire management fund, which is tenure blind and is used across the agencies for controlled burning.

Ms O'Connor - Why is Parks asking for money to do fire management?

Mr GUTWEIN - This is not fire management. This was putting out a bushfire and so they have been provided with additional funds. These funds were used for firefighting, not fire management. As I just explained -

Ms O'Connor - Again, why is Parks coming to you cap in hand over basic fire management?

Mr GUTWEIN - Again, they will have a budget. Obviously this was a greater expense. In terms of bushfire you use the strength of the budget to ensure you are in a position to meet these costs. They do not come back cap in hand. They had a fire, it was on their land and we provided the additional funding that they required.

At the risk of walking into a fight that does not exist, you asked if the \$885 000 for specialist legal advice can be recouped? There is an action underway at the moment.

Ms O'Connor - Sure. The point of the question I asked was why are we paying for outside legal expertise when we have a Crown Law office and a Solicitor-General?

Mr GUTWEIN - I answered that about 15 minutes ago when I said that energy is a complex area and we do not have a specialist team of legal advisers in the House on the basis that we have a cable. Obviously the state's interests -

Ms O'Connor - Doesn't Hydro?

Mr GUTWEIN - Hydro has a different responsibility in its role in the management of the cable. Ours is at a whole-of-state level.

Dr Woodruff - You were going on to say that it is part of the claim with Basslink.

Mr GUTWEIN - Obviously we are looking to recoup a level of redress for the costs associated with what occurred with the cable through that period. Whilst it would not be reasonable of me to say that that \$885 000 is something we are directly asking for, it is a very large claim we are working through with them at the moment.

Dr Woodruff - Treasurer, can you give some idea about how long that claim will take to complete because it has been a few years, coming up to three years now?

Mr GUTWEIN - These matters take time, for obvious reasons. We would no doubt all be much better paid if we could become corporate lawyers in specialist areas.

Dr Woodruff - You mean we're going to be older, balder and greyer by the time this comes to completion?

Mr GUTWEIN - I would hope not but it would be unreasonable for me to place a time frame on that.

Mr O'Byrne, regarding the golf club, my understanding is that post a storm they were aware they had a safety issue in terms of a significant number of dead or dying trees. They made a direct request to government and it was funded. I understand they met a certain component of the cost themselves. We treated them no differently than any other organisation that would come forward in a situation where there was an issue of safety and they were requesting assistance. If it had been a smaller amount it would have been met without the request for a RAF - I imagine directly from the Premier's discretionary fund which he has some flexibility with. Should any community organisation or club be in a position where there is an urgent matter that needs to be dealt with, obviously the Government will give it consideration. I have to say, and I want to make the

distinction very clearly, that this is not about mowing the lawns. This was about ensuring a safe environment so the Government decided to play a part.

I thank members for their support of the motion and their obvious interest in the matters contained within it.

Motion agreed to.

**ELECTRICITY SUPPLY INDUSTRY AMENDMENT
(PRICE CAP) BILL 2018 (No. 13)**

Second Reading

[4.24 p.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Treasurer - 2R) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the bill be now read the second time.

The Government is committed to keeping cost-of-living increases for government services as low as possible. Members would be well aware of the impact electricity prices have on household budgets and the cost of doing business.

Electricity prices have been increasing nationally due to a number of factors, including the retirement of low-cost coal-fired power stations and the increasing prevalence of clean, renewable sources. In this evolving environment, the Government is actively working to maximise Tasmania's competitive advantage in renewable energy while ensuring Tasmanian electricity consumers are protected from increasing prices.

Through the Government's Tasmania First Energy policy, the Government is committed to delivering secure and reliable electricity supply and the lowest possible power prices. Our commitment is to have the lowest regulated electricity prices in the country by 2022. While this work is progressing, the Hodgman Liberal Government has committed to keeping cost-of-living increases at or below the rate of inflation for the next three years. This includes a cap on regulated electricity prices for three years from 2018-19.

This bill before you today delivers on our commitment to take action on the cost of living and provides for increases in regulated electricity prices for small customers to be capped at the rate of change in the Hobart Consumer Price Index.

Some members will recall that in this place over 12 months ago legislation was passed to amend the Electricity Supply Industry Act 1995 to enable the Treasurer to determine a wholesale electricity price to be used in determining regulated tariffs, thereby protecting residential and small business customers from electricity price volatility.

While our aim, as evidenced by the action we took, was to ensure that our regulated electricity tariffs were affordable and reflective of cost-of-living increases rather than other factors such as those influencing prices in the NEM, the amendments made at that time did not apply any restriction to the level of increases that could apply to regulated tariffs. Since that time the Government has

made a commitment to restrict regulated electricity price increases to no more than the increase in the Consumer Price Index. This commitment is enshrined in the bill before the House today.

For the three financial years 2018-19 to 2020-21, increases in regulated electricity tariffs will be capped to no more than the increase in the Hobart CPI. The amendments within the bill requires that the Tasmanian Economic Regulator must not approve draft standing offer electricity prices submitted to it by Aurora Energy, the state's only regulated offer retailer, unless those prices are no higher than the prices for the previous year indexed by CPI.

The provisions that were introduced last year remain in force. If the Treasurer considers that the market-based mechanism which determines the wholesale electricity price in Tasmania is not delivering a price consistent with the actual wholesale cost in the state, the Treasurer may issue a wholesale electricity price order, or WEP order, determining the price to apply. This enables the removal of external price shocks that may occur on the mainland from impacting the Tasmanian wholesale price.

The bill does not change the provisions that were inserted into the Electricity Supply Industry Act last year. The WEP order process remains the same. If a WEP order is to come into effect, it must be published in the *Gazette* by no later than 15 May prior to the increase in tariffs that will apply from the following 1 July.

For 2018-19, a WEP order has already been made. The wholesale electricity price to apply from 1 July 2018 is \$79.68 per megawatt hour. The application of this wholesale price has ensured that tariffs for 2018-19 increased by no greater than 2.1 per cent, the increase in the Hobart CPI between the December quarter 2016 and the December quarter 2017.

Under our Lowest Regulated Electricity Prices in the Nation policy, the Government will break away from mainland electricity wholesale contract pricing. This will involve a detailed analysis of options to determine a mechanism which will best meet the Government's objectives. This body of work will take some time, given the need for extensive consultation with key stakeholders and market participants.

As the current retail price determination by the Tasmanian Economic Regulator applies to 2019, and given the changes to the regulatory framework that will be developed, this bill extends the current retail price determination until 30 June 2021. This means that the regulator will not be required to undertake a further price investigation and determination process until the new regulatory arrangements come into effect. Such an investigation would provide little value given that this bill is setting the maximum price increases that can apply over this period.

Members may be aware that a two-year sunset clause currently applies to the WEP order provisions that were enacted last year. These provisions are contained in the Electricity Supply Industry Amendment (Pricing) Act 2017 and require an independent review into the operation of the WEP order provisions to be undertaken within 18 months and a report to be tabled in each House of Parliament. Unless both Houses agree that the provisions are to remain, they would be repealed.

Given the certainty that this bill provides in regard to regulated electricity prices that will apply over the next three years, these provisions are being extended for a further two years, which will align with the timing for the review of the wholesale regulatory arrangements to be completed. At this time it is likely that new legislation will be brought before the Parliament for consideration.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this bill delivers on the Government's commitment to legislate to cap power prices at CPI for the next three years while we begin the complex task of delinking Tasmanian electricity pricing from the National Electricity Market.

I commend the bill to the House.

[4.49 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I indicate that the Labor Party will support the bill. We will support it on the basis that Labor always supports a reduction in the cost of living for the Tasmanian community. Any measure that does that and ensures those people that are struggling to make ends meet and are either on fixed incomes or on lower income have a level of predictability about the future of their energy costs. A bill such as this, in isolation, will do that to some point.

In terms of the initial circulation of the draft second reading speech and the one we received, in paragraph 2 in the final version it says the electricity prices have been increasing. In the first iteration it was that they are increasing so that does reflect that there is a change in the national marketing terms of pricing. The underlying point to that is the shock of Hazelwood and shocks to the system and the collapse of any coherent national energy policy with Mr Frydenberg and his national energy guarantee. He is now the Treasurer and we have a new Prime Minister and I am sure the anti-climate change warriors of the Liberal Party will continue to grind their axe in the federal parliament. We may have a new Prime Minister by the end of the year on the basis of a 20th, 25th or 50th version of a national energy policy.

The federal minister is again not a huge fan of wind farms and, until the next federal election when, not only based on the polls, it is pretty clear we will have a federal Labor government in power that will have a coherent energy policy the Tasmanian community can welcome.

Mr Bacon - Twenty-first century.

Mr O'BYRNE - Arguably, it is in the 20th century but 21st century policy will get us into the space that we can have a level of predictability and take the opportunity that is in front of Tasmania and take it well. We have some real issues. There are big questions about Snowy 2.0 under this Prime Minister. I know that was a big proposal of the previous prime minister because you could not talk about renewables in wind and solar at the exclusion of coal. That is where, like a limpet, he held on to Snowy because that was a form of renewable energy that the dinosaurs in the federal Liberal coalition could accept because it served Australia, particularly the states that could generate it, quite well.

While there is an absolute mess I will take issue with the fact that the reason the price shocks were being experienced nationally was, as your second reading speech rightly commits, that there was a retirement of a low-cost coal fire-powered station, stations, Hazelwood in particular in the Victorian market. We do not accept that is also connected to the increase in the prevalence of cleaner renewable sources. It is purely about the market and about the supply. Supply went down in the kind of power that was available. Therefore they had a price shock because of the nature of the energy retailers and wholesalers. We do not accept that simply because you are increasing cleaner renewable sources that this has a negative impact on pricing. The issue was the mix of the market and that when you have one cheap supply moving out of the market, which was the coal-fired power but the cost is not purely in the dollar charge for that energy. There is a much larger cost that needs to be taken into account beyond the context of energy prices.

A number of things have been referred to in regard to the Government and ministers making determinations or WEP orders. We have concern that it depends on the outcome of your policy and what you want to try to do. Is it about keeping the lights on? Is it about the economic opportunity of renewable energy and/or is it about keeping prices low? Your policy framework or policy outcomes you want to achieve, having a mix and match of legislative intervention with a lack of transparency around the reasons you are making that intervention, does create some concern for us. If it is about keeping costs low, why cap costs at CPI? Why do you not make it a determination at the wholesale and retail point? The intervention is to reduce, year-on-year, real costs to either segments of the market or to users within Tasmania. The challenge with that is the impact on the energy businesses. You cannot have it both ways. You have to make sure the energy businesses are sustainable. The cost price, particularly to low income Tasmanians, people on fixed and low incomes; if your policy outcome is to look after them then we would argue you are not being aggressive enough. Some of the challenges we have is a lack of transparency around what the cost of generation is and what the impact is.

You have gone from last year's budget having a very conservative prediction of the returns from those government business enterprises to state Government Consolidated Revenue. All of a sudden there is a significant bite on those energy businesses in terms of returns to the state budget, particularly over the next couple of years. When you have all these things in the mix it creates concerns about the sustainability of energy businesses. Are you genuinely interested in keeping costs low? Is this a gimmick? If you keep it at CPI, what impact does that have on the government businesses? We have GBE Estimates coming later this year and we will have an opportunity to have a conversation with them but you cannot have it both ways. When there is a lack of transparency around the order process and the reasons for decisions made by the minister, we will be concerned about that.

This is not in isolation from a range of other things that are occurring. For example, the Solar Feed-in Tariff Review. That is due to be completed at any point and our new feed-in tariff regime is due to be implemented at 1 January next year. That is your announcement. We have had no indication from the Government about where that is at, what the result of that will be and what impact that will have on those people that are on certain tariff rates and the GBEs involved in that element of energy provision. There is a range of questions and it goes to the heart that the Government was in yet another white-knuckle panic at the time. Heading into an election, energy prices were a big issue and you made the announcement of the decoupling from electricity pricing under the NEM, using the Victorian example. There seems to be a real mess in energy policy in Tasmania and we have these ad hoc, very blunt instruments being used to deal with a political circumstance or a political opportunity, more to the point.

While we support this as a measure to keep prices down, we are still not convinced by the Government's lack of coherent energy policy in ensuring that the cost of living is mitigated for people on low income and fixed incomes and that the short-, medium- and long-term sustainability of the GBEs and the energy companies in Tasmania are sustainable. There is a real lack of transparency and a real lack of coherent policy in this area, which is concerning consumers, both industrial and home owners, and those people involved in industry negotiating contracts in the national energy market. There is a real level of concern about the ad hoc, blunt measures that are being used to achieve what seems to be a lack of a coherent policy outcome for the Government. Having said that, we will be supporting this legislation.

[4.40 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Energy) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I am very pleased to be supporting this bill 100 per cent. I am proud of it. It is a key plank in this Government's second-

term agenda, a key plank in keeping the cost of living down, and keeping the cost of doing business under control in this state. It is one of the reasons we have a growing economy and more jobs, development and growth opportunity for young people and their families.

This is a terrific initiative that was backed in, in spades at the election some seven months ago. The Tasmanian people like it because they like to keep the cost of living down and they know the Hodgman majority Liberal Government is doing everything it can to keep the cost of energy down. They know the Tasmania First energy policy puts Tasmanians first. They know we are delivering secure, reliable and low-cost energy. They know that by 2022 our target is to be 100 per cent fully self-sufficient, fully renewable. Across the country we see other states clamouring for 30 per cent, 40 per cent and 50 per cent. We are so way ahead of the game it is not funny, but we are making the most of it. We are on track because we have Cattle Hill Wind Farm and Granville Harbour under construction on the west coast and by 2022 we are on track to be 100 per cent fully self-sufficient, fully renewable.

Since the day this policy was announced at Lake Gordon, with the Premier and me saying that by 2022 we wanted to have the lowest regulated power prices in Australia, we are on track and Tasmanians know it because we are working hard to achieve that. They know the independent Economic Regulator announced less than two months ago that Tasmanian residential regulated customers and businesses have been identified as having the cheapest, lowest-cost electricity in Australia. The Energy Consumers Association likewise recognised it, and that is fantastic.

I am very pleased and proud to be part of a government that delivering for Tasmanians. I am very pleased to know the Opposition is supporting this legislation but I am not pleased that my shadow, Mr O'Byrne, says we do not have a coherent energy policy in Tasmania. We do, we have the Tasmania First energy policy and we are delivering for Tasmanians. We are delivering with the lowest-cost, reliable energy and we are delivering clean energy - a trifecta. We are delivering in spades and we will continue to do so. That is part of our policy package. This is part of our plan for the future for Tasmanians, to keep families together, to give them opportunities for more work and to care for one another. We want the best for Tasmania and we are delivering.

On the mainland we saw increases of 15 per cent and 20 per cent. These last few years we saw the unreliability in Victoria and in South Australia not so long ago. They need a battery. We are the renewable energy powerhouse of Australia. We are the battery and we can and will be the battery of the nation, I believe. It is our vision for Tasmania to deliver a terrific number of jobs, in fact thousands of jobs, billions of investment and doubling our energy capacity from 2500 megawatts to double that over the next 15-plus years.

This power cap legislation is working. It has been working for the last two years and it will continue to work during this term of government, as the Treasurer has indicated, in accordance with the Government's plan. We have a plan that includes delinking from the wholesale pricing mechanisms on the mainland, in Victoria, in mid-2021. That is the plan. It was announced during the election and the Tasmanian people responded to that. We got 50 per cent plus of the vote and the Tasmanian people said yes, we want what the Liberals are offering - a majority Liberal government offering low-cost energy for Tasmanians. They want it, we are delivering.

Price and reliability is front and centre in Tasmania and it is front and centre from our federal Coalition colleagues. The Prime Minister was at the Tribute power station on the west coast Friday week ago with the Premier, Steve Davey from the Hydro, and many others. He said that our Battery of the Nation project, which is part of our Tasmania First energy policy, is a cracker of a project

and that is very encouraging. He also said that it was fair dinkum power. He knows that pumped hydro is fair dinkum power. He knows that Tasmania can deliver low-cost, reliable, clean power.

Mr O'Byrne - Did you say clean coal?

Mr BARNETT - Clean power. Do not verbal me, Mr O'Byrne. You are attempting to verbal me but you are wrong. With your interjections from the other side, I remind you that you are part of the Labor Party Opposition. When you were in government - yes, let us get it on the record - there was a 65 per cent power price increase over that seven-year period in the lead-up to the end of the Labor-Greens government.

Mr Brooks - Shame.

Mr BARNETT - It is a shame - shocking - and during that difficult time in 2015-16 they were recommending power rationing. They allowed for the draining of the dams in Tasmania. No end of trouble. We kept the lights on thanks to my predecessor, Matthew Groom.

Dr Woodruff - After you turned them off.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BARNETT - We have done it. We have kept the lights on. We did not have power rationing and we have had this CPI price cap and it has been working because we are delivering. It is not just delivering for all those regulated consumers. What about the other businesses? What about those that are unregulated? We have had in this last Budget a \$10 million support package thanks to the Treasurer to extend the rebates for industrial and commercial users and customers when they come off contract after that 12-month period or after their contract period. We have also provided support for the farm sector. What about the farm energy advocate through Aurora Tasmania and the work they are doing as the retailer? The energy on farms policy is working. Over that next three-year period there is \$5.5 million through Tasmanian Irrigation's renewable energy program and we will see that work with irrigators and farmers and that support will be rolled out. A further \$750 000 has been allocated for a three-year on-farm energy and irrigation audit and capital grants scheme.

There is much work being done in the different sectors of the Tasmanian economy. We are delivering again and again and we will not stop. There is much more work to do. We are hard at it. Last week we had the Energy Security Board here in Tasmania. As a result of the request through the COAG Energy Council, I was successful in getting that request to review the Battery of the Nation projects and was very pleased. We had the top names in the country in Hobart last week and they met with all the key stakeholders and are looking at the process, looking at the regulations, about how we can bring forward and expedite this further interconnection to Tasmania. That will unlock a host of renewable energy development projects in Tasmania. Not only pumped hydro but also wind. At Robbins Island and Jim's Plain more than 1000 megawatts of wind power is planned with a \$1.5 billion development, if we can get that further interconnection.

Likewise on the far north-east. The far north-east is one of our four renewable energy zones. It is terrific news for Tasmania, with a further 1000 megawatts and the jobs that go with the building and construction of such a large wind farm.

Mr O'Byrne - Who is paying for the second connector?

Mr BARNETT - Who is paying for this, is the interjection -

Mr O'Byrne - That is not what I said. I said, who is paying for the second interconnector?

Mr BARNETT - I heard you say who is paying for this. Let me answer the first question first.

Mr O'Byrne - I did not ask it. How can you answer a question I did not ask?

Mr BARNETT - UPC Renewables is a private sector operator.

Mr O'BYRNE - Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The minister quite often accepts questions that are never asked and answers a hypothetical question he wants to answer. I did not ask him about who is paying for these. The question, by interjection, was who is paying for the second interconnector for Tasmania, which is surely part of the Tasmania First Policy?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - That is not a point of order but a clarification. I am sure the minister will get around to contributing to both questions.

Mr BARNETT - I will answer the first question first. UPC Renewables is a private sector operator, well credentialed and with a good reputation. Anton Rohner is the CEO and he is doing a terrific job. They have already invested millions of dollars in Robbins Island and Jim's Plain. They have plans for further wind farm developments. There are also other wind farm developers and proponents throughout Tasmania. North west, north east in particular, but there are four renewable energy zones. The Central Highlands is the third one and King Island, the far north west of north west Tasmania is the fourth.

The member opposite says we do not have a coherent energy plan in Tasmania. He is wrong in that regard. He knows we have a Tasmania First energy policy. We have put a lot of work into it and we will continue to do so because we are delivering low cost, reliable, clean energy. He knows that we have worked collaboratively in partnership with the federal government. Millions of dollars has been invested by the state and federal governments in Project Marinus, looking at the second interconnector. He knows there will be a further report in December on the cost of the interconnector, on the capacity of the interconnector and on the likely location of the interconnector.

I see Anita Dow looking intensely at me from across the Chamber. She is from Braddon. Burnie has been identified as one of those cities. She is interested because she is from Burnie and is the former mayor. She knows that Burnie is one of the preferred sites identified in the July report, which was paid for and funded by the federal and state governments through TasNetworks and the Australia Renewable Energy Agency.

We are doing a really good job working hard, delivering. As for the member opposite who suggested it is incoherent, that is absolute rubbish.

I am looking forward to the COAG Energy Council meeting at the end of next week when we will have further discussions with our federal and state colleagues. We will have further updates to provide. The Hodgman Liberal Government will not stop working in the interests of Tasmania to keep the costs of living down and keep the costs of doing business low.

[4.54 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Greens to provide in-principle support for this bill, as we did when a similar bill came before us last year.

We have concerns, which we raised last year, regarding putting off the requirement for a review of the wholesale electricity price. We cannot look at a bill such as this without noting the failure of the federal Liberal Government to provide leadership in the national electricity market to set the conditions that would provide safe and secure production of electricity, low prices and a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions.

Coal-fired power stations and gas power stations are by far the dominant way we generate electricity in Australia. It is the relationship between the coal lobby and the federal Liberal Party that has created the situation where the current Prime Minister of Australia is proud to hold up a lump of coal in parliament. He is proud of the fact that he has brought our country to its knees in terms of renewable electricity generation. He is proud of the fact that he has done everything he possibly can as the leader of the federal Liberal Party to scuttle our commitments to the Paris Agreement. He pretends we will meet our global commitments for reducing greenhouse gas emissions at a canter. He is lying to the Tasmanian people. We have to say it for what it is. It is a lie to pretend that Australia is pulling its weight in doing what is needed to bring down our proportion of greenhouse gas emissions.

We provide 80 per cent of the coal to burn in the newly built south-east Asian coal-fired power plants. This is at the same time that the latest report from the IPCC makes it clear we have 12 years to act. If we do not make radical and dramatic reductions in burning coal to between 0 per cent and 2 per cent of current emissions within 12 years we will be on track to a 2 per cent increase in global average climate temperatures. We in this place and most people who read *Hansard* understand what will happen to the global climate if we reach that limit.

We have to do everything we can. We can no longer pretend we are only 1 per cent of the world's population and we have not more responsibility to act than other countries. We have as much responsibility to act and more. We are the supplier of coal to the majority of the coal-fired power stations in the world. We are that country. We can make that change.

This bill hides the fact that we have the ability to make people's power prices far cheaper in Tasmania than they currently are; much, much cheaper than this bill will entrench. All this does is talk about the Office of the Tasmanian Economic Regulator and the maximum amount that pegs it to an increase in the CPI, but it puts off the independent review for another three years, which ought and was required to be done under the initial Electricity Supply Industry Act. This is already overdue. It has been put off by another year. It was put off last year and this bill again pushes it back.

It allows Hydro to charge as much as they want for a wholesale electricity price. It allows Hydro, as the Minister for Energy was describing, to continue this mad race toward spending \$2.5 billion. We have not even seen anything like a back of an envelope estimate of an economic viability case for spending \$2.5 billion and how that is going to be good for the electricity prices of Tasmanians. Where will the money come from? The federal Government has made a commitment to Snowy 2.0 and, because of national competition rules, the federal Government cannot intervene in the market and create an unfair situation with other private companies so it is taking over Snowy 2.0. It is taking over the Snowy Hydro system so that it will invest a substantial amount of money in that hydro-electric system, create hydro-pumped power and retrofit the Snowy Hydro system so that it can provide stability, renewable energy and other forms of energy to the national electricity grid.

In so doing, it will be charging. Were Tasmania to put in a second interlink, a second Basslink, essentially, we would be competing with Snowy 2.0. Energy experts, people who know far more about this than I do, are of the view that we as a state would not be granted some largesse from the federal Government toward putting another cable across Bass Strait to help us and make us this notional battery of the nation. There are no free lunches in energy policy. We would not ever be getting \$2.5 billion from the federal Government. If we did receive \$2.5 billion from the federal Government, it would not be for anything else. That would be all our money for Launceston water and sewerage, all our money for Bridgewater bridges, all our money for all the other major infrastructure we need as a state, the money we need to shore up our best opportunities for adapting to climate change volatility in infrastructure, in transport, in building strength and in protecting communities.

The money we need to be going into those sorts of projects would be gobbled up to provide a service, essentially for mainland Australia. It seems the energy experts are of the view that the pumped hydro service is far better provided by facilities that are closely located to the renewable energy generation sites. The losses across the system are substantial. It would be probable that they would be in the order of a 40 per cent loss in electricity generated in Tasmania and sent to, say, South Australia. They are substantial losses and when they are measured overall, when such big sums of money are being considered, they do not make any sense. It does not make sense to have this big investment of \$2.5 billion in a pumped hydro so that it can somehow bail out South Australia in a hot summer event in future.

What is the point of this conversation? The point is that we have a Minister for Energy, who persists in deluding himself and Tasmanians about the idea of another big dream, thought bubble, about what we should be doing with our energy dollars in the future. All the expertise we have in Hydro, TasNetworks and Aurora, all the great skills and innovation we have in Tasmania, should be directed full on into preparing us as a state to reduce our reliance on liquid fuels, to become 100 per cent renewable and more by 2022. The Liberals have, fantastically, picked up the Greens policy of becoming renewable energy by 2022. Good on them, but we -

Mr Barnett - Thank you.

Dr WOODRUFF - The Greens policy, Mr Barnett, is not to become 100 per cent renewable by 2022 but to become 100 per cent renewable and be able to export all the time, which is more than 100 per cent.

It is great that we are starting on it but we have to be self-secure because we are so reliant on power we take from the mainland. The dams are at around 50 per cent, which is excellent. We are in the good times at the moment but we have an El Nino this summer. That is expected to bring less severe droughts for Tasmania than the east coast of Australia. As an aside, my heart really bleeds thinking about people in eastern Australia, the severe drought they are already in and the much more severe one they have ahead of them. We ought to pause to reflect on people who are having a really hard time living on the land trying to create our food.

Now is the time to focus. According to the international climate change experts, we have 12 years to put our heads down, to look at our dependence on liquid fuels that come across the ocean and to do everything we can to transfer our state from our dependence on fossil fuels into renewable energy.

We support the principle of people in Tasmania being removed from the umbilical cord that attached us to the wholesale electricity price in Victoria, which was at a historically low level, something like \$50 per megawatt hour, but skyrocketed when Hazelwood closed. It skyrocketed because the federal Liberal Government refused to take long-term preventative action so there was a plan in place for when that happened and when it will happen with the other coal fired power stations and gas power stations in the near future. It will happen because it has to. We have to stop using that form of power whether we like it or not. That has to happen soon.

We support the work of OTER in being the independent economic regulator which is kept at arm's length, but we think the wholesale electricity price review should not be put off. That is an independent review that should be done immediately. We made this point last year. The sooner we do it, the sooner we can look at how Hydro can reduce its component of the bill -because it is a part of the bill - and the sooner we can have a really deep dive into Hydro's books and look at the smoke and mirrors around the prices they are charging for the wholesale electricity and what else can be done to bring that price down so we know some of that money is not being spent on thought bubbles but should be focused much more on the things Tasmanians need to be concerned about such as adaptation to live in a more volatile climate.

On behalf of the Greens, I am happy to support this bill but urge the Energy minister to consider the points I have raised and to pay attention to people who are asking for actions on a target for liquid fuels and actions on a proper target in this state for energy efficiency, because we know that energy efficiency makes the most difference to people's power bills. We have a situation where we still have people in rental houses who do not have heat pumps, proper insulation in the roof, insulation in the walls and the opportunity to put solar panels on the roof to reduce their power bill.

When we had a Greens housing minister, Cassy O'Connor effected some amazing energy efficiency for some 9500 houses in Tasmania. Those people's lives have been immeasurably improved by living in more comfortable houses. Importantly, they are the lucky ones who will have the lower power bills. Regardless of what we do here, it is the sorts of houses we live in that make the biggest difference to our electricity bills. It is generally people who are more well off who are able to make those changes and if we want to get to the nub of reducing people's power bills, giving support to people on low incomes to make their houses energy efficient would be a great program this Government could introduce.

[5.13 p.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Treasurer) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank members for their contributions and their support of the bill before us. It is largely a high level of commonsense that has been used today in the contributions that have been made.

Mr O'Byrne - No need to apologise for your minister this time. We get it.

Mr GUTWEIN - I will take that in the good grace with which I am sure you meant it.

I will make a couple of points in summing up. As to the reason prices went up a few years ago, and they did rise markedly, the closure of Hazelwood was one, the collapse of the interconnector was another, as was the challenge South Australia had with their energy mix being broadly speaking about 50 per cent wind and not having the ability to have base load at that time. They were blacked out for a period of time and I know the previous Labor treasurer was very concerned, post the 2016 summer hit they took, as to what would occur to his businesses in 2017 because their energy mix is a little askew in terms of base load. Members would have to agree with that.

The interconnector was also an issue, but the other factor was that that year we had a very hot summer in Sydney, which had a brown-out through that period. Demand was extremely high and the price went through the roof. There were market factors that were well outside Tasmania's control that drew the wholesale electricity price up and that was the reason we introduced the bill we did back in 2017 to ensure we could cap our prices here.

In terms of questions about the businesses, I refer you to the budget and their annual reports. Our businesses are making money and by setting the wholesale electricity price at the level we do and capping the economic regulator's ability to increase tariffs for regulated customers to Hobart CPI, that affects the budget bottom line. The businesses are still making money.

In terms of Dr Woodruff's comment, it was extraordinarily ill-informed about the Energy minister allowing Hydro to have, in an unfettered way, impact on the increases in the wholesale electricity price. That is simply not correct. In terms of our regulated customers, we have set the wholesale electricity price. If we had not and if we were to get to next year, currently the WEP order is at \$79.68. The estimated 1920 WEP is 11 per cent above that. The wholesale electricity price is one of the key building blocks of electricity prices and therefore if we did not proceed with this bill and put in place the mechanism that we are, there would be an exposure, because the market will set the wholesale electricity price, not Hydro.

Dr Woodruff - We need the review to happen. Why are you afraid of an independent review?

Mr GUTWEIN - The point I am making is that we are setting a wholesale electricity price below what the market is expected to charge, so we are in front. A review would tell you that we would have to charge more if we did not do this. To some degree that demonstrates a high degree of ignorance. To say that the Energy minister allows Hydro to set unfettered price increases, which is exactly what you said because I wrote it down as you were speaking, is simply not correct.

Dr Woodruff - The Minister for Energy never provided Hydro's price when we asked in Estimates so there is some smoke and mirrors happening here.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Dr Woodruff.

Mr GUTWEIN - Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank members for their contributions. I am not going to pick a fight today that does not exist. I will finish on the Minister for Energy's contribution and the work that he is doing. The Battery of the Nation concept is a fantastic opportunity for Tasmania. Everybody in this place should support a concept through which we aim to deliver the lowest prices in the country for Tasmanians and if we are selling power into the national market, we can get the highest possible prices. That simply makes sense.

Hopefully now we will be in a position where by 2022 we will be 100 per cent renewable. That provides us with a significant market advantage. It is worthwhile looking back and Mr O'Byrne commented on the investment that was made into the Hydro. That is an investment that is going to stand not only previous generations and this generation but generations into the future in very good stead. What the country wants right now and what they want into the future is our base load power.

We have that opportunity and we will continue to work very closely with the federal government to deliver it. It is a significant opportunity for this state in terms of economic activity within the state itself but, more importantly, it will enable us to send the message that in Tasmania the cost of living, the cost of doing business, can be in relative terms lower than the rest of the

country. That opportunity is one we need to grasp with both hands and I know the Minister for Energy is working very hard on that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank members for their contributions and support for this bill. It is sensible legislation that provides a transition pathway through to 2022 when we will look to exit from the linkage with the Victorian market.

Bill read the second time.

Bill read the third time.

FAMILY VIOLENCE REFORMS BILL 2018 (No. 39)

Second Reading

[5.21 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Minister for Justice - 2R) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the bill be now read the second time.

This bill delivers on the Government's commitment to create a new offence of 'persistent family violence' and makes changes to clarify the operation of section 125A of the Criminal Code and provisions of the Evidence (Children and Special Witnesses) Act 2001.

Clause 4 of the bill inserts section 170A in the Criminal Code. Section 170A provides a new offence of 'persistent family violence'. This offence recognises that a family violence perpetrator can maintain an abusive relationship, physically or psychologically, with a spouse or partner for an extensive period of time. Like other existing continuing offences in Tasmania, this new offence addresses the difficulty of proving the particulars of each offence in circumstances where multiple offences are alleged over a prolonged period of time.

It is often difficult for victims of family violence to recall in specific detail each individual occasion where they were subjected to a family violence offence. Victims of family violence may spend months, even years, under the control of a violent or abusive partner and be subjected to a range of offences such as assault, wounding or serious sexual assault. This may result in victims only being able to provide general evidence, which may cause difficulties in proving individual family violence offences and can result in the number of charges being greatly reduced.

This new offence is modelled on other continuing offences, such as the existing offence of maintaining a sexual relationship with a young person under section 125A of the Criminal Code. In order to prove this charge, the Crown is to show that the accused committed an unlawful family violence act in relation to his or her spouse or partner on at least three occasions. For this offence:

- an unlawful family violence act is an act that constitutes a family violence offence;
- the indictment is to specify the period during which it is alleged that the unlawful family violence acts were committed and that the indictment is not to include a separate charge for an unlawful family violence act during that period;

- it is not necessary to prove exact dates or circumstances of the unlawful family violence acts;
- the unlawful family violence acts committed on one of the occasions can be different from the other occasions; and
- on a trial before a jury, each member of the jury is not required to agree on which unlawful family violence acts constitute the persistent family violence relationship.

This offence is intended to overcome the problem whereby victims of family violence are unable to particularise the alleged family violence acts sufficiently to enable the alleged acts to be charged separately. There may be for a number of reasons for this. For example, a victim may be unable to provide specific circumstances, dates or places when the alleged offences took place, or the repetitive nature of the family violence offences could mean that a victim is unable to specify each offence to the degree necessary to tell apart repeated family violence offences.

The offence also provides that an unlawful family violence act committed outside Tasmania can be considered an unlawful family violence act for the purpose of section 170A, provided that the act would have been an unlawful family violence act if committed in Tasmania and at least one of the required unlawful family violence acts that constitutes an offence under this section was committed in Tasmania.

In sentencing a person for an offence under section 170A, the sentencing judge is to make her or his own findings as to the nature and character of the unlawful family violence acts and sentence the accused person accordingly. In doing so, the judge does not need to ask the jury which of the unlawful family violence acts the jury agreed were proved for the maintenance of the persistent family violence between the accused and his or her spouse or partner.

This new crime has appropriate checks and balances in place. Section 170A provides that this offence will only be proceeded with if the Director of Public Prosecutions consents. The proposed requirement for the written authority of the Director of Public Prosecutions to charge is an important safeguard to protect an accused person's rights.

The purpose of this new offence is to address difficulties of proving the particulars of each offence in cases of persistent family violence where multiple family violence offences are alleged. The varied impacts on victims of family violence are well documented and can be long-lasting. In such circumstances victims can find it difficult to recall specific details of each individual offence.

For a person charged with conduct comprising continuing family violence acts against their spouse or partner to be held to account by the court and sentenced for that course of conduct, the court needs to be in a position to sentence the accused to reflect the gravity of their conduct. This offence will be used where there is serious criminal conduct; that is, where there are at least three occasions of serious indictable offences. The Director of Public Prosecutions is best placed to consider the weight of the evidence establishing the seriousness of the alleged conduct and whether to lay charges.

The Director of Public Prosecutions will also issue prosecution guidelines in relation to prosecutions for this proposed offence. The prosecution guidelines will provide a standard by which the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and its prosecutors will conduct criminal proceedings on behalf of the state to ensure transparency and maintain a consistent approach.

The guidelines have been drafted and will be publicly available. They will enable the judiciary, the legal profession, Tasmania Police, victims, accused persons, persons engaged with the criminal justice system and interested members of the public to understand the actions of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

This new offence of persistent family violence enables the courts to have regard in sentencing to the 'relationship' nature of family violence, and may result in more successful family violence prosecutions by relieving victims from having to recall in specific detail each individual occasion of family violence.

The Criminal Code provides that in certain circumstances, a person charged with one offence may be convicted of another similar offence instead of the one charged, provided that the evidence establishes that the alternative offence has been committed. The inclusion of section 337A in this bill provides that where an accused person is found not guilty of the crime of persistent family violence, they may be convicted of an alternative crime or offence, such as rape, assault or abduction. To be convicted of one of the alternative offences or crimes listed in proposed section 337A, the trial judge must be satisfied that there was sufficient evidence, adduced at the trial, to try or convict the person of the alternative crime or offence.

Clause 4 of the bill also amends section 125A of the Criminal Code. The recent criminal justice report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse considered the matter of the requirement for extended jury unanimity; that is, the requirement that the jury identify and agree on the same occasions of sexual abuse. The royal commission recommended that each state and territory should introduce legislation to amend its persistent child sexual abuse offence so that each member of the jury must be satisfied that the unlawful sexual relationship existed but each member of the jury need not be satisfied of the same unlawful sexual acts.

At present, the offence of 'maintaining a sexual relationship with a young person under the age of 17 years' at section 125A of the Criminal Code provides the requirement that the accused committed an unlawful sexual act in relation to the young person on at least three occasions - (section 125A(3)(a)) - and the unlawful sexual act that was committed on any one of the occasions need not be the same - (section 125A(4)(b)) - but the provision does not go to whether all members of the jury need to be satisfied of the same unlawful sexual acts.

This bill implements the recommendation of the royal commission by amending section 125A of the Criminal Code through the inclusion of paragraph (c) to overcome the requirement that all members of the jury be satisfied of the same unlawful sexual acts regarding a charge under section 125A.

Proposed section 125A(6B) proposes that when sentencing the accused for the offence against section 125A, a judge does not need to inquire of the jury which unlawful sexual acts the finding of guilt was based upon. The sentencing judge is to make her or his own findings as to the nature and/or character of the unlawful sexual relationship on the evidence heard at trial and sentence the accused accordingly. This clarifies that the judge is to sentence on the basis that the identified occasions were not isolated acts but rather ones that took place during the course of the relationship.

The proposed provisions for the new offence at section 170A, also a 'relationship' offence, are consistent with the proposed provisions to section 125A of the Criminal Code. New section 170A similarly clarifies that each member of the jury need not be satisfied of the same unlawful family violence acts that constitute the persistent family violence relationship and provides that the

sentencing judge is to make her or his own findings as to the nature and/or character of the unlawful family violence acts committed on the evidence heard at trial and sentence the accused accordingly.

I will now address Part 3 of this bill and the proposed amendments to Part 4 of the Evidence (Children and Special Witnesses) Act 2001.

Currently, the Evidence (Children and Special Witnesses) Act 2001 provides that in a proceeding where a person has been charged with a family violence offence a self-represented defendant is not permitted to cross-examine a witness who is the alleged victim of the offence.

Appearing in court can be an intimidating experience for victims of family violence. One area that can be particularly challenging is where the alleged perpetrator of family violence can cross-examine the victim. The effect of the proposed amendments is to ensure that in circumstances where an application is made for a family violence order or an interim family violence order, or an application to vary, extend or revoke a police family violence order or a family violence order and in relation to applications for bail, cross-examination of a witness who is the alleged victim of the family violence offence can only be undertaken by counsel.

The amendments remedy an inconsistency and make clear that a self-represented defendant is not permitted to cross-examine a witness who is the alleged victim of a family violence offence during certain applications for family violence protection orders and applications for bail. This proposed amendment does not undermine procedural fairness. Cross-examination is an important part of proceedings and the evidence can still be tested with the assistance of counsel.

The principal act provides that where a defendant is not legally represented, the judge is to ensure that the defendant is warned of the prohibition, advised that he or she may be entitled to legal assistance from Legal Aid, and given a reasonable opportunity to obtain the assistance of counsel. A defendant may also be provided with legal assistance at the direction of the court.

Targeted consultation was undertaken on a draft version of this bill, and I thank those who made comments in response to the draft.

The provisions in this bill provide more options for dealing with family violence offences and for perpetrators to be held to account.

This bill also clarifies the operation of section 125A of the Criminal Code in response to recommendations contained in the Criminal Justice Report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and enhances provisions to protect vulnerable witnesses during court proceedings.

Family violence is a serious issue affecting too many Tasmanians and this Government is committed to improving the protection and safety of victims and children of family violence and the way our justice system deals with family violence perpetrators.

I commend the bill to the House.

[5.35 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Madam Speaker, I confirm that Labor will be supporting the Family Violence Reforms Bill 2018. In supporting the bill, I note that family violence is a scourge on our society. It is a disgrace that so many people and predominantly women suffer violence, emotional,

financial and physical, at the hands of their partners. People who should be the ones who care for us most, who build us up and make us stronger are, sadly, sometimes those who do us the most harm.

The week before last, six women were killed by their partners in Australia in five days - six women dead in five days. As of today, there are doubtless more. It is a national crisis and it hardly makes the news. Jane Gilmore, a journalist, described it in the *Sydney Morning Herald* last week as compassion fatigue. She said there is no national outpouring of grief and outrage at this rising crisis because our compassion is fatigued by the daily drain of women being beaten, raped, assaulted, ignored, dismissed, blamed, ridiculed and murdered.

That is precisely how violent crimes like family violence can begin by perpetrators against their intimate partners. Insults, belittling comments, emotional abuse and financial abuse, which can then go on to beatings, rapes and assaults; the kind of insidious slow burning incremental abuse that can start slowly and last for years and decades. That is why there has been a tripartisan approach to family violence reforms in Tasmania for such a long time and why Labor will be supporting this bill.

The bill creates a new offence of persistent family violence. This is what is known as a course of conduct offence where the job of the court is to establish that a relationship existed and it is precisely because of that relationship that abuse endured and a charge recognising a pattern of behaviour is warranted, as opposed to multiple individual charges of individual instances of assault or other offences. Doing this gives voice to the thousands of people, predominantly women, who suffer in abusive relationships. It recognises perpetrators of domestic abuse and family violence perpetrate continuous abuse of their partners in multiple ways, physical, emotional, financial, and often for many years.

Women are sometimes criticised for not leaving abusive relationships. To make this criticism of people who are abused in intimate relationships is to miss the point entirely. Abusive relationships are complicated. The abuse often starts small and it can often be followed by floods of apologies and promises that it will not continue but it does and it often escalates. Reforms like this one are necessary because they will give victims, police and prosecutors the tools they need to charge an alleged family violence offender with a course of conduct offence that does not only recognise individual instances of abuse but recognises the whole pattern of behaviour and potentially longstanding abuse in the relationship.

In their submission to the consultation on this bill, White Ribbon Australia pointed out that 54.5 per cent of women who reported experiencing violence from a current partner experienced more than one incident and only 9 per cent of those women sought help from police, and 67.9 per cent of women who reported experiencing violence from a previous partner experienced more than one incidence of violence and 21 per cent of those women sought help from police. There is a problem and it is one that parliaments nationwide need to address and take seriously.

I note that strengthening family violence laws was one of the recommendations in the criminal justice report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sex Abuse and this bill we are debating today is a response to that recommendation. There were significant consultations on this bill, the majority of which were positive in supporting the introduction of the crime of persistent family violence. For example, the Bar Association supports the change and said it would more appropriately reflect the gravamen of the criminality engaged in by perpetrators of persistent family violence rather than ad hoc prosecutions for repeated specific offences.

Women's Health Tasmania said that in their work they see the significant social and economic impacts family and domestic violence has on the Tasmanian community and the disproportionate impact this has on women and children. They point out the comments made by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women during a recent visit to Australia -

The failure to articulate violence against women as a human rights issue was a common concern in discussions.

Where governments fail to address the issue in human rights terms it can lead to an inappropriate and inadequate response by government and state agencies with long-term social and economic consequences.

They believe changes proposed in this bill are consistent with these comments as well as the UN Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, which calls on governments to provide comprehensive and integrated protective measures to address violence against children including measures for prevention, identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment, follow-up and judicial involvement.

On the changes to section 125A of the Criminal Code, they noted the policy intent of that offence was to provide a mechanism to address the ongoing dynamics of child sex abuse, which often makes it difficult for victims to specify the dates and circumstances of particular offences. There is a direct and tangible comparison to be made here between the effects of longstanding abuse of children by sex offenders and the longstanding, insidious way family violence offences are often committed by partners. Community Legal Centres Tasmania support the changes in the bill, stating that the advantages of the new offence will be that the recognition of family violence often takes place over a prolonged period of time and convictions should allow for expeditious identification in future family violence and other legal proceedings.

They also point out, as other stakeholders do, that while creating this new offence is important and welcome, it is equally important that appropriate funding is provided for rehabilitative programs that address the underlying causes of an offenders' behaviour. Similarly, they and other stakeholders also point out many issues associated with resourcing of courts and the justice system generally. Many stakeholders argued in their submissions that without additional funding there will likely be hundreds of cases stalled in the court and other associated delays. On that note, I return to the comments I have made in previous debates about the lack of funding to the court and the significant backlog, particularly in the Supreme Court criminal division and reiterate my support for a permanent extra judge on the Supreme Court and encourage the Government to follow Labor's commitment to achieve this.

Engender Equality, the not-for-profit agency supporting people experiencing family violence, said in their submission that they firmly believe family violence and abuse is behaviour that should not be accepted in Tasmania and the law must be used to its full influential capacity to challenge community attitudes regarding gender equality and family violence. They wrote that family violence often occurs as a pattern of behaviour and is rarely a once-off event. They believe the new offence of persistent family violence is useful because it reflects how family violence often unfolds. They went on to say that a persistent family violence charge will acknowledge and validate that family violence can occur over a long period and feel it is potentially a useful step in recognising the nature of family violence and the adverse effects on victims.

While there was widespread support for this change, some stakeholders had views and suggestions about how the bill might go further. Engender Equality mentioned in their submission that a recent review of Safe at Home initiatives recommended the introduction of a specialist family violence court. A number of stakeholders commented on the current definition of the family relationship and argued that it should be expanded, for example, expanding it to include other family members who are often abusive, whether living together, such as carers, guardians, children and parents. They also argued the definition could be expanded to all relationships of an intimate, familial or domestic nature and specifically included same-sex relationships, relationships between residents in group homes and dating and other relationships that are based on trust and commitment that may not include intimacy.

Similarly, Relationships Australia's Tasmanian division noted the definition currently in the act provides protection only for intimate partners and does not offer protection against elder abuse or other types of violence in families. They say the Tasmanian legislation has the narrowest scope of the states and territories and that it should be extended beyond intimate partner violence and they suggest 'significant relationship' might be a more accurate term than 'family relationship'. I do not intend to expand further on these suggestions other than putting them on the record as comments that were made during the consultation period on this bill.

Many stakeholders also raised the issue of demand for services and the need for more resourcing across the sector. Several of those who responded to the consultation pointed out the existing backlog in the Supreme Court criminal division and called for more full time judges. Further, some also called for increased funding to the Legal Aid Commission of Tasmania and community legal services to accommodate any increased demand for services flowing from the changes in the bill. Relationships Australia Tasmania said that they would support a model whereby additional training is provided to workers to assist in the identification of various forms of family violence cases with the aim of preventing further family violence, noting that they rarely receive orders concerning non-physical forms of abuse. They say this may be indicative of ongoing reliance by police, prosecutors and the judiciary on physical violence, notwithstanding the definition of violence being broader than that.

TasCOSS recognised in their submission the importance of the investment in specialist support services and the need and efforts to integrate community and service responses. They noted that while a strong legal response to family violence is important, there is also a need to continue investments in flexible and responsible frontline services that support people experiencing violence, the pro-social behavioural change programs for perpetrators. They also urge government to invest in therapeutic and restorative sentencing options in family violence matters, noting that these approaches are better places to address the underlying causes of repeat offending than a term of imprisonment, in some cases.

The bill amends section 125A of the code. I support the changes, which clarify that in the charge of maintaining a sexual relationship with a young person, each member of the jury does not need to agree on the same unlawful sexual acts that constitute the unlawful relationship, except that each juror must be satisfied of guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. It also clarified that the judge in such a case need not ask the jurors which particular acts they believe have been proven.

These changes are a response to the High Court case in Truro. Other states have made similar changes to their legislation to clarify the issues that were raised by the High Court in that case. The Law Society of Tasmania in their submission to the consultation on the bill went into significant detail about the background in the case of Truro and the Queen. I will not go through it on *Hansard*

but for members who are interested I recommend that they read it to understand the changes that have been made here and in other states to accommodate what went on in that case.

Labor will support the bill. I put on the record my thanks to the Attorney-General for arranging a very detailed briefing for me from her office and from her departmental officers. As a result of that briefing any concerns I had with the bill were addressed. I come here today very comfortable in supporting all the provisions of the bill.

I have decided to put on the record some of the concerns that were raised by stakeholders. I do this is for one reason alone and that is to allow the Government to make clear the policy intent on the record and on *Hansard*, which will hopefully give comfort to those concerns but also will assist with future legislative interpretation.

I will start with double jeopardy. Some stakeholders were worried that former convictions could form part of an indictment for a charge under the new offence. It is my understanding that that is not the case. An indictment for a charge of persistent family violence could only include formerly uncharged alleged offences. I invite the Attorney-General to put on the record that this understanding is correct. The ALA argued that the threshold that will need to be attained before a person is liable on the proposed elements of the crime mean that it will occur in extremely common and relatively trivial circumstances, for example, breaching police family violence orders through phone calls and text messages. They worry that if this is the case, almost every person who comes before the court for family violence will be liable for the new crime because in their assessment it is the exception and not the rule for a person to commit a single stand-alone count of family violence.

This is why such an offence of persistent family violence is required. If an alleged offender is alleged to have committed multiple counts of family violence then this is why a case of persistent family violence should be the charge. My understanding from the briefing is that a charge will not be pursued under the new offence on multiple charges of minor offences. It would need to be three or more indictable offences that are alleged in order to pursue a charge of persistent family violence.

Another concern raised in that submission was that under the new crimes operation, each juror would need to be satisfied of at least one of the crimes on the indictment having been proved beyond a reasonable doubt. It was explained in the briefing that this is not the case and that each individual juror would need to be satisfied that three instances of indictable crime had been proved beyond a reasonable doubt. The point of confusion flows from the fact that each juror needs not be satisfied of the same three. That is, if there were 12 charges on the indictment, one juror may be satisfied of charges 1, 2 and 3 whereas another juror might be satisfied of charges 4, 5 and 6, and so on. As long as each juror is satisfied in his/her own right that three indictable offences have been proved beyond a reasonable doubt, a finding of guilt would be made. I support that arrangement. I raise these issues simply for the purposes of *Hansard* to make clear the policy intent as I understand it.

Family violence is a scourge on our society. For a long time there has been a tripartisan approach to family violence reforms in Tasmania. I am pleased to be part of a Labor Caucus that supports this bill and supports the changes it will make to protect victims of family violence and assist prosecutors and police to recognise long-standing relationships involving abuse and violence. I have flagged with the Attorney-General and with the Greens that in the Committee stage I intend to move an amendment to rename the offence under 125A of the Criminal Code, which deals with maintaining a sexual relationship with a young person. My intention is to rename that offence persistent sexual abuse of a young person, which is already the name of the offence in New South

Wales, Victoria and Western Australia. I will go through the reasoning behind wanting to move that amendment once we reach the Committee stage.

[5.53 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Speaker, I indicate that the Greens will be supporting the legislation, and to acknowledge the work the Attorney-General and her department have put into a bill that significantly reflects the recommendations of the royal commission.

It is a very difficult time for women and girls in the world. We thought we were making progress, and we are here, to some extent, in Tasmania. We have gender equality in the Tasmanian Parliament. Women and girls are encouraged to aspire to success and to be treated equally. As we know, the fight for gender equality and to end violence against women and girls is a long way from won.

When we look at the submission to the bill from the Community Legal Centres of Tasmania, which has the latest data from Tasmania Police, it is very clear that there are either three things happening. One, family and sexual violence is on the increase in Tasmania; two, because of the new processes that have been put in place and the emphasis now on dealing with family violence, the victims of family violence are more likely to report to Tasmania Police because they believe that they will be heard; or three, a combination of both those two factors.

The data here is very sad. Since 2013-14 there has been a significant increase in family violence orders issued by both the police and courts, with Tasmania Police data noting a 33 per cent increase in police family violence orders and a 20 per cent increase in court family violence orders over the past four years. In 2013-14 police family violence orders totalled 1304 and in 2017-18 police family violence orders totalled 1746, so the difficult fact for us as a parliament and as policy makers to deal with is that there is a culture in some parts of our broader Australian community that does not believe women and girls are equal and which tacitly, if not overtly, condones violence towards women and girls.

As a woman and mother of a daughter, to have a new Prime Minister, for example, elected to this country who spent his first two weeks in the job talking about strawberries and football, and not going to some of these really profound national issues that hold us back as a country, is a great disappointment. I acknowledge the Premier is in the Chamber today and he was a very significant part of why this is an issue that we engage with in a tripartisan way. My colleague, Mrs Petrusma, is not here, but I have said it before and it needs to be put on the record again: Mrs Petrusma, in the previous term of the parliament, has been a very important agent for change here and an advocate for working together.

There is no doubt that for all the progress made towards gender equality and the advancement of women in our community, there are geopolitical social circumstances that tell us all too bluntly that we have a long way to go. We saw that in the United States last week with the appointment of Justice Brett Kavanaugh to the US Supreme Court, despite the fact that a victim of his abuse had testified before the US Congress -

Mr Barnett - That is rubbish. It's an allegation. You're stating it as fact.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Ms O'CONNOR - Are you serious? I beg your pardon? Let the *Hansard* show that Mr Barnett must at some level believe Brett Kavanaugh, the new Supreme Court Justice of the United States, is innocent of the charge that was levelled at him by one of his victims, who stood up before elected representatives and told her story with such compelling, detailed honesty, a story that she told a counsellor about six years ago and did not divulge post President Trump's decision to nominate Brett Kavanaugh to the US Supreme Court.

This is exactly the problem that we have here, Madam Speaker, where a woman who had nothing to gain and everything to lose put herself before the people, told her story, a humiliating and terrifying story, and yet the Republican members of Congress backed Kavanaugh in.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Anti-Poverty Week

[6.00 p.m.]

Ms STANDEN (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, I rise to recognise Anti-Poverty Week from 14 to 20 October. It is a week where all Australians are encouraged to organise or take part in an activity aimed to highlight or overcome issues of poverty and hardship in Australia or overseas. It was established in Australia as an expansion of the UN's annual international Anti-Poverty Day on 17 October. Some years back I had the privilege, when I was working within the community sector, of being a co-chair of Anti-Poverty Week and I recognise the efforts of the state facilitating group in Tasmania who are busily organising tens, if not hundreds, of activities statewide to highlight these issues.

I had the pleasure on Friday of attending the City of Hobart's launch for Anti-Poverty Week together with the Salvation Army and TasCOSS, and today participated on a parliamentary panel, hosted by you, Madam Speaker, here in the people's House. It was coordinated by Colony 47 and probably 20 to 30 people from the community sector were there to discuss issues impacting youth.

I take the opportunity to highlight on this adjournment some of the issues that have been discussed this year. First, an estimated 74 000 Tasmanians live below the poverty line, a statistic which should be unacceptable to us all. I think it was TasCOSS CEO Kym Goodes who said that an estimated 120 000 Tasmanians are 'waiting for a good life'. Around one in four Tasmanians' lives and opportunities are impacted by the influence of poverty, which is a very high statistic indeed.

Danny Sutton, CEO of Colony 47, today said that an estimated 1000 young Tasmanians are on the social housing waiting list, and we know an estimated 1600 Tasmanians are homeless on any given night in Tasmania, a figure that should be unacceptable to us all.

The Salvation Army produced an interesting booklet called *Feeling the Pinch - a national economic and social impact survey for 2018*, with a snapshot of Tasmanian key findings. For the House's interest, I will read out a couple of those.

Income support payments have not increased to match the rising cost-of-living expenses such as utility bills, education, childcare fees and housing costs, and 94 per cent of all households that

responded to the survey were under the poverty line. After paying for accommodation expenses, a staggering \$22 only per day was left for survey respondents to live on and it was less than that for Newstart Allowance at \$17 per day. A total of 88 per cent experienced extreme housing stress, paying more than half of their income on housing, and 65 per cent of children experienced severe deprivation where parents could not afford more than five essential items for their children. Parents could not afford items relating to access and participation in social activities, education and technology for their children.

It is not just about paying for basic cost-of-living expenses, it is also about the very real impact on lack of participation and opportunity for these children, very sadly. Among Tasmanian respondents, households with children are 11 times more likely to live in high-rent, low-income situations and experience financial hardship compared to the average Australian child.

Today's panel discussion covered a range of interesting topics around barriers to educational attainment and engagement in further education and employment, including mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, low confidence, lack of transport, family violence and family trauma, substance misuse, teenage pregnancy, housing affordability, job security and training and skills as well as youth advocacy. It is Anti-Poverty Week, 14 to 20 October, and it ought to sharpen all of our minds as to the impact of poverty in Tasmania so that we can all work together on initiatives to lessen this impact.

Liberal Party - Support for Pauline Hanson

[6.05 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Madam Speaker, it is often said in politics and in life that decisions are made by people who turn up. It is also important to know what you are turning up to and to know what you are doing while you are there. There is a famous musical written by Lin-Manuel Miranda called *Hamilton: An American Musical*. One of the key lines in it is that when in political life and when in leadership you want to be in the very room where it happens. That assumes you know what is happening in that room.

The Tasmanian Liberals, state and federal, do not know what room they are in or what they are up to at any given time - or that is what they would have us believe. They would rather have us believe they do not know what they are doing rather than that they have acted badly, poorly and should be ashamed. We saw it with the Premier when he said he was not in the room when the federal Liberal council had a motion regarding the ABC, but if he had been in the room he would have had a full defence of the mighty ABC. Then it turned out he was in the room and he did not know what was going on; he kind of missed it. He had another opportunity last weekend, when the ABC was up on the agenda for the Liberal Party conference again but, unsurprisingly, despite the Premier's absolute desire for a full defence of the mighty ABC they simply did not get to it. It does show how important that was and we have seen it again this week in Canberra.

We have seen it with Senator Pauline Hanson's motion that focused on the phrase, 'It's OK to be white'. I raised this as someone who is married to someone of colour, someone who is a parent of children of colour, and when racist comments are made and endorsed by leaders, my family knows. They do not notice it because they read it on Facebook. They notice because behaviours change.

Who else uses such a phrase as 'It's OK to be white'? White Supremacists organisations use the phrase, 'It's OK to be white'. Far right groups, racist groups, hate groups use the term, 'It's OK to be white'. When this motion was put in the Senate, every single Liberal Party senator voted for it, including the Tasmanian representatives, backed in Pauline Hanson with, 'It's OK to be white'. There is no way they did not know what they were voting for. There is no way you could be in the highest office in this land and not understand the way hate is created, the way hate is perpetrated and the way this language is used.

Today, they have had some bad media about it because Wentworth is coming up and that is a more progressive electorate than most people in the right of the Liberal Party. They are upset about it. Today, you have the Leader of the Senate coming out to say it is only a dreadful mistake. None of our senators knew what they were doing. None of our senators understood they were voting for, 'It's OK to be white'. None of our senators listened to Pauline Hanson's motion that had been in the media for days, that she spoke to, that talked about why we had to vote for, 'It's OK to be white'. Not one of them, apparently, understood what they were voting for.

It is important to have good representation. It is important to be in the room where it happens but if being in the room when it happens means you do not have a damn idea of what is going on, and you can vote and support this kind of racism, then shame on every single member of the Liberal Party.

Trowunna Wildlife Sanctuary

[6.08 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, last week I had the privilege to visit Trowunna Wildlife Sanctuary in Mole Creek. It was an amazing experience. I am not sure how many people here have visited Trowunna but if you have not, I implore you to visit and take your family. It is a magnificent Tasmanian wildlife sanctuary. It was recently awarded the 2018 People's Choice Quarterly Gold Winner at the Tasmanian Tourism Awards and it has up to 80 000 visitors per year. It is privately owned and they specialise in native flora and fauna. It began in 1979 to care specifically for native fauna.

The site has the world's largest heritage population of Tasmanian devils with the breeding program spanning 30 years and, incredibly, 16 generations of Tasmanian devils. I was able to spend time with the owner, Andrew, and his team and had the privilege to meet a baby Tasmanian spotted-tail quoll. I was holding it in a beanie of sorts and it was about the size of my thumb. It was absolutely stunning and that is a threatened species. I was also able to spend some time with some bandicoots, Tasmanian devils, some wombats and some wedge-tailed eagles, which when you see them up close are phenomenal.

That breeding program is a conservation program and it is federally funded. I think they are given \$42 000 annually federally and the two species they are dealing with at the moment are the eastern bettong and the eastern barred bandicoot. They build enclosures that are cat-proof, and enclosures that protect owls from preying on the animals. It was fascinating to see the care and attention the staff provide to the animals and the education program they provide to people visiting Tasmania. We have an awful lot to be proud of with our natural or native animals.

One of the biggest threats to our native animals in Tasmania is cats. They kill with their claws and their teeth and through disease, with toxoplasmosis. That is spread through urine and the faeces

of cats, which the native fauna pick up as well, and that is killing quite a lot of our native animals at the moment. With our feral cat population growing, we as legislators need to look at what we can do about that. The enclosures to protect these animals from cats are really quite complex. We need to see what we can do about feral cats in Tasmania. I congratulate the team at Trowunna and I encourage all members, all Tasmanians and tourists to visit Trowunna.

Arts Funding

[6.13 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Minister for Arts) - Madam Speaker, I stand this evening to make a contribution on Arts funding because I wish to set the record straight in relation to one specific thing that the member for Franklin, Dr Woodruff, made in a contribution this afternoon regarding theatre funding. More generally, I want to set the record straight and clarify the Hodgman Liberal Government has allocated funding of more than \$2 million to arts organisations to deliver high quality arts experiences and activities around the state in 2019. This is in addition to previous years and we have certainly not decreased funding, which was the allegation. I cannot remember the exact words so I am not going to attempt to quote it, but there was an allegation that we had cut funding. We have allocated it through a peer assessment process, as recommended by peers from the Cultural and Creative Industries Expert Register. A total of 11 organisations received new support in the most recent round of Arts Tasmania's support for organisations, which was announced in late September this year.

Peers from the Cultural and Creative Industries Expert Register did not recommend any theatre applications for support under this round. The multi-artform peer panel was comprised of nine individuals from across Tasmania and Australia representing the art form and practice areas of dance, literature, design, visual arts, community and cultural development, music, Tasmanian Aboriginal arts and cultural practice, theatre, screen, performing arts and touring. The panel was constituted in compliance with the Cultural and Creative Industries Act 2017 and had experts in every practice area from which an application came and was also managed for conflicts of interest. The peers, over two days of intense meetings following an extended period of reading and scrutinising all applications, provided overall feedback to the round. This feedback is provided for the benefit of all applicants, both successful and not successful.

Like many of us, the panel was disappointed that they were not able to recommend any theatre applications to support this round. They were disappointed that applications submitted from that sector were not at an appropriate standard and were uncompetitive against the other applications, which had their visions clearly articulated, their strategies expanded, their support material in order and, importantly, the buy-in of their respective boards in the application making process itself.

Arts Tasmania treats the matter of individual feedback as a confidential matter between them and the applicant and this has been the subject of meetings between Arts Tasmania and applicants post-assessments since the release date of September.

Because I recognise the valuable contribution that theatre organisations make to the state's thriving cultural and creative industries and am a repeat attendee at many theatre productions - or as many as I can get to these days - I have committed new funds in addition to what I have previously been referring to of \$400 000 over two years to support the sector through a special Tasmanian Theatre Fund which will augment our existing investment in theatre.

Unfortunately today Dr Woodruff would have you believe that this is not worth applying for. I for one think that \$200 000 per annum is an amount most theatre organisations would welcome in addition to missing out on the round for this year. This is a separate theatre fund I have created to ensure we can have a continued thriving theatre sector. I am sure that the post-assessment meetings will be very helpful in them formulating their applications for this process.

I want to also mention we have existing funding relationships with the theatre sector through Tasmania Performs, Terrapin Puppet Theatre, which is internationally renowned, and Theatre North. We support writing for theatre through our support of the Australian Script Centre based in Hobart, and we support individuals applying for theatre projects through a range of programs including the support for individuals round, a separate funding round altogether. Together this support is over \$587 000 in 2019, around 21 per cent of the total funds available for distribution for individuals, groups and arts organisations, so to say we are not funding the theatre sector is incorrect.

We also have relationships with other companies who work in theatre contexts amongst a range of other practice areas including Big hArt and KickStart Arts, both well known to most members in this House, I am sure. We are investing in the future of the theatre sector through the program of capital works and contribution to operating costs for the Hedberg in partnership with UTAS, which is an exciting development next to, and will connect with, the Theatre Royal.

Arts Tasmania will call for expressions of interest for the new Tasmanian Theatre Fund I have just announced in the near future and I look forward to hearing the outcomes of this process. Unlike the member for Franklin, I believe that our cultural and creative sector is thriving and will continue to do so into the future, especially because of the additional funds I have announced.

Thai-Burma Railway - 75th Anniversary

[6.18 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Veterans' Affairs) - Tonight I pay tribute to Australian and allied prisoners of war who suffered unbearable conditions during World War II on the infamous Thai-Burma Railway. The date of 16 October, today, marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of this terrible experience forced on our diggers by their Japanese captors which claimed the lives of an estimated 2800 Australian prisoners of war. Some 700 of those died during the building of what is known as Hellfire Pass, a pass some 75 metres long and 25 metres high made of rock. They were squalid and tough conditions.

There was a national service in Ballarat, Victoria, today in honour of these prisoners of war. We are reminded that some 22 000 Australians were captured in 1942 as the Japanese headed south thick and fast, particularly in the capture of Singapore. A third of those died in captivity and 20 per cent of all Australian deaths in World War II were from prisoners of war and sadly, they endured dreadful conditions in Changi in Singapore and also in the building of the Thai-Burma Railway.

We should also not forget the 200 000 to 270 000 other local Asian labourers who were forced to work for the Japanese captors, and some 75 000 estimated of those were killed or died under squalid conditions. It is an absolute tribute to the Australian Government, who built the Hellfire Pass Memorial Museum in 1998 in honour of our prisoners of war.

I have a personal connection through my great-uncle, Laurie Thyne, who served as a POW in those squalid and brutal conditions. He was a member of the Second 40th Infantry Battalion, most of who came from Tasmania. A total of 1909 men served in the Second 40th Infantry Battalion and more than 85 per cent were Tasmanian. Many of those soldiers sadly were captured by the Japanese forces in Timor and were held in Singapore or forced to work on the Thai-Burma Railway. My great-uncle was one of those. He served in Sparrow Force, or Second 40th Battalion, was in Timor and was captured within five days and then spent close to three-and-a-half years as a prisoner of war.

The Thai-Burma Railway was some 415 kilometres long and the conditions were dreadful - slave labour, comprising greatly undernourished or starved prisoners of war, weakened by disease and crippling ailments such as dysentery and malaria. They were forced to work in some cases up to 18 hours a day in intolerable hot conditions. Sadly, many of them were regularly beaten by their guards.

My wife, Kate, and I had the privilege of visiting and attending an Anzac Day service at Hellfire Pass in 2010. It was one of the most special Anzac Day experiences I will never forget. I was there with two other POWs and their families, together with my friend and colleague at the time, Senator John - or Wacka - Williams, a very fine man. The trip was organised by John and I put on record my thanks to him for that.

More than 60 000 prisoners from many nations were forced to build the railway and in fact the numbers are much higher than that. The railway runs from Thailand to Burma. The Japanese at the time were trying to find a route other than by sea, because they lost the Battle of the Coral Sea, the Battle of Midway, and needed access for their intent to attack the British in India. They needed a route by land, so that 415-kilometre railway was the intent.

Many know about the bridge over the River Kwai. My wife and I visited there and then followed in the footsteps of my great-uncle Laurie and so many others in the Second 40th Infantry Battalion from Tasmania. I am a very proud descendant of great-uncle Laurie and of course there are many other thousands of descendants in Australia today and in Tasmania from the Second 40th Battalion and our POWs. They are often forgotten about. It is our job in this day and age to remember them. They showed courage and compassion for one another. We remember the stories of Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop from Victoria who did so much and my great-uncle fortunately had the opportunity to work with him and support him in his role and service to care for and show compassion to his prisoners of war. What an amazing service he provided our great nation Australia.

I will never forget visiting on that Anzac Day at Hellfire Pass. It was a weird feeling because the birds were chirping and it was just the memory of nearly 75 years ago. One of the POWs ended up working in a coal mine in Nagasaki and remembers the coal mine vibrating as the nuclear bomb was dropped. He survived and came back home.

I pay tribute to the Australian Government for that memorial museum to remember the work and the lives of those who died and those who survived, and their families. The Kanchanaburi museum and cemetery is one of those special places that are well managed by the Commonwealth War Graves. I pay a tribute to the Commonwealth War Graves for what they do.

As we enter this final stage of the Centenary of Anzac, with 11 November not far away, we will be preparing for that moment's silence at 11 a.m. on 11 November as we remember those who

have served, as we say thank you to those who have served and sacrificed so much. We remember their families and their close friends as well.

On behalf of the Hodgman Liberal Government, thank you for your service particularly on this day as we commemorate 75 years of the Thai-Burma Railway. To those great men and women who survived and the many thousands who did not survive, let me say, Lest We Forget.

Assisted Suicide - Proposed Legislation

[6.26 p.m.]

Mr HIDDING (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, I rise to continue my contributions on euthanasia in anticipation of a debate coming on later during this term of Government.

Mental illness is an expanding area for the practice of euthanasia in the Netherlands. The Netherlands has rightly attracted criticism for its approach to euthanasia of people with a mental illness. As I said when I last spoke, the president of the Dutch Society of Psychiatrists wrote a commentary published on 9 September 2018, in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, titled 'Is Euthanasia Psychiatric Treatment?'

Have we come so far as to contemplate euthanasia for formal inclusion as a valid psychiatric treatment for people suffering a mental illness? While it is not yet defined as such, euthanasia is being administered as a psychiatric treatment in practice. There were two reported cases of euthanasia for psychiatric reasons in 2010 in the Netherlands, 42 in 2013, and 60 in 2016. In 2018, 83 people died by euthanasia for mental suffering, up 40 per cent from 2016. I never want to hear the charge again that there is no such thing as a slippery slope with euthanasia legislation. It is a recipe for a dangerous slippery slope in terms of public policy.

The journal *JAMA Psychiatry*, published a study on 10 February 2016 examining euthanasia for psychiatric reasons in the Netherlands. The study examined 66 cases of euthanasia for psychiatric reasons between 2011 and 2014. The data for this study was provided by the Netherlands Regional Euthanasia Review Committees. According to the report, of the 66 people who died by euthanasia, 70 per cent were women, 52 per cent had attempted suicide, and 80 per cent had been hospitalised for psychiatric reasons. In one case, a woman in her 70s, without health problems, had decided with her husband that they would not live without each other. After her husband died, she lived a life she described as a living hell that was meaningless. A shocking case was reported in the *Daily Mail* newspaper on 11 May 2016 of a woman who died by euthanasia for psychiatric reasons in 2015 who was in her 20s and had been sexually abused. The newspaper reported that a woman, in her 20s, was given a lethal injection after doctors and psychiatrists decided that her post-traumatic stress disorder and her other conditions were incurable. The woman, who was not named began to suffer from mental disorders 15 years earlier, following sexual abuse, according to the Dutch Euthanasia Commission.

Sarah (Aurelia), a physically healthy 29-year-old woman was also euthanased this year in the Netherlands. Her sole medical complaint was serious, nearly lifelong depression and self-harming behaviour. It was reported that she was released from prison in December 2016 after serving two-and-a-half years for arson. Tellingly, she received no therapy while incarcerated and 12 months later she persuaded her doctors that her psychological suffering was unbearable and untreatable and therefore her life was taken.

The rapid expansion of euthanasia to include patients with mental illness is troubling enough, but the statistics show that women are particularly vulnerable as are people with mental illnesses that have attempted suicide and are being encouraged to suicide.

People in the Netherlands who are in general distress and in need of real care and compassion are being abandoned to a system that sees euthanasia as a valid treatment for human suffering. I am so disgusted I can barely get these words out.

In January 2016, euthanasia was formally extended in the Netherlands to people with severe dementia. Exactly one year later a Netherlands Regional Euthanasia Review Committee decided that the forced euthanasia done on a woman with dementia where the doctor sedated the woman by secretly putting drugs in her coffee, then asked the family to hold her down in order to legally inject her, was done 'in good faith'. This is how low the Netherlands has become in this area of public policy. The committee chair urged that the case be reviewed by the court but urged that the doctor not be punished, rather to set a precedent concerning these acts. Hugo de Jonge, the Dutch Minister for Health, showed some sense by ultimately condemning forced euthanasia by stating that 'the holding or fixing of a patient prior to the execution of euthanasia with the aim of preventing the patient from resisting is and may not be part of the execution of euthanasia'.

The fact that the Minister for Health had to provide these clarifying statements provides a disturbing glimpse into how widespread euthanasia without consent has become in the Netherlands. There is a massive slippery slope happening there and in Belgium, Oregon, Canada and other places in the world. I look forward to continuing this expose of the terrible threat to the vulnerable in Tasmania from this legislation.

Forsyth - Open Day

[6.32 p.m.]

Mr BROOKS (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to briefly talk about an event I attended on behalf of the Government and officially opened at Forsyth. It was an open day that looked at not only the agricultural opportunities but also the work the University of Tasmania does alongside industry on developing processes for food security. That included presentations on biosecurity, presentations from interstate farmers on issues they have had on their farm and risks for food safety generally and its overall issue for not only Tasmanian farmers but farmers across the nation. Our thoughts and prayers are with those who are in severe drought areas throughout regional New South Wales. Our farmers feed not only the nation, they feed the world. It is vitally important. My friend and colleague the Deputy Premier would know. The work of the university, alongside farmers and our agricultural producers is crucial to the security of Tasmania's food.

There was a presentation on the use of drones in the agricultural sector. They are a little cheaper than helicopters and a little easier to get a licence for than for a helicopter.

Mr Hidding - Is it hard to get a licence for a helicopter?

Mr BROOKS - Yes, especially if you are overweight. At the risk of interjection by Mr Hidding, it has been long known that I fly helicopters on occasion.

When I was doing my training I used to get really hot and I would take the doors off the training helicopter. When you are flying a helicopter and you are 1500 feet above the deck and you are doing a bank to the right and do not have a door on, it is rather interesting. Anyway, it is all part of the good fun of training. I would say every trainee pilot would have flown without a door on and it is quite interesting because you have a very tiny seat and seatbelt holding you and you probably would not want to fall out because that would be the end of that. It is an amazing feeling being able to fly a helicopter and as they say, if you cannot hover do not bother, but maybe we will talk about the aspects of how to fly a helicopter and the coordination needed another time. That is probably why Mr Hidding will not be doing it.

Mr Hidding - Hovering is not a problem. Hovering in the same spot is the problem. It is not easy.

Mr BROOKS - It is my passion, flying choppers, and it is a really exhilarating thing being able to fly a helicopter.

I want to talk about drones because they can now program them. They can now count trees and plants across a plot or paddock or farm or whatever it is. They can equip these drones with pesticides or sprays. It can go out and spray a certain section, remotely, where it is programmed. It will then go back in a week or two and check through thermal imaging and other things to see what has happened to that plant or to that crop and if it is not working it can automatically change or amend the spray for that plant. That is the technology that is now taking place across our agricultural sector that really gives farmers an overview of what is going on on their land. It can also tell the variance of the lie of the land and the highs and lows. It can map it and indicate where you have a water issue, where it is pooling, and the thermal imaging will also tell you that from a drone. It will also indicate where it is not being sprayed because it can also sense the temperature within that plant section. If it is not quite being sprayed from your irrigator or whatever - I am not a farmer so I do not like to say pesticides - it can tell you that.

It is amazing technology and is very cost effective for farmers to get into that if that is what they want to do. There are some rules in licensing but they can be dealt with or met quite simply. It was a really interesting day looking at biosecurity and the challenges everyone has and the ultimate message that I took from that was that farming security and biosecurity has to start on the farm. Part of it is the farmer knowing what is going on and off that property because of the impact it can have on them and their livelihoods and on the food. That is not a criticism toward any of our wonderful farmers who work so hard. It was a very clear message about the vigilance that is now better understood within our farming community across the nation and across Tasmania. Our investment in things such as education for farming, farm schools and contributing to our next generation of farmers; that is the sort of technology we need to be teaching them.

It is no longer 'do not run over the ag pipe', when you are 14, 'you silly kid', like I accidentally did once on someone else's farm. It is now drones, mapping and GPS tracking and it is a whole new business. They track every animal from birth to plate, effectively. They can record all that. They know where all that information is and it is quite a significant advancement. If we do not do that, if we do not have that, we cannot compete in other areas. Other countries love our safe produce. Our exports are massive for the economy and massive for our Tasmanian farmers who work so hard and do such a wonderful job.

I really enjoyed the day. It was a privilege to open it on the behalf of the Government and I even learned something. With the drone use of spraying technology and weeds and weed control and all of those sorts of things, there is some amazing technology for farmers these days.

Time expired.

The House adjourned at 6.40 p.m.