

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA
DEBATES OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

DAILY HANSARD

Tuesday 18 August 2026

Preliminary Transcript

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UNCORRECTED PROOF

Tuesday 18 August 2026

The President, **Mr Farrell**, took the Chair at 11 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People and read Prayers.

MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR

Senate Vacancy - Resignation of Senator Peter Whish-Wilson

[11.07 a.m.]

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, I have communication from Government House.

Dear Mr President,

I enclose a copy of a letter that I have received from the President of the Senate notifying me that, pursuant to the provisions of section 21 of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution, a vacancy has occurred 14 August 2026 in the representation of the State of Tasmania as a result of the resignation of Senator Peter Whish-Wilson.

I have also written to the Premier and the Speaker of the House of Assembly to advise them of the vacancy.

Yours sincerely
Caroline Wells
Governor

The letter from the honourable Sue Lines, President of the Australian Senate, reads:

Your Excellency,

Pursuant to section 21 of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution, I notify Your Excellency there is a vacancy in the representation of the State of Tasmania following the resignation of Senator Peter Whish-Wilson on Friday 14 August 2026.

Yours sincerely
Senator Sue Lines
President of the Australian Senate

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MOTION WITHOUT NOTICE

Joint Sitting of Both Houses - Senate Vacancy

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council)(by leave) - Mr President, I move -

That so much of standing order 329 be suspended to allow for a joint sitting of the Houses to be arranged sooner than seven days after receipt of the Governor's message.

[11.09 a.m.]

Ms THOMAS (Elwick) - Suspension of Standing Orders is often a controversial topic in this House, and we've been asked to do it two weeks in a row now for this purpose. I'm just wondering if there could be an explanation given as to why this House ought to suspend the Standing Order that currently provides that there be seven days allowed before we consider the motion.

Ms RATTRAY - I have a response to the honourable member. The suspension of Standing Orders has occurred previously, not just last week. The preselection has occurred, and Tasmania is currently a senator down. The Senate is sitting today, and had we not appointed a senator last week, Tasmania would have one less representative in the Senate today. These are important appointments, and in the government's view there is no reason to delay. I appreciate the question.

Motion agreed to.

Ms RATTRAY - Mr President, I move -

That on Thursday 20 August 2026 at 10.00 a.m., the Legislative Council meet the House of Assembly in the House of Assembly Chamber for the purpose of sitting and voting together to choose a person to hold the place in the Senate of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia rendered vacant by the resignation of Senator Peter Whish-Wilson.

Motion agreed to.

Ms RATTRAY - Mr President, I move -

That the Joint Sitting Rules as distributed to members in the House be adopted as the rules for the joint sitting of both Houses.

Motion agreed to.

Ms RATTRAY - Finally, I move -

That a message be transmitted to the House of Assembly requesting its concurrence therein, and that such message contain the proposed rules for the joint sitting of both Houses.

Motion agreed to.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, before moving on to today's special interest matters, I would like to welcome to the Chamber today - and these good people are the subject of the honourable member for Nelson's contribution and it's in regard to the Hobart Repertory Theatre Society. Joining us today we have the president, David Clements, the secretary, Karen Fahey, and board members Lesley Somerville, Carolyn Riley and Matthew Andrewartha.

I'd also like to welcome to the Chamber today, Kristi Chapple, who is a participant in the Pathways to Politics program and the deputy mayor of the Break O'Day Council. The Pathways to Politics program is all about assisting more female members into our parliament. Kristi is on this year's course and will be observing the proceedings of our Chamber today and is also having a look at the other place.

I welcome you all to the Legislative Council and I hope you enjoy your time in the Tasmanian Parliament.

Members - Hear, hear.

SPECIAL INTEREST MATTERS

Hobart Repertory Theatre Society 100th Anniversary

[11.12 a.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Thank you, Mr President. I rise today to celebrate a much-treasured local theatre institution, the Hobart Repertory Theatre Society, the Rep or Hobart Rep for short. The Hobart Rep is a wonderful volunteer-run community theatre organisation which has brought the magic of theatre and performance to our community and inspired audiences for generations - in fact, for 100 years.

With around 350 members, Hobart Rep has 250 or so active members, and it takes the passion and dedication of a whole tribe to bring a theatre society to life. Front of house, on stage and backstage, board and committee members, and, of course, wardrobe and props departments are essential. It's the dedication and care of this group of talented people that has ensured the theatre is a vibrant and welcoming place for everyone and fosters a deep appreciation for the performing arts in our community.

Mr Rob Valentine, our dear friend and former colleague in this place, was patron of Hobart Rep for a very long time, beginning, I believe, while he was still the Lord Mayor of Hobart and through to 2024, when he retired from this place. He moved on from being patron and it was with immense honour and privilege to follow in Rob's footsteps in 2024 to be invited to become patron of the Hobart Repertory Theatre Society, a position that I cherish. Sadly, Mr Valentine couldn't join us here today; however, I did contact him and he has sent through a message. Firstly, a message to members in this place. Rob says:

Hi to all,

The past elder member is still watching your antics between leisurely breaks, and it makes interesting theatre.

On the matter of celebrating the 100 years of the Hobart Repertory Theatre Society, Rob commented:

Having been a past patron of Hobart Rep for many years, I'm very disappointed not to be able to personally attend the acknowledgement this morning of their 100 years of service to the Hobart community as a much-respected amateur theatre company.

Theatre provides the community with so much more than it ever receives in return from governments at all levels. It adds immeasurably to community and member wellbeing, and I wish the society all the best as they commence their journey towards their next 100-year milestone. Break a leg.

Rob certainly left big shoes to fill, Mr President, but what a joy it is to be able to take up the baton and do my best to be also a champion for the Rep.

Not only are we recognising a wonderful organisation today in the Chamber, we're celebrating a very significant birthday milestone. This year, on 21 July, the Rep celebrated a remarkable milestone: its 100 birthday. A century of storytelling in the theatre, brought to life by thousands of Tasmanians who have been involved as performers, directors, technicians, designers, builders, committee members and volunteers.

Mr President, 100 years ago, on 21 July 1926, a group of passionate and enthusiastic theatre lovers attended a meeting held in the Mayor's Reception Room at Hobart Town Hall, just up the way, where they decided to form the Hobart Repertory Theatre Society. This historic moment saw the establishment of Tasmania's oldest continuously operating theatre company, which is now the Hobart Repertory Theatre Society.

The *Mercury* article which reported on this first meeting had an article titled 'Hobart Society formed - enthusiastic meeting', the very next day on 22 July. The article recounted the evening of the twenty-first and the meeting which occurred in which apparently the Mayor, Alderman EJ Rogers, presided and noted the following:

The main objects of this enterprise ... were the provision of regular changes of programme, representing the best writings of authors of all ages, and especially of modern British writers; efficient production; and popular pieces. He hoped that the Hobart society would be highly successful.

Mr President, it certainly has proven to be so. Over the past century Hobart Rep has staged 692 productions, the first of which was *Mice and Men* by Madeleine Lucette Ryley, staged at the Theatre Royal on 10 February 1927. Hobart Rep then found its permanent home in the 1936-37 year when it purchased the former Amuzu Theatre and transformed it into the Playhouse Theatre, a beautiful historic building in the heart of Hobart treasured by all. The first production held at the Playhouse Theatre, in November 1938, was Shakespeare's *The Taming*

of the Shrew, directed by Olive Wilton, which launched the theatre into a new era with Hobart Rep.

Since then, generations of members and volunteers have cared for, preserved and improved the Playhouse Theatre and it remains one of Tasmania's longest-running community art venues. The Hobart Repertory Theatre Society has become a thriving institution of community theatre in the south of our state, representing a century of community participation in the arts. It would not have been possible without the generations of talented and committed people who generously contributed their time and expertise and passion to enrich Tasmania's cultural life.

I congratulate everyone who has played a part in the first century of the Hobart Repertory Theatre Society, no matter how big or small your role has been. I extend my best wishes to the Rep as it looks ahead to the next act, hopefully, another 100 years and many more, Mr President.

Members - Hear, hear.

Ulverstone Winter Shelter Program

[11.18 a.m.]

Mr HISCUTT (Montgomery) - Thank you, Mr President. I rise today to recognise an outstanding community achievement in Ulverstone: the opening of the Ulverstone Winter Shelter, the first initiative of its kind in Tasmania. After several years of planning, advocacy and much persistence the shelter welcomed its first guests in late July. This achievement has only been possible because local people and organisations saw a serious need in their community and committed themselves to finding a practical and compassionate response.

I particularly acknowledge commanding officer of the Salvation Army Ulverstone, Captain Andrew Webb, who has been foundational in bringing this initiative to life. Andrew has consistently expressed the purpose of the shelter in very simple and powerful terms. It is about getting people off the streets. When someone no longer has to spend every moment worrying about their next meal, their belongings, their personal safety or where they will sleep, they are better able to engage with the support needed to find stable accommodation and improve their circumstances.

I also commend the Combined Churches of Ulverstone for turning that vision into action. Ulverstone's nine churches are working together to deliver the program, with four churches - the Anglican Church, the Salvation Army, the Baptist Church and the Reformed Church - hosting the guests on site in rotations seven nights per week. The remaining churches are providing support and volunteers.

The program is based on the Stable One model, which has operated successfully in Victoria. Referred guests can arrive from 5.30 p.m. in the evening and remain until 8.30 a.m. the following morning. They receive fresh bedding, share a hot meal and spend the night in a warm, safe and welcoming environment. They also leave with a light breakfast. Up to 10 guests can be accommodated with three volunteers remaining overnight.

The shelter will continue to operate until 31 August and is intended to return each winter from 1 June to 31 August. I acknowledge shelter coordinator Naomi Skeat for her important work overseeing the program's operation. Naomi and her fellow volunteer knitters have also created hug in a rug blankets, which guests receive and can keep - a thoughtful expression of warmth, dignity and human connection.

Central Coast Council must be highly commended for its leadership. Although homelessness has traditionally been regarded as the responsibility of state and federal governments, the council recognised what was happening locally and chose to act. Central Coast Council's Homelessness Strategy 2023-2025 established a clear vision that everybody in Central Coast every day should be able to access a safe and comfortable sleep, a hot shower and a nutritious meal.

This was driven by director Daryl Connelly, and it was whilst I was on the council that through him I first heard about the Stable One model. The strategy noted that while the 2021 census reported 70 people experiencing homelessness in the central coast, local service providers estimated the true number could be between 100 and 150. Increasingly, this includes families, school-age children, older people and those experiencing homelessness for the first time.

The council identified the Stable One model as a practical response, but uncertainty within Tasmania's planning and building frameworks created significant obstacles. The mayor, Cheryl Fuller, and the council continued advocating for clarification from the State Planning Office and supporting the churches as they worked through those barriers. I must also acknowledge councillors Amanda Diprose and Kate Wylie, who especially have continued to champion this issue during their time on council. The program ran into some serious regulatory issues. Who knew how much effort would be required for people to be able to sleep in a church? But with council's persistence and local builders and regulators giving their time for free, this was able to be achieved. Sometimes you just have to do the right thing. The result is a shelter that offers more than protection from the cold; it gives people an opportunity to eat, rest and sleep without fear.

The Ulverstone Winter Shelter cannot solve the broader housing crisis, but it provides immediate relief, compassion and dignity while long-term solutions are pursued. I congratulate Andrew Webb, the combined churches of Ulverstone, Naomi Skeat, Central Coast Council and councillors, and every volunteer and supporter who helped transform this idea into action. Their persistence represents community compassion at its best. They have just done the right thing.

Excavation and Removal of Contaminated Soil at Macquarie Point

[11.23 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Hobart) - Mr President, I rise to speak about a matter of very significant public interest to the people who live and work in Hobart. In early July, work began to excavate and remove contaminated soil from the stadium site at Macquarie Point, which comes, broadly, under the heading of preparatory works. Depending on whether it's classified level 1, 2, 3, or 4 under the *Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act*, or EMCA, the soil at Macquarie Point is confirmed to contain various quantities and levels of mercury, arsenic, cyanide, lead and other heavy metals, asbestos-containing materials, other chemicals of concern and a number of volatile organic compounds.

It is a very heavily contaminated site as a result of decades of industrial use and waste dumping. The toxins on the Macquarie Point site pose a risk to public health and the environment if they are not treated with the greatest of care. The excavation, on-site storage, removal and disposal of these poisoned soils is where the risk to public health on and off site - that's to workers on the site, but also more broadly to the people of Hobart and visitors and the environment - is most elevated. So, of course, that's where the greatest of care needs to be taken, because there is significant potential for plumes of contaminated material, dust and other emissions from the site.

Under EMCA, the government - the proponent, MPDC - has a legal obligation to not place public health at risk, but I believe questions remain over the volume of contaminated soil that will need excavation, treatment and removal on site. In Estimates last year, we had confusion over the numbers. The Environment Protection Authority, which thought there was between 130,000 and 220,000 tonnes of contaminated material on the site. In June this year it was up to 298,000 tonnes, so a significant increase on the EPA's evidence between two Estimates committees. Macquarie Point Development Corporation thought it was around 130,000 cubic metres, which is a different measure, in last year's Estimates. In this year's Estimates, we're told that there's around 100,000 cubic metres. The numbers are all over the place.

Hobart City Council officers, without reference back to elected members, have made an arrangement with MPDC to take 50,000 tonnes of level 2 contaminated waste at McRobies Gully. That's about 1325 tonnes a week and up to 20 truck movements a day between the Macquarie Point site and McRobies Gully. Interestingly, the EPA guidelines for the classification and management of contaminated soil for disposal do not include McRobies Gully as a site for disposal, although I'm sure that the EPA has made an exception here.

We also had confirmation from the Director of the Environment Protection Authority, Catherine Murdoch, last year in Estimates that about 10 per cent, or 30,000 tonnes, of Level 3 waste is on site and that would make the total volume of waste, if you use those figures, around 300,000 tonnes. Level 3 contaminated waste is highly toxic and requires great care in its removal, so it is the assumption that level 3 contaminated waste, that 30,000 tonnes, will be sent to the Copping C Cell.

My point here today is this. There is a lack of transparency from Macquarie Point Development Corporation and this government about the process of site remediation, the volume of contaminated materials on site, how they will be treated on site and where they will be sent. Those elements are to be, as we understand it, included, incorporated in the construction environmental management plan and the site environmental management plan, neither of which we can find a contemporary version online. So, there are many questions outstanding; there is a void of publicly accessible information, particularly for people who live in and around Hobart.

The people of Hobart have the right to know what is in that site, how much of it is there, that it's being dealt with safely and transparently, and that the health of the city and their health, and the health of our river will be protected at all stages of cleaning up that site. There are many questions remaining. The Greens will keep asking them, but I do hope the Leader for Government has been listening to my contribution today and perhaps will come in with some more information on where the construction environmental management plan and the site

environmental management plan for the Macquarie Point Stadium site are to be publicly accessible.

Optometry Australia - Eye Health and Vision Care

[11.28 a.m.]

Ms LOVELL (Rumney) - Mr President, as co-chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Eye Health and Vision Care, I would like to take this opportunity to share some important information about eye health and vision care and the work of Optometry Australia.

Optometry Australia is the peak professional body for optometrists working to strengthen the profession and improve access to high-quality eye and vision care for the community. They work with optometrists, government, parliamentarians and the broader eye health sector to identify barriers to care and identify solutions to overcome those barriers, ensuring Tasmanians can access the right eye care from the right professional in the right setting, while preventing avoidable vision loss and supporting a sustainable eye health system.

There are currently 125 practising registered optometrists in Tasmania, of whom 73 are women, and 111 are therapeutically endorsed to prescribe scheduled medicines, which means they can prescribe scheduled medicines and independently manage a range of eye conditions as well as provide shared care with ophthalmologists and other health professionals where required. This can include care for people with glaucoma, diabetic eye disease, age-related macular degeneration and dry eye disease, which helps to provide continuity of care while ensuring specialist and hospital services are available for patients who need them most.

Ninety per cent of vision loss can be prevented or treated with early detection through regular eye examinations and timely access to care. Myopia, which is more commonly known as short-sightedness, is an area of growing concern, due to many of us - and I'm sure many in this place will relate to this - spending less time outside and more time working on screens. It is predicted that 50 per cent of Australians will have this condition by 2050 unless preventative measures are taken. Some of these preventative measures include 90 minutes outside each day, breaks from screens every 20 minutes, and can include eye drops and the use of corrective contact lenses while sleeping.

Good eye health relies on collaboration across the entire system. From community-based prevention and early detection, through to specialist hospital and support services. By working together, sharing expertise and strengthening referral and care pathways, the sector can help Tasmanians receive the right care at the right time, and achieve better eye health outcomes.

This Thursday, the Parliamentary Friends of Eye Health and Vision Care are hosting an event here at parliament in the Long Room between 10.00 a.m., and 2.00 p.m. The event is being coordinated collaboratively by Optometry Australia and Vision 2020 Australia, with the support of the Tasmanian Eye Service Network, Guide Dogs Tasmania, and representatives from community optometry, ophthalmology and orthoptics. Together, the event aims to highlight the importance of eye health and vision care to the health and wellbeing of Tasmanians, while showcasing the strength of collaborative eye care across our state.

Mr President and other honourable members, if it's been a while since your last eye exam, consider this your little reminder. Optometry Australia will be available for eye screening

throughout the event on Thursday. I encourage all honourable members to pop in for an eye screening, and to meet with the representatives of Optometry Australia to learn more on Thursday.

Hobart Reclink Community Cup

[11.32 a.m.]

Mr EDMUNDS (Pembroke) - Mr President, the annual Hobart Reclink Community Cup will be played next Sunday, 30 August, at Queensborough Oval. The cup is a clash between the Van Diemen Dogs, a 'band' - pun intended - of local musicians and music industry participants, and the Ramonas, mostly a 'pack' - pun also intended - of media and media industry types, past and present.

This is the 10th year of the annual fundraising event, which has provided thousands of dollars over that past decade for Reclink to create greater social equity for disadvantaged Tasmanians through sport and recreation. I've had the pleasure of seeing Reclink's work up close, in those cases encouraging young Tasmanians from all backgrounds and abilities to participate in sport. While the match is a bit of fun, it helps lead to fantastic results.

The cup itself features a few gimmicks: it's multi-ball, where two balls are on the pitch at the same time; the power-walking segment; and the dreaded fitball, as well as a number of others that change each year. It may not be a feast for the eyes on the field, but there's delicious food and beverages provided by event sponsors, and there are at least some super-skilled performers in the half-time show.

This event is always a good time, so I would encourage you, Mr President, as well as the public at large to head to Queensborough Oval next Sunday; you may even see some fellow honourable members pulling on a guernsey. Google Hobart Reclink Cup for a ticket, or grab one on the gate next Sunday at Queensborough Oval, and go the Ramonas!

Ringarooma Days Book Launch

[11.34 a.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - I'd like to add my welcome to Deputy Mayor of Break O'Day, Kristi Chapple, who is obviously one of my constituents. It's lovely to see her wandering around the parliament today and for the rest of the week.

Recently, I had the pleasure of being asked to officially launch a book called *Ringarooma Days: The history and families of a remarkable iconic north-east community*. I've got quite a few. It is a newly written local history book by Glenn Carins. There was a wonderful turnout at the Ringarooma Memorial Hall on a recent Sunday afternoon with around 140 people in attendance, including many current and past residents, coming together for this special event. The celebrations commenced with fourth-generation Ringarooma citizen John Wardlaw, as MC. John relayed the living history of the area, the changes over time, and of course its people. John also made mention that Ringarooma wasn't just about those who mined or farmed; there is much more about the uniqueness of this community, the people who made the town and its

surrounds their home; their love of sports, the local shops throughout the decades, and their celebrations and commemorations.

I needed to explain why a Winnaleah girl was given the honour of launching a book about Ringarooma - written and compiled, as I said, by Glenn, who also grew up in Winnaleah. The answer to that question was simply my family have had a strong connection to Ringarooma over a very long time. My paternal grandmother, Doris Florence Frances Rattray, was one of six Singline siblings raised at New River. In our younger days, when Nana Rattray returned to Ringarooma to live after my grandfather passed away, I would spend many a school holiday in Ringarooma; sometimes solo and sometimes with my cousin Janine, enjoying many a visit to the New River Singline family home. It was one of those big old timber homes with a huge long verandah. It was close to the windmill, and we used to climb the windmill and we never got into trouble for that - not sure why.

I have many happy memories of spending time with my grandmother doing the shopping at Hayward's store, heading up to Tuck's bakery, and collecting the mail at the local post office. What a treat for a young person who lived on a farm and rarely went to shops.

The book consists of 353 pages. I haven't read them all, but I've had a look through most of them. It includes a contents page and an extensive general index, where your particular interest in a surname or area can quickly and easily be found and take you straight to the relevant pages.

Page 322 features my direct family line, but how very interesting to learn about other branches and how they're connected. I expect this is equally as interesting for other families who may have wondered just how the connections unfolded.

Interestingly, so many of the surnames are still part of Ringarooma and the surrounding community. That suggests a couple of things to me: connection to family and to the land remains important, and why wouldn't you want to live in a community where the land is fertile, the rainfall is consistent, and a supportive community still means something to so many?

In particular, I enjoyed reading the Holmes family story: 115 years of continuous dairy farming. I certainly would like to acknowledge the late Edgar Holmes, who worked his family farm for 75 years. Edgar always asked me to call him Edgar, not Mr Holmes - because, you know what it was like, you used to always call everybody Mister. I was pleased to be able to talk about his contribution to the community and his dedication to the dairy industry, following in his father's, Mervyn's, footsteps.

The book captures the social history of the region, particularly the Anzac Day march and service, the heyday of netball and football, and the local sporting rivalries. That was very real and genuine, I can assure you, from a girl from Winnaleah.

Following my official duty, the author, seasoned writer now with over six books to his name - which also include *Winnaleah Days* and *Legerwood Days* - Glenn captivated the audience with stories of times gone by, describing how he would start researching a Ringarooma family early in the morning and look up to find the moon was already out. Glenn spoke of many times when searching a single person would end up being a history lesson on about 20 or 30 of their relatives.

He noted that the book captures not just the town but many localities within its boundary such as Alberton, New River, Talawa, Trenah (aka The Maurice). Glenn's research discovered more than 50 families had been in Ringarooma for at least three generations, and there are at least three families who had been in the township for seven generations.

Glenn paid thanks to his community members who provided living history information, family genealogies and their time for interviews, along with the Ringarooma History Room and the Dorset Tasmania History Society, who all certainly contributed to this important record of the Ringarooma and district history in a significant way.

I'd like to place on the record my congratulations to Glenn for this initiative and the previous books. Certainly, the sheer volume of information that needs to be researched, gathered, sorted and compiled is possibly overwhelming for most of us and this publication is a wonderful achievement by Glenn. Congratulations.

Members - Hear, hear.

MOTION

Report of the Auditor-General No. 10 of 2025-26 - Planning and Early Implementation of the Human Resources Information System - Consideration and Noting

[11.41 a.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I move -

That this House note the report of the Auditor-General No. 10 of 2025-26, Planning and Early Implementation of the Human Resources Information System.

It was tabled with you, I understand, on 25 May 2026.

Members of Estimates Committee A will recall years of asking questions in health Estimates when we were regularly informed these answers would be able to be provided or the questions responded to effectively once the Human Resources Information System - I will call it HRIS - was completed. It was a regular response that provided no comfort it would ever happen and felt more like a reason not to answer genuine questions - it was very frustrating - legitimate questions the committee was asking, that we could answer those questions if we had this. Many of us held real concerns about the cost and time being spent on the human resource information system program without any clarity about what was actually being achieved for that expenditure.

The Audit Tasmania report clearly shows what those concerns were. I thank the Audit Tasmania team who were involved in this work and our Auditor-General, who reports the evidence without fear or favour as the independent office requires. I do acknowledge he's put out some pretty interesting reports of late, and they're critical reading for all Tasmanians.

I will start with the numbers in the report because they tell their own story. This is what's reported by the Auditor-General. Over four years, from 2020 to 2024, the Department of Health spent \$47 million of public money on the HRIS program. At the end of those four years, not

one intended module had been delivered. Since the program transferred to the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) in mid-2024, the department has spent a further \$19.7 million and now anticipates it will need a further \$53.1 million to complete the work.

Add that together and according to DPAC's own business case, and expenditure to date, we're looking at a total expected program cost of \$119.8 million, close to \$120 million. This is a significant cost overrun whichever way you look at it.

The other matter and a critical matter is that this IT upgrade is critical. It's not a 'nice to have' thing. It's critical as current systems are clearly at the end of life and not fit for purpose. As I said, it's not something that's nice to have. It is essential infrastructure and it will cause cost problems if it's not addressed.

With the cost approaching \$120 million of Tasmanian taxpayers' money committed to replace a payroll and HR system that began six years ago but has still not been delivered to a program and support it was intended to deliver is, I'm sure, disappointing for everyone, including those people who worked on it. We should also not forget that the need for this reform was first identified not in 2020 but in 2013, so we've known for a very long time that this needed to happen. We know that digital transformations are challenging and big-ticket items, but it's been a long time and a lot of money has been spent, and we're seeing very little to show for it. DPAC developed a business case back then in 2013 - or maybe a little bit after. It was endorsed in 2016. A project to better configure existing systems ran until early 2021, when it was stopped following a review that found no proper project management approach, a lack of appropriate governance, a lack of reporting and accountability for decisions, and extreme or high levels of risk across every area examined. This was not the Auditor-General's report. This was a report done by government.

Members should note that pattern because, as I will come to it, it repeats, and that's a major concern too. The Auditor-General's conclusion on Health's management of the HRIS program is unambiguous. It was not effective or economical. But I do want to be fair to the department here because the Auditor-General is fair to it in that report. Health did develop a largely appropriate draft business case. Credit where credit's due, they did that. It correctly identified intended benefits, payroll efficiency and accuracy - pretty important when you're on the receiving end of that - better workforce management, improved employee experience, reduced system outage risk. Those benefits were well aligned to real problems, including the COVID-19 contact tracing failures at the North West Regional Hospital and issues this audit office has already reported on in 2019 in relation to specialist rostering. That feeds directly into this whole process. If members want to read another Auditor-General's report to update themselves, that report into specialist rostering is another important read.

The problem was never the diagnosis of the problem; it was everything that came after that. That business case was never actually finalised; it was never approved. By March 2023, three years into the program, the steering committee was told there were four different versions of the business case in existence, but none of them had formal approval. Imagine how difficult that is for people trying to deliver this, not really knowing which business case they were to be acting on. The project team could not be sure what they were actually working on, it seems, and that was no doubt very challenging. Four years and \$47 million were expended without clear evidence that the relevant business case had ever actually endorsed what was being built or why. We understood the problem, but you do need to have a very clear plan for those trying to deliver it, particularly in this space. Or every space, for that matter.

Underneath that failure sat three specific unresolved system design decisions: how awards should be interpreted, how to handle employees in multiple or concurrent positions, and how rostering should work consistently across the department. We're talking about Health here initially, because Health does have significant rostering challenges, and we've known for a long time it's been problematic. These problems - the three I've just listed: how awards are interpreted, how to handle employees in multiple concurrent positions, and how rostering should work consistently - are not IT problems. They are business and workforce policy problems that needed to be resolved before any system could be built around them. Until you resolve those matters, it's really hard to build a system around them to make them work. These needed to be addressed and resolved before any IT solution could be fully developed. Again, on these matters, the report is quite clear. These three issues were identified as dependencies as early as 2020 and reported repeatedly and transparently to successive steering committees right through 2022 and 2023. They were never resolved.

Health commissioned its own external review in 2024, which is accepted, and it's a good thing they did that. It found that governance of the program was ineffective and that the steering committee did not have the capability to govern a transformation of this size and scale, and that the mitigation strategies in place were not mitigation strategies at all. The audit cites one example where the proposed treatment for a risk was simply, 'reduce the likelihood', which is not really a strategy. It doesn't sound like a strategy to me. This is more a restatement of the problem. We know we have a problem; we're just going to try to reduce the risk. A problem that really needed a proper solution to make it work.

I also want to note the finding on Cabinet's decision to expand this from a health project into a whole-of-government solution. In May 2021, the project team was advised that Cabinet had endorsed the business case being developed with regard to it being a whole-of-government solution in the future where applicable. That is the entirety of what the program team and the Audit Office, despite its statutory powers under the *Audit Act 2008*, could establish about the decision; there was nothing more. According to the audit report, the information provided by the Auditor-General, he had engagement right across the relevant sectors and nobody could produce the full cabinet decision. Now, to be clear, the Auditor-General wasn't asking for the Cabinet's deliberations, he was asking for the cabinet decision because the decision is what the bureaucrats and people trying to deliver this program need. If they don't have a decision or they're not really sure what the decision is, how can they possibly implement it? This is a bit of a recurring theme for the Audit Office and something we need to take very seriously and respond to.

So, DPAC advised the Auditor-General that it held no record beyond an email quoting from it. He found an email quoting from the decision but not the decision itself. Was that the whole decision or part of the decision - who knows? The Auditor-General notes that this has now happened in more than one recent audit, this inability to get access to information, and we should all be troubled by that. A decision to fundamentally rescope a \$20 million project into one that would eventually cost the state closer to \$120 million was made by Cabinet, and neither the officials responsible for delivering it nor the independent Auditor-General of this state could establish with any confidence what the decision actually required.

No-one was able to provide written evidence or an actual record of this decision and what was agreed and what was required to be delivered. How was the project team to be sure they could deliver exactly what Cabinet agreed? How could the Auditor-General audit compliance against the cabinet decision and the business case? If these documents couldn't be produced by

either party, this is deeply concerning. And the problem is far more than a technicality, it goes to the heart of accountability as to how our money is spent, what the expenditure delivers and whether the intended outcomes have been achieved. That's what we should all be focusing our attention on: the outcomes that are achieved on the money that's spent, or appropriated or agreed to be spent.

As noted in the report, the Department of Health did not adequately brief its ministers. The relevant minister was briefed only twice, in December 2021 and February 2022, and those briefings were basic background material. There is no evidence ministers were given what they needed to make the threshold decisions that this program required, including the decision to expand it to the whole of government. Parliament, in turn, was not adequately informed.

To give credit where it's due, I will note one thing in Health's favour particularly. When the program reached the point of implementation in early 2023 and the independent assurance adviser found that 20-30 requirements were unmet and seven deliverables were outstanding from the system integrator, the steering committee did hold the rollout at that point rather than deploy an unsuitable system. That is commendable, but it's a worry that we got to that point and that those underlying fundamental problems weren't corrected. Given what we've seen in Queensland Health's payroll disaster a number of years ago and the Canadian government's payroll catastrophe, all of which I'll come to, that decision not to proceed prevented what could have been a far worse outcome for Tasmania's public servants, who rely on being paid correctly and on time. So, I do commend the government and the Health department for taking that action.

As a result of this process and review, responsibility transferred to Department of Premier and Cabinet in mid-2024 and the program was rebranded the Human Resource Transformation Program or H RTP. The Auditor-General finds real improvement here and I accept that finding. Governance has been elevated to the secretaries board; roles and accountability have been pushed out to agency leaders and business owners, rather than concentrated in the chief information officer, which was one of Health's structural weaknesses. Risk assessment now complies with DPAC's enterprise risk framework, and mitigation strategies are broadly proportionate, but - and we need to be really clear about this - DPAC has not resolved the fundamental problems that sank Health's effort. They still remain unresolved problems. As at March 2026, 20 months after taking over the program, DPAC's business case was still not finalised. The same three design decisions that defeated Health, award interpretation, concurrent employment, are now an expanded list including pay harmonisation across three different pay cycles, a payroll remediation strategy, data sharing across agencies, and integration with at least eight separate instances of the Finance One system remain unresolved. You can't fix the problem if you don't fix the underlying problem.

There is progress to acknowledge on some of these. A proof of concept for concurrent employment has been developed with the system integrator Accenture, and a process for centralised award interpretation is under development. It is good to hear that there is progress being made on these problems we've known about for a very long time, but the audit is also explicit that other key risks, including long-term funding, remain unresolved.

To summarise, our independent Auditor-General, after examining six years and \$67 million of continuous expenditure on this program under DPAC's stewardship to date, cannot yet provide any assurance to the parliament as to whether it's going to work. Hopefully, the Leader might have something more to say on this.

With regard to stakeholder engagement, the Auditor-General surveyed members of DPAC's own human resources directors forum, the very people meant to represent business process owners in this program, in October 2025. Their responses are somewhat concerning. I will quote briefly because these are the voices of the people DPAC itself asked to be its eyes and ears across the service. One member said, and this is reported by the Auditor-General, that there isn't a shared updated risk register, 'so [they] have little confidence that risk mitigation strategies are clearly defined and managed and appropriately escalated'. Another said they were 'not aware of what the actual mitigation strategies are, how they were developed, or who is accountable for them'. A third said they did not have a 'comprehensive view of the risks and barriers and how these are being managed'. I know one person may feel a bit at sea on this, but when you have similar concerns being raised repeatedly, it should raise alarm bells. DPAC has, to its credit, taken steps since October 2025 to address this, including an intranet page, resources for agencies, presentations on the implementation approach, and a self-reporting process. It is too early to know if this is working, and something we will need to continue to scrutinise through questions and relevant committee scrutiny.

We should also be aware of a specific and recurrent problem: money. The 2025-26 Budget provided \$24.8 million for the H RTP in 2026-27, but DPAC's own business case says \$53.1 million is needed across the budget and forward estimates. That is a \$28.3 million gap between what DPAC says it needs, and what's actually provided by this parliament through the government's budget. DPAC's response to the Auditor-General on this point was that it was working with Treasury toward a final 2027-28 Budget request with the remaining funds, and with the whole-of-government rollout now expected to complete in 2028-29. This is one of the holes in the budget. It's a rather large hole, but it's one of them. If everything is included in the 2027-28 Budget that has sort of been talked about as 'We didn't have it in this budget, it'll be in the next one', it's going to be a shocker. So, here we are again, being asked to trust that funding will materialise in future budgets for a program that has already consumed \$67 million, without full parliamentary appropriation of its cost and on the back of a program that, in its previous incarnation, spent \$47 million and delivered effectively nothing.

The Auditor-General's own words are, 'There is an ongoing risk that mistakes at Health will be repeated in DPAC's program.' I share that concern, particularly on some levels. I also know what appears to be considering approaches to procurement in the H RTP, as we are also now seeing in Health with the Bluegum Digital Transformation Project. I raise this because it bears directly on whether the lessons of this report are actually being absorbed by the government or whether the same underlying weaknesses are already resurfacing on the very programs meant to demonstrate improvement.

I do have some questions on notice relating to this matter with regard to the H RTP, but the Auditor-General's report is explicit that detailed procurement and contract management for the HRIS program and the H RTP program are outside the scope of his audit, so he didn't actually look at them in that particular audit. I'm not referring to a matter that was subject to an audit report and an audit finding with regard to the procurement matters, but what I am raising is a pattern that, on the evidence available to me, warrants further scrutiny and attention.

The Treasury website has published information relating to contracts associated with the H RTP which show that many of those contracts are priced between \$90,000 and \$99,990, that is just under the \$100,000 threshold at which the Treasurer's Instructions require open market quoting. Eight of those contracts were priced at exactly \$99,990.

Several vendors appear more than once in the list within short periods of each other, at or near the same value. There is also reporting of contracts well over \$100,000, well over the threshold that ordinarily requires competitive tender, appearing to have been exempted from that process, and this goes to the heart of the questions I've put on notice.

There also appears to be a reported inconsistency in how one vendor has been classified for 'buy local' purposes between 2025 and 2026, using the same interstate address for both years. The four contracts totalling over \$900,000 were reportedly executed on Christmas Eve last year. These measures require our attention, and hence my questions on notice.

I raised this because of the pattern and the fact that the H RTP is essentially reborn HRIS. This sub-threshold pricing cluster just under the mandatory tender trigger, repeated awards to the same vendors and an almost total absence of competitive tension is precisely the kind of administrative behaviour that Treasurer's Instructions exist to avoid. What concerns me is that this is not an isolated problem.

At Estimates hearings for Health this year on 3 June, the member Elwick put to the minister and the secretary of Health that a search of the Treasury contracts website returned more than 130 contracts connected to the Bluegum Digital Health Transformation Project, another IT project in Health, each under \$100,000 totalling around \$12.4 million, including multiple contracts to the same contractors, in some cases for the same contract period.

The secretary's answer was that these were properly characterised as labour hire rather than consultancy, that the department was complying with the Treasurer's Instructions as they currently stand and that Health has written to Treasury on at least two occasions over roughly two years seeking a change to those instructions to allow a panel-style arrangement for this kind of engagement - a change Treasury has, on the secretary's own advice to the committee, declined to make.

I asked the secretary directly at the hearing why we should not be concerned about another major digital transformation program showing the same low-value, high-volume contracting pattern that characterised the environment around the HRIS program's failure, and I did not receive an answer that resolved that concern. The secretary's position, as I understood it, was that the Treasurer's Instructions do not currently provide him with a suitable mechanism for directing labour hire to the scale this program requires or required, and that in the absence of that mechanism, the Department has proceeded regardless.

I'm not sure Treasury share this position or share that approach. I accept the secretary of Health's account was given in good faith, but a department knowingly working around a gap in the Treasurer's Instructions for two years without resolution on a program with a current capital allocation of \$140 million is not, in my view, acceptable, and that is why I've commented on this as it is relevant to the report and its notings and findings.

Also, I want to bring to members' attention that the government has two other matters - when you take two matters taken together - that I've just referred to: unresolved threshold-adjacent contracting on the H RTP at DPAC and acknowledged threshold-adjacent contracting on Bluegum at Health sit either side of the same central agencies that this report tells us must demonstrate improved governance if the H RTP is to succeed where the HRIS program failed.

Both programs report at senior levels to the same secretaries board structure now overseeing the H RTP. If that structure cannot resolve a known admitted gap in procurement practice on one major digital program for two years, we are entitled to ask what confidence we should have that the same structure will resolve the unresolved system design decisions - award interpretation: working on it, not resolved; concurrent employment: working on it, not resolved - pay harmonisation and finance systems integration that this report tells us remain open on the H RTP itself.

Mr President, I raise those matters because procurement integrity is not a side issue in this. It's integral to the way we deliver such projects. It's not a side issue to program governance. It does require strict guidelines and adherence to the rules and the intent of the rules. With significant expenditure going towards digital transformation, work that is urgently needed has been identified for a very long time, we need to be assured of, and actually see, robust program governance. The government and the parliament must insist on seeing program management and procurement done properly, not merely accepting assurances that it is.

Since I began writing my contribution on this motion, a further report has been tabled that speaks directly to the concerns I have just raised. I'm not going to go right into that, but I just want to bring it to members' attention now because it moves this from a pattern I was putting to the government for explanation to a matter the Auditor-General has now formally confirmed. The Report of the Auditor-General No. 1 of 2026-27 - the annual audit update tabled on 12 August this year - examines the internal control environment of every state entity, including the Department of Health, the Tasmanian Health Service and Ambulance Tasmania. That report, which is the one that was tabled just a few days ago - and if members went to the briefing, they would have found it a little bit disturbing - that report identifies two high-risk items for Health: the entities fraud framework raised in October 2025, and directly on point, non-compliance with the Treasurer's Instruction PF-3 - the procurement framework that was raised in June 2026.

The Auditor-General's findings here are quite clear as well. I want to put them on the record because they're not allegations, they're the outcome of an audit testing. From 1 July 2023 to 30 April 2026, Health awarded 508 contracts valued at more than \$50,000 but less than \$100,000, totalling \$42.76 million. That's 508 contracts in that range. That is an average of 169 such contracts worth a combined \$14.25 million every year. The significance of that threshold is not incidental. Below \$100,000, Health is not required to run a competitive process. It is not required to apply the Tasmanian content weighting and is not required to refer the engagement to the procurement review committee. A lot of it flies below the radar. Above that threshold all those requirements apply.

The Auditor-General found Health had been in breach of PF-3 in at least two specific and serious respects. First, the instruction requires the accountable authority to ensure external contracts are engaged only after options for sourcing within the agency or another agency have been fully considered. When asked to demonstrate this, Health's own documentation told a different story. Its process is titled a 'request for contract or resource' form. The audit found no direction to, or evidence of, consideration of internal sourcing at all. The Treasurer's Instruction requires that. The audit also examined Health's contract renewal process and found it weaker again - fewer control steps than a new engagement, and no consideration of whether the value or duration of a renewed contract should trigger a higher level of scrutiny.

Second, and just as concerning, the audit tested whether Health's own explanation for the pattern could be substantiated, that contract values reflect the full duration of the project rather than an artificially short term. Therefore, of the 508 contracts, only six have been extended. The Auditor-General's conclusion as stated in the report is that the evidence supports a finding that Health frequently reduces the duration of contract terms, specifically to keep the contract values under \$100,000. I hope you're all listening to this because it just blows my mind.

Ms Thomas - Doesn't pass the pub test.

Ms FORREST - Thereby bypassing the probity, competition and value for money requirements that apply above that threshold. We should all be very concerned about this, and I thank the Auditor-General for his work.

This is a shocking indictment on the Department of Health and the responsible minister and Treasurer. This should have been reviewed and stopped a long time ago. I'm aware of some of the reasons that have been made for ongoing practices, but I do not believe they are adequate. We have Treasurer's Instructions for a reason, and both Treasury and the department should be monitoring compliance. It seems it's nobody's job.

The report also confirms something else worth our attention. Of the 508 contracts, 80 had a start date before the contract's award date, meaning contractors began work before Health had actually approved their engagement: a direct breach of the PF-3 requirement that accountable authority approval be obtained prior to appointment. That was 80. Seventeen contracts were awarded a single day after the work had already started, while 30 were awarded more than 10 days late, and one contract with JAM Web Services Pty Ltd was not awarded until 122 days after the contractor's start date of 1 November 2025. Who was checking this? Where is the government oversight of this? Thanks to the Auditor-General, we've now had a light shone on this, but it's obviously not a new problem.

Critically for this debate, the Auditor-General records that the majority of these 508 contracts relate to either digital health readiness program or the Bluegum Health Transformation, the same program I've just raised on the basis of the Estimates hearing in June and the questions that the member for Elwick raised. This is no longer two separate concerns sitting side by side. It's a confirmed pattern, now independently verified by the Auditor-General, running across Health's largest digital transformation program over close to three years, this particular one worth over \$42 million in contracts alone, and possibly - and I'll hold my judgement on this until we're sure - occurring in the Department of Premier and Cabinet with the Human Resource Transformation Program project. I hope those answers can be forthcoming pretty promptly on that matter, on the one on notice. I know that another minister down here said he would answer questions this week and he's failed to do so today; maybe tomorrow.

I acknowledge, in fairness, that Health has not been silent on this. I do want to be fair. We should be. The Auditor-General records that the Secretary of Health approved new arrangements for the procurement of information and communications technology (ICT) labour hire on 10 July 2026, following collaborative work with Treasury through May and June. That was after this all came to light, I might add. I welcome that change, but I would say to the House that this is now the second time within a matter of months that the parliament has been told after the fact that a Health digital transformation program has been operating outside the procurement rules that exist to protect public money - first, through the Estimates exchange on

Bluegum, and now through a formal audit finding covering 508 separate contracts. Two high-risk findings, raised months apart, on the same department, on the same category of program.

If the Treasurer's Instructions aren't fit for purpose, let's have a discussion about that. But they're not subject to any parliamentary approval, so we don't actually get involved in it. That's a matter for the Treasurer, Treasury and the government.

I do not think it's good enough for parliament to receive these confirmations one report at a time, months after the fact and treat them as an isolated correction. That's why I've brought in the second report because I think it's really important we look at the big picture here. This pattern is now established on the Auditor-General's own evidence. We are entitled to ask how many other digital transformation programs across government carry the same undisclosed risk, and what assurance we have that the new arrangements that were agreed to in July have been applied, consistently, rather than simply added to the list of frameworks that look appropriate on paper but do not change practice on the ground.

I now wish to come back to the matters I referred to earlier and noted in the Auditor-General's report. The comparative material in chapter 1 of the report should inform how we consider the matters I've just raised and the issue of accountability going forward. Major overspends in other jurisdictions on similar projects should not be taken as an excuse for what has occurred here. It is a fact that HR and payroll transformation programs of this kind fail more often than they succeed worldwide. It is a challenging area. There's no question about that. The Canadian federal parliament's Phoenix payroll system costs \$3.5 billion and produced years of pay errors requiring costly remediation. Queensland Health's payroll system, at \$1.2 billion, led to a commission of inquiry and what the report describes as terrible consequences for employees. Western Australia's \$370-million attempt to centralise shared services did not succeed. I believe that, basically, it was scrapped. A \$340-million Commonwealth finance, HR and procurement system was terminated before its objectives could be achieved. Clearly, it's not easy. The Australian Capital Territory spent \$78 million on delivering a single-module learning management system.

They're the failures. I hope we don't have to add Tasmania to it. Against that backdrop, New South Wales stands alone as a rare success: a \$360-million program that delivered a common platform for 75 agencies in 2024, now extending to another 100. It can be done, but we need the proper processes in place to ensure that it is. These accounts clearly show that this is an area of high risk of cost overruns in a complex environment, and the New South Wales example demonstrates this can be done without that failure eventuating.

It's not inevitable that government HR transformation fails. It is, however, inevitable that it fails when the business case is not finalised, when governance lacks the capability and the reach to resolve cross-agency issues, and when known risks that have been reported for years remain unresolved. This is precisely the pattern Tasmania has now repeated for six years, first at Health and now, on the Auditor-General's own conclusion, it is at risk of repeating again at DPAC.

I now turn to the submissions in appendix C, because we should not ignore the responses from government. I note that the Auditor-General almost always includes the full response of government ministers and relevant parties to ensure they're not taken out of context, and that they have that full right of reply after they are sent a draft copy of the report.

The way the government responds to independent audit findings says as much about accountability in this state as the findings themselves. I acknowledge and appreciate the fact that these responses are, as I said, provided in full. The Premier's response does not accept the observations or conclusions of this report. The Premier states he considers the report does not adequately or accurately characterise the program's context and that, in his assessment, the report gives rise to conclusions that are, in his words, 'incomplete and in material respects potentially misleading'.

I take that response seriously, as I do take any response seriously from the Premier, but I would remind members and the Premier what actually sits behind an Auditor-General's report of this kind, because it does matter directly how much weight this parliament should give the Premier's blanket rejection of it.

The audit was conducted in accordance with Australian Standard ASAE 3500 Performance Engagements issued by the Australian Auditing and Assurance Standards Board. This is the specific standard governing how a performance audit must be planned, evidenced and concluded for the purpose of the Auditor-General expressing a reasonable assurance opinion, not a lesser indicative one.

Separately, the Tasmanian Audit Office, as a firm, operates under Australian Standard ASQM 1, which requires it to maintain an ongoing system of quality management, covering ethical requirements, professional standards and regulatory compliance across its practice as a whole. One standard governs this engagement, the other governs the office itself.

On top of those two serious rules or standards that apply, that, the Auditor-General's rejoinder sets out the specific discipline behind this report: quality gate controls at every phase - planning, implementation, reporting and tabling; an independent team member who substantiated the report before release, tracing every finding back to the evidence and giving the significance of this program an additional technical review committee, and an externally contracted engagement quality reviewer who examined the entire audit file. So, don't tell me it hasn't been properly considered and is potentially misleading. It is an inappropriate comment, and I ask the Premier to think seriously about making such comments and communication to our Auditor-General, who has far more standards imposed on him than it seems the government does.

This report is based in the evidence collected by Audit Tasmania. They haven't gone off looking for a witch hunt, they've looked at the evidence available. I say this not to suggest the Premier has no right to disagree with how the findings are framed, of course he does, and his office and both secretaries have set out in length, in Appendix C, their views on that. But there is a difference between disagreeing with framing and treating that disagreement as equivalent with the findings being unreliable or potentially misleading. There's a very big difference. Nothing in any of these three responses of the relevant entities identifies a factual error in the evidence base, a departure from the ASAE 3500, or a defect in the officer's ASQM 1 quality management. What is offered is a difference of interpretation about the complexity and sequencing, which does not, in my assessment, displace a reasonable assurance conclusion reached through this process. The secretary of Health's response accepts that the HRIS program did not proceed to implementation and did not deliver its intended outcomes. He was accepting that and acknowledges the report's findings on governance and risk management. I think he was taking some responsibility there. That acceptance is appropriate and I welcome it.

But the secretary's response also pushes back on the characterisation that the program delivered no outcomes at all, pointing to a configured system architecture, business process works and artefacts that have been used since, by DPAC. Well, the proof will be in the pudding on that, Mr President. There is something to that, as well. Work is not always visible in a deployed system, but I would say is that configured artefacts and design documentation are not the same as a working payroll and HR system for the people who needed it. After four years and \$47 million, that is what Health was funded to deliver and did not. It will remain to be seen whether the things that were delivered actually don't see the cutting room floor, because those underlying problems that were fundamental at the start are still not fully resolved.

The response from the secretary of DPAC and Head of State Service goes further still. She rejects the audit's framing of this as two separate programs, arguing it has always been one continuous program of work across six budget periods and six sets of Estimates hearings - I did refer to those, and how frustrating they were earlier - and that the modules now being delivered by DPAC are a direct product of the work done by Health. Well, let's see if we can get the information out of it. She specifically disputes the finding that the program did not progress to system testing, stating that the system integration and data migration testing were in fact undertaken in 2023-24 with formal deliverables, and that this work underpinned the first live deployment of the PeopleCentral establishment management module in DPAC, in November 2025. We do also need to remember that's when the review was done by Health that said: whoa, we'd better stop, it's not working.

The secretary of DPAC also provides revised cost estimates, putting the net present value of the implementation cost to 2028 at \$75.4 million, rather than the \$53.1 million reference elsewhere. It has gone up even more while arguing the projected system will ultimately be cheaper than the ageing systems it replaces over a four-year horizon. I would hope that's a no-brainer when we have so many problems in the current system. We don't want a Queensland situation where we end up with some commission of inquiry into a stuffed-up payroll.

In my own observation, whether one characterises this as one continuous program or not, the plain fact remains that \$47 million was spent under Health stewardship without a functioning system reaching a single Tasmanian public servant, and that six years after this reform began and 20 months after DPAC assumed responsibility, the state's independent auditor cannot give this parliament assurance that the program will succeed. Disagreement about framing does not change that reality.

The Auditor-General makes one recommendation to Health and two to DPAC. All are accepted, and I welcome that. However, we cannot take accepted or even completed at face value where the cultural and good governance problems persist. Health has marked as completed its acceptance of stronger business case requirements, project gating and external communication frameworks; those matters we will need to follow up in budget and Health scrutiny, particularly in relation to the Bluegum Digital Transformation project. DPAC has also marked as completed its finalisation of the business case and the embedding of project gates. These administrative steps matter and I'm not dismissing them, but they should have been there at the start. This report itself demonstrates that Health had governance frameworks, risk registers and reporting structures that looked appropriate on paper throughout the life of the HRIS program.

The Auditor-General found that the risk register had all the required elements and that reporting to steering committees was genuinely transparent. The failure was not the absence of

a framework; it was the absence of capability and authority to act on what the framework revealed. A tick against 'completed' on a recommendation without establishing a gating process tells us nothing about whether the next set of officials sitting around that table has a seniority, the reach across agencies, and the willingness to actually pause the program when the evidence says it should be paused, but let's hope that is the case. Let's hope they can deliver it.

This is why we need to continue to scrutinise and ask questions about costs and delivery of these digital transformation projects. As I said, the need for HR and payroll reform in the Tasmanian State Service is real and it's been real since 2013, particularly across the health sector: more than 40 ageing systems over 20,000 staff on manual fortnightly timesheets - this is more of an issue in Health, for example, where you do have large rostering demands - 30 industrial instruments, \$6 billion in wages and salaries paid annually. The case for a modern integrated system is absolutely not in dispute. DPAC's own estimate that a working system could save the state \$296 million over 14 years is a benefit worth pursuing properly.

What is in dispute though, and what this report puts beyond dispute, is whether the way we have gone about pursuing that benefit to this point has been effective, economical and properly accountable to the department. I share the Auditor-General's view on this that it hasn't. Tasmanians have paid \$67 million for a program that has yet to deliver on top of the \$47 million that Health spent and cannot account for in outcomes, and we are now told a further \$53 million, or on DPAC's revised figure, \$75.4 million, is required without the funding to match fully appropriated across the forward Estimates. That's a hole in the forward estimates that will have to be filled if we're going to see this delivered.

Programs of this scale and complexity are not a reason for less scrutiny; they're an argument for the contrary. They are precisely why we must maintain it. I do thank the Auditor-General and Audit Tasmania for their work on this important matter, not just in the HRIS report but also the most recent annual audit update that was released last week. These are incredibly important matters. I'm sure his office as well as the members will be watching the progress of the H RTP and Bluegum digital projects and other digital transformation projects, with perhaps a bit more renewed interest.

I note the report.

[12.29 p.m.]

Ms THOMAS (Elwick) - Mr President, I rise to make a contribution on the motion noting the Auditor-General's report No. 10 of 2025-26, Planning and Early Implementation of the Human Resource Information System. I thank the member for Murchison for bringing this motion to us for consideration and noting, and for that very comprehensive overview of the Auditor-General's report. I'll try to not repeat much of what she said in my contribution, although I do have it prepared here.

It is an important report and I thank the Auditor-General and his team for their work to prepare it. It is important not simply because of the very substantial amount of taxpayer money involved here, although that is significant, but also because of what it tells us about the way major digital transformation projects are conceived, governed, monitored and delivered across government in this state. It's especially important because the government has other very significant digital transformation programs underway right now. The question for us, therefore, cannot simply be what went wrong with HRIS, it must also be, what has the government learned

from it and how can this parliament be confident, how can Tasmanians be assured, that those lessons are actually being applied elsewhere?

The Auditor-General's conclusion regarding the Department of Health managed phase of this program is very clear. The planning and early implementation of the Human Resource Information System program was not effective or economical. Health spent approximately \$47 million over four years, and at the time responsibility was transferred to DPAC in mid 2024, none of the intended modules had been delivered, as the member for Murchison outlined. Taxpayers rightly expect that when government spends money of this magnitude, there are robust systems in place to make sure it's being spent properly, that projects remain on track, that risks are acted upon and somebody is ultimately accountable for the outcome.

The particularly concerning thing about this report is that the Auditor-General does not identify one isolated mistake. He identifies a series of governance failures. The business case and other critical documentation were not finalised following significant changes to the scope of the project; known risks were not adequately managed; relevant stakeholders were not sufficiently engaged in resolving critical dependencies; there was not an appropriate decision-making framework; and steering committees did not have sufficient capability to govern a transformation of this complexity.

The report also identifies three critical design issues: interpretation of awards, multiple or concurrent employment, and rostering. These were not minor technical details, they went to the heart of whether the system could actually work. Yet, these issues were repeatedly raised during 2022 and 2023 and remain unresolved. In fact, the Auditor-General records that in July 2022, an assurance advisor suggested that consideration be given to pausing some project activities until the concurrent employment issue was determined. That issue remained unresolved even when the program moved to DPAC two years later.

Perhaps one of the most important lessons in this report is that there is very little value in having risk registers if the risks identified in them are not considered and resolved. There is very little value in reporting problems to governance committees if those committees cannot, or will not, make the decisions necessary to fix them. And there's little value in having project gates if a project continues to pass through them despite not satisfying the criteria for progression. The 2024 external review found that the steering committee did not have the required capability to assess the information before it, that the program moved between stages without consistently satisfying entry and exit criteria, that leadership and team structures were unstable, and the required resources could not also always be assigned.

The Auditor-General makes another observation that deserves particular attention. Individual contractor deliverables were defined through statements of work, but the program became disproportionately focused on completing those individual tasks rather than governing delivery of the program as a whole. The consequence was an inability to properly manage dependencies between those individual pieces of work and the overall transformation. That should be ringing alarm bells for government because major transformation programs cannot simply be viewed as collections of individual contracts, work packages or consultants. Someone has to be responsible for the whole. Someone has to be asking: how does this piece fit with that piece? Are we still delivering what we set out to deliver? Are the dependencies being managed, and are we getting value for money? Most importantly, perhaps, should we continue? To give Health some credit, eventually the answer to that last question was no. The Auditor-General expressly acknowledges that when Health ultimately stopped the program

from moving into implementation, it demonstrated good practice and potentially prevented much more serious consequences. I acknowledge that. Stopping a troubled project is not a failure in itself, sometimes stopping is the responsible thing to do. The problem here is allowing a project to reach the point where tens of millions of dollars have been spent before that decision is made, ignoring all the red flags and spending \$47 million of taxpayer money before pulling the pin. That's the problem here.

None of this means the underlying reform is unnecessary. Quite the opposite, as the member for Murchison pointed out. The Auditor-General also makes very clear that Tasmania urgently needs contemporary human resource systems. Many State Service entities continue to rely on Empower HR, a payroll system dating back to the early 1990s, together with an assortment of other electronic and paper-based systems for recruitment, rostering, leave, staff management and learning and development. The consequences are significant. The report identifies poor workforce data, inefficient manual processes, increased risks of payroll errors and ageing systems. At Health alone, around 30 full-time equivalent employees were required in 2020 to manage payroll. Across the State Service, the Auditor-General identifies approximately 100,000 hours of manual work annually associated with these outdated arrangements. So, doing nothing is not an option, and I acknowledge the point made by the department and the government that these are exceptionally complex transformations. As the member for Murchison said, these are not easy projects to deliver, and as the member for Murchison also pointed out, Tasmania is not alone in struggling with them. But complexity cannot become an excuse for poor governance. In fact, the greater the complexity and the greater the risk, the stronger governance needs to be.

The program has now moved to DPAC and has been retitled, or should I say intituled, The Human Resource Transformation Program. The Auditor-General acknowledges that there have been improvements: governance arrangements have improved, stakeholder engagement has improved and so has external reporting. DPAC has more clearly defined the intended outcomes, and has incorporated lessons from Health and other jurisdictions. This is positive and it should be acknowledged, but the Auditor-General was still unable, at the time of the audit, to provide assurance that the program would succeed in its current form. The report also identifies important funding issues. The member for Murchison clearly articulated those, so I won't repeat them, but we know that more funding will be required across the forward estimates than perhaps what is included at this point in time.

Now, I acknowledge that Health and DPAC have accepted the Auditor-General's recommendations. Health has committed to ensuring major digital initiatives have approved business cases before substantive delivery begins. It has committed to strengthening engagement with business process owners, establishing project gates, and assessing whether governance bodies have the capability and organisational reach required to make decisions. These are sensible responses, but accepting recommendations is the easy part. The real test is whether they change behaviour.

That brings me to another very significant digital transformation occurring with the Department of Health, the Bluegum Digital Health Transformation Program. The Auditor-General himself makes the connection. In the foreword of his report he says that while Bluegum was outside the scope of this particular audit, it is 'critical that Health addresses the recommendations of this report before progressing with more expansive digital solutions planned as part of its 10 year \$478 million Bluegum Health Transformation'. That is an extraordinarily important warning. We've just received an independent audit telling us that

Health spent \$47 million on one major digital transformation without delivering the intended modules before the program was transferred. Now Health is undertaking a digital health transformation program involving hundreds of millions of dollars. This is why I've been asking questions about Bluegum.

During budget Estimates, I raised concerns about the department's use of labour hire contracts and procurement arrangements. Last week in this place, I received some responses to my questions on notice that, frankly, raised further questions. The government's answer says that there have been 742 Bluegum-related contracts with a total awarded value of approximately \$61.28 million. Of those, 692 contracts were valued between \$50,000 and \$99,999 with a combined value of \$59.8 million. Another 50 were valued at below \$50,000 with a combined value of \$1.5 million. The department advised it did not identify a single individual labour hire contract exceeding \$100,000. Just consider that for a moment. There were 742 contracts - more than \$61 million awarded in contract value - and not one individual labour hire contract exceeding \$100,000.

The government has also clarified that labour hire expenditure from 1 July 2022 to date across Horizon 1 and 2 was \$50.6 million, rather than the \$36.5 million figure that was provided during Estimates. Of that \$50.6 million, the government says \$49.5 million was spent on contracts valued between \$50,000 and \$100,000. I find those figures extraordinary. The answer also shows in a table the concentration of those contracts. One individual firm was awarded 86 contracts worth almost \$7 million. Another received 58 contracts worth more than \$5.1 million. Another received 40 contracts worth more than \$3 million. This is firm after firm after firm receiving repeated contracts. A total of 22 entities received at least 10 contracts each. Only a small number received a single engagement.

I want to be fair about what the government has said in response. The government says these contracts were procured under the department's approved ICT labour hire procurement arrangements through a request for quotation process. It says more than 40 approved agencies were eligible to participate in relevant sourcing activities and that candidates were assessed according to skills, experience, capability, availability, and proposed rates. The government says this constituted competitive market testing, and it is satisfied value for money was achieved.

I acknowledge that explanation, but it does not, in my view, end this matter because when we are dealing with 742 contracts associated with one major transformation program, parliament is entitled to look beyond each contract individually and ask about this procurement model as a whole. At what point does the cumulative value matter? At what point does the repeated engagement of the same contractors matter? At what point should government stand back and ask, is this procurement strategy itself appropriate and acceptable, or should it be market tested? How does the government satisfy itself that repeatedly procuring individual resources through hundreds of separate engagements represents better value than alternative workforce or procurement models?

I want to be clear, these are not accusations against individual contractors, and they are certainly not criticisms of the people performing the work. I've heard directly from people working as contractors within the department who have decades of highly specialised ICT experience and who do make an important contribution. The issue is the system; it is the procurement model; it is the governance surrounding tens of millions of dollars of public expenditure, and it is the obligation of the government to demonstrate value for money.

The answer I received says contract values were determined according to the specific resource requirement, anticipated duration, operational need, and prevailing market rates. But when 692 contracts fall within the \$50,000-\$99,999 band, it is reasonable for parliament to ask for greater assurance about how these values were determined, particularly given the procurement thresholds applying at the time.

The government now does appear to recognise the need for change. The response says that:

Following engagement with Treasury, revised procurement arrangements have been implemented for ICT labour hire. Those arrangements now include procurement review committee oversight, structured quotation processes for procurements below \$250,000, and open tender processes for procurements of \$250,000 or more, consistent with the current Treasurer's instructions.

The government also says:

Treasury has endorsed the use of open tendering for ICT labour hire, whereas previous advice was that this was not available to the department.

I'm a bit confused about this point. If the previous model was entirely satisfactory, why is it necessary to change it? If hundreds of individual engagements provided sufficient assurance and value for money, why is procurement review committee oversight all of a sudden being brought into this? These are legitimate questions.

This is where the Auditor-General's HRIS report becomes directly relevant to Bluegum. There is danger in looking at major transformation projects through the prism of individual pieces of work. The HRIS report tells us that individual contractor deliverables were defined, individual tasks were being completed, progress was being reported and risks were being recorded, but the overall program still failed to deliver the intended modules before its transfer. That is the distinction we need to understand.

A major program can have hundreds of individual activities being completed while still failing at the program level. It can have consultants doing exactly what they have been contracted to do and still fail. It can comply with individual procurement processes and still leave unanswered questions about whether the overall procurement strategy represents value for money. This is why governance at the program level matters so much. With Bluegum, we should not have to wait another four years and spend another \$47 million or considerably more, before discovering whether governance arrangements were adequate. We have the warning now. The Auditor-General has given us that warning and the government should act on it now.

I welcome the advice in the government's response to my questions that the additional ministerial oversight is being established for Bluegum. The minister for Health has written to the Treasurer proposing monthly reporting on the program's progress and financial performance, with meetings involving the secretary of Health, the minister, the Treasurer, senior officials and project leaders. The government says this is intended to provide additional scrutiny of milestones, expenditure risks and governance, and I welcome that. But I would also say this; ministerial oversight must be more than receiving reports and meetings. The lesson from HRIS is that reports can be produced, risks can be identified, governance committees can

meet, but what matters is whether someone has the authority, the information and the willingness to act when those reports show something is wrong. What matters is someone being ultimately accountable.

I also wonder, would these things be being established had these concerns not been raised through the Auditor-General's report and followed up in Estimates? Maybe not, and that, too, is concerning. It shows how important scrutiny processes like Estimates are.

One of the questions I'm left with after reading the Auditor-General's report on HRIS is a very simple one, and it goes back to what I just said: who is accountable? When \$47 million is spent without the intended modules being delivered, where does accountability sit? Not merely responsibility for processing invoices or managing work streams or preparing risk registers, but who is accountable for the success or failure of these programs, as a whole? The original governance framework said the chief information officer was ultimately responsible for the program and accountable for the successful delivery, while the steering committee was responsible for policy and resourcing decisions essential to delivering the program. Yet, the independent review subsequently found the steering committee did not have the capability required to properly assess the material before it. That's a serious governance failure and it reinforces why accountability needs to be clear from the beginning of a major program, not reconstructed afterwards when something has gone wrong.

The report also makes an important finding about transparency. The Auditor-General found that Health did not establish an appropriate external communication strategy and did not provide sufficient briefings to ministers. As a consequence, parliament was not adequately informed about impediments to progress or the decision to expand the program to whole of government. That should concern every member of this parliament. Parliament cannot scrutinise what it does not know. When programs involve tens or hundreds of millions of dollars, information about costs, risk, progress and changes in scope should not have to be dragged out through Estimates, questions on notice, RTIs or Auditor-General's reports years later. There's damage done then; there should be proactive transparency.

This is another lesson I want applied to Bluegum and I hope the government will apply it. I want this parliament and the Tasmanian people to know what the Bluegum program is costing. I want to know whether it's meeting its milestones. I want to know if the scope changes, when significant risks emerge and how much is being spent on consultants and labour hire. Importantly, I want to know how government is testing whether expenditure represents value for money. This is not micromanagement; this is accountability for public money.

There is much in this report that should concern us, but there is also an opportunity, and that opportunity is to learn. The government needs modern HR systems. The Department of Health needs modern digital health systems. Nobody disputes that. Digital transformation does have the potential to make our public services safer, more efficient and more responsive, but spending more money does not guarantee transformation, employing more consultants doesn't guarantee transformation, and creating another steering committee doesn't either.

Successful transformation requires clear objectives, an approved and current business case, capable governance, genuine ownership by the business, active management of dependencies, effective project gates, transparent reporting and clear accountability - and sometimes it requires having the courage to stop.

The Auditor-General's message extends well beyond HRIS. He says state entities should either demonstrate they have the capability to effectively manage major digital programs or transfer program management to those who do. And he warns that government must learn from past mistakes or risk repeating them. That warning could hardly be more relevant as the Department of Health embarks upon a \$478 million digital transformation of our health system.

I want Bluegum to succeed. I want clinicians to have contemporary, reliable and integrated systems, and for patients to benefit from better information and safer care. But wanting a project to succeed is not enough. We need to make sure the governance and procurement arrangements give it the best possible chance of doing so. The answers I received last week about Bluegum, about the 742 contracts and more than \$61 million awarded in contract value, do warrant further scrutiny and I intend to continue that scrutiny, not because I oppose digital transformation projects or question the contribution of the skilled people working on those projects, but because the community we represent expects us to ask these questions, and the Auditor-General's report demonstrates why it is so important that we do. If the government fails to apply the lessons from \$47 million being spent without the intended HRIS modules being delivered and allows the same governance weaknesses to be repeated in projects many times larger, it cannot later say it was not warned.

I note the report and once again thank the Auditor-General for his work.

[12.52 p.m.]

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT (Huon) - Mr President, a short contribution from me. I support the motion by the member for Murchison and I note the Auditor-General report No 10 on the Human Resource Information System program of 2025-26.

Well, the report makes for sobering reading. It highlights a project that began with good intentions, yet, despite around \$47 million being spent over four years, none of the intended human resource and payroll systems were delivered. Costs are now forecast to approach \$120 million. What concerns me is not just the cost escalation, but the findings that planning, governance and decision-making were not effective or economical. The Auditor-General found that key risks and design issues were identified repeatedly but left unresolved; that business cases were not updated as the scope changed; and that ministers and parliament were not adequately informed of the program challenges. While it is encouraging that DPAC has strengthened governance and stakeholder engagement, it seems the program remains at risk. I thank the member for Murchison for bringing this to our attention and giving a great summary and explanation. I will be supporting the motion.

[12.55 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I acknowledge the honourable member for Murchison in moving the Auditor-General's report be noted. I also acknowledge contributions by other honourable members. I know it has been of interest to all honourable members.

Continuing to rely on ageing and disconnected systems creates increasing operational workforce and compliance risks. Current systems do not provide a consistent view of the workforce and often rely on manual processes, duplication and workarounds. Existing systems do not effectively integrate people, pay and rostering functions, limiting visibility and reducing efficiency. Modernising workforce management is an essential to provide accurate workforce

information, strengthen workforce planning and support better service delivery across government.

An independent audit of the programs was conducted by the Tasmanian Audit Office and, as we know, delivered in May 2026. Government notes the findings and recommendations and acknowledges the progress already made by the program. Both the Department of Health and the Department of Premier and Cabinet have accepted the recommendations and are considering opportunities to further strengthen governance, delivery and implementation planning, and they've been raised a number of times through the various contributions.

The government committed to continuous improvement as it progresses delivery of a modern whole-of-government workforce management solution. The HR transformation program is a whole-of-government initiative to modernise workforce management across the Tasmanian State Service. For more than 15 years, independent reviews have identified the need to replace ageing and disconnected HR, payroll and rostering systems. Many of these systems are at or beyond end of life, rely on manual processes and create operational compliance and workforce management risks. The program will deliver critical public sector infrastructure, replacing more than 40 legacy systems and related off-system processes with a modern integrated workforce management solution. At its core, this is about getting the fundamentals right, ensuring our people are paid correctly and rostered safely.

Programs of this nature are complex and high risk and that is why the program has been designed with strong governance, stakeholder engagement and a phased delivery approach to support successful implementation. The program has delivered its first operational capability to government, with establishment and position management now implemented in the Department of Premier and Cabinet. This provides improved visibility of workforce positions and supports more efficient workforce planning and management.

Building on this successful implementation, the program is extending establishment management to the Department of Health. The program is delivering PeopleCentral, a single workforce management system that will support the Tasmanian government workforce from end to end. It will deliver modern capabilities across recruitment, payroll, rostering, workforce management, workplace health and safety, and HR case management. The program will improve workforce visibility, reduce -

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

QUESTIONS

Autopsy Practices in Tasmania - Compliance

Ms WEBB question to LEADER for the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Ms RATTRAY

Noting the September 2025 Tasmanian coronial findings report in relation to human remains retained following coronial autopsies between 1966 and 1991 at the RA Rodda Pathology Museum, which cited the 2001 Walker review of retention of body parts following post-mortem examination in New South Wales, the subsequent Australian Health Ethics Committee report, *Organs retained at autopsy: ethical and practical issues*, and the 2002

Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council Subcommittee on Autopsy Practice report, can the government please:

- (1) Confirm whether current Tasmanian autopsy practices comply with national guidelines, principles, procedures and codes of practice, particularly regarding informed consent and procedures for handling and disposal of organs after autopsy, in line with community expectations regarding the practice of organ retention;
- (2) Detail when and how Tasmanian autopsy practices may have been updated following the 2001 Walker and 2002 National Health Ministers reports to provide for strengthened regulatory requirements and oversight;
- (3) Detail any current oversight and auditing processes undertaken of Tasmanian autopsy practices to ensure compliance with established requirements.

ANSWER

In response to the honourable member's question:

- (1) I'm advised that current Tasmanian autopsy practices do comply with national guidelines, principles, procedures and codes of practice. If an autopsy requires tissue to be retained, the *Coroners Act 1995* applies. Section 36 autopsies:
 - (1) If a coroner reasonably believes that it is necessary for the investigation of a death, [they] may direct the State Forensic Pathologist or an approved pathologist, or a medical practitioner under the direct supervision of the State Forensic Pathologist or an approved pathologist, to perform an autopsy on the body.
 - (2) The coroner must direct the State Forensic Pathologist or an approved pathologist, or a medical practitioner under the direct supervision of the State Forensic Pathologist or an approved pathologist, to perform an autopsy on the body if directed by the Chief Magistrate to do so.
 - (3) A coroner may direct the State Forensic Pathologist or a pathologist or medical practitioner performing an autopsy to cause to be preserved for such period as the coroner directs any material which appears to the State Forensic Pathologist or the pathologist or medical practitioner to relate to the cause of death or the circumstances surrounding the death.
 - (4) The State Forensic Pathologist or a pathologist or a medical practitioner performing an autopsy may remove and retain such parts of the body as [they consider] necessary in order to determine the cause of the death or the circumstances surrounding the death.

The Coroners Rules 2006 apply to autopsy performance.

Rule 8. Performing Autopsy.

If a coroner under section 36 of the Act directs the State Forensic Pathologist, an approved pathologist or a medical practitioner to perform an autopsy -

- (a) the State Forensic Pathologist, approved pathologist or medical practitioner is to perform the autopsy as soon as practicable after receiving the direction; and
- (b) as soon as practicable after completing the autopsy, the State Forensic Pathologist, approved pathologist or medical practitioner is to notify the coroner -
 - (i) of any preliminary findings as to the cause of death; or
 - (ii) that the cause of death is still under investigation; or
 - (iii) whether any of the deceased person's organs have been retained and, if so, the reason for their retention; and
- (c) within 28 days of completing the autopsy or such longer period as the coroner may allow, the State Forensic Pathologist, approved pathologist or medical practitioner is to notify the coroner of the autopsy findings; and
- (d) the State Forensic Pathologist, approved pathologist or medical practitioner is not to notify any other person of the autopsy findings without the prior approval of the coroner.

The State Forensic Medical Services currently provides an interim post-mortem report (IPMR) to the CO, which gives the preliminary cause of death pending test results, notice of intention with reasons that it is necessary to retain tissue. Coroners' associates communicate with senior next of kin (SNOK) and provide an update on the autopsy, what is happening and why. Coroners' associates discuss with SNOK to obtain decisions for the consent for permanent retention for investigation, research or other purposes, release of the body with permanent tissue retention, clinical disposal of retained tissue, release of body without postponing funeral, and subsequent return of tissue previously retained for separate funeral disposal, and return of the tissue to the body before release for funeral postponed until after completing the autopsy investigations and ancillary testing.

When samples for testing and tissue processing are completed, the coroner issues a certificate for funeral disposal based on the decisions of the SNOK and their controlled jurisdiction over the retained tissue ends. The mortuary can clinically dispose of the retained tissue, release the body with the returned tissue, release the body without retained tissue, and release the return tissue separately. Release of tissue previously retained by the coroner directly to an academic or other institution

requires written consent of the SNOK for transfer and permanent retention for investigation, research or other purposes.

- (2) At response, the recommendations from the reports of 2001 and 2002 arose from investigations of practices in New South Wales at the Glebe forensic mortuary in Sydney. Recommendations were accepted in New South Wales and were implemented by the then-director of Statewide Forensic Medical Services in Tasmania. Current procedures are supported by controlled documentation for interim post-mortem reports and retention procedures. These documents are on the Tasmanian Health Service pathology Q-Pulse controlled laboratory procedure document management system. Current practices have built upon the improvements of the previous 20 years and have adopted writing practices which are based upon those in the Coroners Court, Queensland, provided for in the *Queensland Coroners Act 2003*.
- (3) In mid-2025, Statewide Forensic Medical Services and anatomical pathology services at the Royal Hobart Hospital commenced the process for the shared mortuary space located at the Royal Hobart Hospital to undergo National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) accreditation. The mortuary having NATA accreditation will support the site obtaining Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA) accredited training for registrars for both coronial and non-coronial autopsies. The NATA accreditation process is ongoing, with further inspection due in September 2026. In 2025, the Attorney-General referred the *Coroners Act 1995* to the Tasmania Law Reform Institute for review to report on how the legislation governing coronial processes can be improved, including how it operates with SNOK.

Bell Bay Aluminium - Hydro Tasmania - Energy Cost Gap

Mr EDMUNDS question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr DUIGAN

[2.40 p.m.]

Minister, when was the figure of \$60 million first established as the gap between Bell Bay Aluminium and Hydro Tasmania, and what information was that figure based on?

ANSWER

I'll just seek some advice. I thank the member for the question and appreciate the ongoing interest in the negotiations between Hydro Tasmania, the state government, Commonwealth government, Rio Tinto and Bell Bay Aluminium in terms of the work that continues to happen regarding securing a long-term future for Bell Bay Aluminium, which is an outcome that the government, I believe, has demonstrated its willingness to pursue.

I was interested to hear comments from the federal minister for Industry this morning, Tim Ayres, on ABC Radio and note that a number of conversations are happening concurrently between state and federal ministers regarding this issue and, of course, with the company.

It's important, as I say and have continued to say, that Rio Tinto demonstrate its commitment to Bell Bay Aluminium, as it has done with its smelters in New South Wales and Queensland.

In terms of the negotiation and the \$60 million number, that's a number based on what we know and understand as the negotiating positions of Rio Tinto and Hydro Tasmania. That is, as I am advised, the quantum of the gap per annum. As, I believe, most members would recognise, that is a very large gap and not, I don't believe, in the realms or the interests of the Tasmanian people, the owners of Hydro Tasmania, to be paying a loan.

Answer to Question - Edgar Dam Strengthening Project

Answer to Question - Scotts Peak Dam Works - Progress and Cost

[2.42 p.m.]

Mr DUIGAN (Windermere - Minister for Energy and Renewables) - While I'm on my feet, Mr President, with your indulgence, I have some information for the member for Hobart regarding questions of Edgar Dam and Scotts Peak Dam. I'd like to answer several questions I took on notice last week from the member regarding Hydro Tasmania's Edgar Dam upgrades.

With regard to *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC) breaches, I would firstly note that EPBC compliance is a matter for the Commonwealth Government. However, it is my expectation that all proponents, including Hydro Tasmania, comply with the requirements and conditions set out under the EPBC approvals for their projects.

The Edgar Dam upgrade project was referred to the Commonwealth government, which determined that the project was not a controlled action under the EPBC Act, provided it was undertaken in accordance with the particular manner set out in the referral documentation.

I am advised that the matters identified related to several minor technical breaches of the approved conditions concerning vehicle movements outside permitted hours early in the project. These incidents were assessed by Hydro Tasmania and did not result in impacts to matters of national environmental significance. Hydro Tasmania took these breaches seriously and they were rectified with stricter practices subsequently put in place. No further breaches occurred.

In terms of the cost of the five-year rehabilitation and environmental monitoring, and if they are included in the final budget: with regard to the member's question about costs, I can confirm that the \$35.5 million approved budget includes the cost of delivering the campground, boat ramp and toilet upgrade. A concept design has been prepared, and these works are expected to commence once demobilisation of the main contractor is complete, which is on track for the end of this month. The campground is currently anticipated to be completed in late 2026 or early 2027. I can also confirm that the \$35.5 million budget includes the required environmental rehabilitation and monitoring activities. Hydro Tasmania advises me that the statutory requirement is for two years of environmental monitoring post completion. The post-construction two-year monitoring period will formally commence once the use of machinery at the site ceases, which is expected in late 2026 or early 2027 following the completion of campground reinstatement works.

The third question was about the works for the Scotts Peak Dam upgrade. With regard to the member's question regarding Scotts Peak Dam upgrade work, I can confirm that detailed planning is currently underway to finalise the project design. Early planning has been underway since November 2025, with the final design and approval documentation expected to be completed by 2029. Once a solution has been identified, a cost estimate will be developed to inform the capital investment required. This is expected to be ready in the 2028-29 financial year. Hydro Tasmania advises the current timeframe for the project completion remains within the five-to-10-year timeframe from the commencement of the design contract in 2025.

Tamar Valley Power Station - Exports

Ms FORREST question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr DUIGAN

[2.46 p.m.]

Thanks, Mr President. Last week I asked you about why it had been necessary to run gas from the Tamar Valley Power Station and you informed me that it was due to a planned scheduled maintenance outage of a machine at Poatina. I also asked whether it's just being run to meet Tasmanian demand or the gas is also being run to sell as an export. You said you would take it on notice. You answered some questions already from the member for Hobart, which you took on notice. I hope you can answer these.

ANSWER

My memory of that answer was the fact that with Poatina being down, we needed enough generation to meet Tasmanian demand, so with Poatina down, Tamar Valley runs. To meet the total demand on-island in Tasmania, we have to have enough generation to meet that demand. We need to run Tamar Valley.

Tamar Valley Power Station - Exports

Ms FORREST question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr DUIGAN

[2.48 p.m.]

I acknowledge that. The question was, has the Tamar Valley Power Station been run when it's not required or there is excess generation from the Tamar Valley Power Station that's used for export? Or is it just to meet Tasmanian demand and there is no energy exported when it's being topped up by the Tamar Valley Power Station? As a green renewable energy state, I think we need to be clear about what's being exported.

ANSWER

Thank you. I appreciate the question. At the Tamar Valley Power Station, the large generator is a combined-cycle generator which doesn't scale up and down quickly. It takes a number of days to do that. Once it is up and going, it tends to stay up and going, and it would be delivering its nominal sticker-plate output for the period of time that it is run.

Tamar Valley Power Station - Exports

Ms FORREST question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr DUIGAN

[2.49 p.m.]

My question then to the minister is, have there been exports into notionally higher priced markets, but not necessarily - one would think we're only exporting to higher priced markets - when the Tamar Valley Power Station has been generating in excess of Tasmania's needs?

ANSWER

I will seek some advice, Mr President.

Thanks, Mr President. I will just reiterate what I read out last week. Again, on Tamar Valley, the combined-cycle machine, which takes time - and because the turbine has a minimum operating load and cannot be frequently started and stopped, it continues generating, even when demand is lower. As a result, while the unit is running to support Tasmania's requirements, it can also contribute energy exports from the broader system during periods when local demand is not at its peak. So, I think it's fair to say that if the Tamar Valley is running and we are exporting, then you could find electrons in that stream that have been generated by the Tamar Valley Power Station.

Bird Flu - Tasmanian Sand Enduro Timing

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for PARKS and HERITAGE and MINISTER for SPORT, Mr DUIGAN

[2.51 p.m.]

Minister, as you know, the avian influenza virus H5N1 has arrived in Tasmania and you are no doubt aware that shorebirds are at particular risk. What we've seen in the Northern Hemisphere over the past two years is that tern populations can be hit particularly hard by this virus. The 54th Tasmanian Sand Enduro race takes place from 31 October to 1 November this year at Peron Dunes in the St Helens Point Conservation Area. This is peak breeding time for the hooded plovers and for fairy terns, which are not only threatened but they're also put at risk by the avian influenza virus.

Can you confirm that Parks and Wildlife is negotiating with event organisers to change the date of the 54th Tasmanian Sand Enduro race to a day that does not have such a potentially significant impact on the breeding of birds which are placed at risk by the avian influenza virus?

ANSWER

Mr President, I'm certainly aware that Parks would be talking to the organisers of that event, as happens most years, I think. It always raises some questions. As to whether there is a specific conversation about changing the date, I would need to take on notice and get back to you.

Ms O'Connor - My understanding is that in the briefing today that was provided to members of parliament with an update from government and agencies on the response to avian

influenza virus, the briefing was informed that Parks was having those discussions with the event organisers about a change of date, so you might update the House when we get back in there, but I'm very happy to have updated you. Thank you.

Bell Bay Aluminium - Cost Gap Negotiations

Mr EDMUNDS question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr DUIGAN

[2.53 p.m.]

To be clear about your previous answer, does the \$60 million figure reflect the current negotiating position of both parties, and where is that figure from?

ANSWER

Yes, as I say, that figure is from the price that Rio Tinto says it needs to make Bell Bay Aluminium a viable business going forward and the position at which Hydro Tasmania says it can meet the obligations of its charter but also to offer a price that is not uncommercial and that it can offer responsibly. That is the current position, as I am advised.

Answer to Question - *Youth Justice Act* Review - Victims of Crime Consultation

[2.54 p.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears - Minister for Children and Youth) - Mr President, on indulgence, I wish to provide answers to questions from the honourable member for Elwick. These were questions that were asked on 12 August regarding engagement and consultation with victim/survivors of youth offending and crime in relation to the *Youth Justice Act* review.

The Tasmanian government remains committed to genuine and meaningful consultation to inform the *Youth Justice Act* review, including engagement with victim/survivors of youth crime. Importantly, consultation with victim/survivors is already underway to ensure their perspectives are appropriately considered and reflected in the discussion paper before broader public consultation commences, which is scheduled to occur by the end of this year. I'm advised the Department for Education, Children and Young People has engaged a specialist third-party organisation, to support the development and delivery of a trauma-informed consultation process with victim/survivors of youth crime.

To help ensure the *Youth Justice Act* review discussion paper is comprehensive and well informed, I'm advised that in February 2026 the department met with the Safer Hobart Alliance. Members of this alliance, which represents businesses across Hobart, were provided with an overview of the review, and were invited to discuss the unique experiences and needs of businesses affected by offending by children and young people.

I'm further advised that the department has been working closely with the victims of crime support service within the Department of Justice, and also the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management, to establish contact with those who support victim/survivors of youth offending.

To support appropriate engagement with victim/survivors of youth crime, I'm advised an expression of interest with accompanying information material has been developed to ensure participants are fully informed about the scope and the purpose of the *Youth Justice Act* review. Further consultation with victims of crime will occur alongside the public release of the discussion paper, ensuring victim/survivors have the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed scope of reforms, through a process that is respectful, informed and trauma aware.

This government is committed to a public consultation process on the *Youth Justice Act* review that is sensitive to individuals, families and businesses who have been impacted by youth offending. As Minister for Children and Youth, it is my expectation that their voices continue to be heard through the *Youth Justice Act* review public consultation scheduled to occur later this year.

Answer to Question - Edgar Dam Strengthening Project

[2.57 p.m.]

Mr DUIGAN (Windermere - Minister for Energy and Renewables) - News just to hand, in regard to information I provided to the member for Hobart regarding Edgar Dam rehabilitation works, where I said I can confirm that the \$35.5 million includes the cost of delivering the campground, boat ramp and toilet upgrades; it includes the campground, but not the boat ramp and toilet upgrades. I apologise for the misinformation and I seek to clarify.

MOTION

Report of the Auditor-General No. 10 of 2025-26, Planning and Early Implementation of the Human Resource Information System - Consideration and Noting

Resumed from above (page 29).

[2.58 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, before the lunchbreak I was responding to the honourable member for Murchison and other members who had spoken to the motion and information sharing with all honourable members. I was talking about the program, and I thought I'd just take members back to that.

The program is PeopleCentral and it's a single workforce management system that will support the Tasmanian government workforce from end to end. The program will improve workforce visibility, reduce administrative effort, strengthen compliance and support better decision-making across government. The program is expected to deliver significant productivity benefits across government, including up to 170,000 work hours saved annually through automated payroll processing, around 21,000 work hours saved annually through reduced duplication, up to 26,000 work hours saved annually through improved payroll accuracy and up to 60,000 work hours saved annually through automated reporting. Together, these efficiencies will return hundreds of thousands of hours to the public sector that can be redirected to supporting services for Tasmanians.

The recommendations were accepted and have been actioned. In the audit report, the Auditor-General noted the ongoing work to address critical decisions. Since the audit report

was tabled, several of these have been solved, including the management of multiple assignments. As the honourable member for Murchison stated and was also touched on by the honourable member for Elwick, these programs are complex and the work to solve these challenges continues.

Since January of 2026, H RTP provides monthly reports to the Infrastructure Subcommittee of Cabinet to enable monitoring of key milestones and progress. I would also like to note I have received a commitment to provide a response to the honourable member for Murchison's question on notice No. 59 in the first sitting week of September. I will give that undertaking. The government notes the Auditor-General's report.

[3.01 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - I will just make a few brief comments in response to the debate. I thank members who have made a contribution. These are serious matters and they do warrant debate and consideration in this House. No-one is questioning that these issues are complex and challenging. I made that really clear in my contribution, but at its core this is about getting the fundamentals right and making sure that the issues that were unresolved or continue to be unresolved are resolved before you proceed too much further and then potentially have a system that doesn't work.

I know the Leader said more recently that the multiple assignments matter has been resolved. I'm not sure that is the same as concurrent employment, but we're using several different terms here or different terms, and if it's not the same as concurrent employment, then it's not fixed. I was using the language in the Auditor-General's report and 'multiple assignments' is not a word or a term that is reflected there. I'm just making the point that if it's not the same thing, maybe it hasn't been resolved at all.

Clearly, this is and these sorts of projects are complex and high-risk projects, but that's all the more reason to get the governance right, to make sure you have an approved business case and really clear directions; that you do address fundamental underlying problems before you proceed too far, or anywhere for that matter, to ensure that you're not just making this whole situation worse. I did note the Leader's comments that there will be hundreds of thousands of hours returned to the system. I assume those hundred of thousands of hours haven't been paid for because no one worked them.

We do need to be really clear about who's rostered, what they're paid, and whether they are paid correctly. These things are fundamentally important, as the Queenslanders have found out when they had a massive issue with theirs. I do acknowledge the response from the government. I think telling us all that it's complex and hard is not an adequate response, with all due respect to the Leader, because you have to fix the fundamentals. There's a much bigger issue at play here, as we talked about with the procurement management and the breach of Treasurer's Instruction. That's a matter that I will be taking forward and sure other members will as we move forward in these areas because it's not good enough.

This is taxpayers' money and we need to be sure there are proper processes and everyone gets a fair crack at it, particularly Tasmanian businesses. I'm not sure that anyone in this state could have confidence of that at this point in time. But I do thank members for their contribution and note the report.

Report considered and noted.

MOTION

Joint Sessional Committee on Gender and Gender Equality - Terms of Reference

[3.05 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I move -

That the terms of reference for the Joint Sessional Committee on Gender and Equality, as previously agreed to by resolutions of both Houses, be varied as follows:

- (1) In the introductory paragraph, *inserting* ', Gender-based Violence' after 'Sessional Gender'; and
- (2) By *leaving out* paragraph (1) and *inserting instead*:
 - '(1) (a) Any Bill referred to it by either House in order to examine gender, gender-based violence and equality impacts and any such Bill so referred shall be reported upon within 10 sitting days of its referral;
 - (b) Any matter related to gender, gender-based violence and equality referred to it by either House; and
 - (c) Any matter related to gender, gender-based violence and equality, initiated by its own motion; and'

This will be a relatively short and straightforward contribution. By way of explanation, the Gender Equality Committee is a sessional committee that has been re-established each session of parliament since it was first established. I'm really grateful that it has been re-established. It's a really important committee that has done some important work in the past. Currently, we don't have a reference before the committee, but we're also aware that after the last election there was a joint committee proposed from the other place in relation to family and sexual violence, and that sat on our Notice Paper since it arrived here in September 2025. The reason that it sat there is because we've been unable to fill committee positions because there are few of us in this House, nine in total, who can sit on these types of committees and there are a lot of other members in the other place who have more time and capacity to do so.

When this came forward, I know it was part of the agreement with the government and staying in power and all of that. When I consider the issue of family domestic and sexual violence, in my mind, it fits neatly under the Gender and Equality Committee in any event. I personally didn't think we actually needed to alter the terms of reference to capture it, but I understand there's a strong preference from community service organisations and other organisations that work in this space to see it named up. In the absence of progressing another joint standing committee that needs to have secretariat support, that needs to have membership and all that goes with that, to me it makes sense that the easiest way to address this and make it really clear this committee has the capacity to look at matters relating to family and sexual violence, is that we name it up in the title of the Gender and Equality Committee.

That's what the purpose of this is: I say simply do that, but it's not a simple thing we're talking about. We all know the terrible scourge that family and sexual violence is in the whole of the country, not just here. In my time here, I don't believe there has ever been a dedicated inquiry into that. There was nothing sent from any member writing to the Gender and Equality Committee asking them to consider a reference, but that hasn't happened to date but perhaps making it really clear that this is within the remit of the Gender and Equality Committee with a rename to include family and sexual violence, which to me and most people would agree is a gender-related matter predominantly, that it's appropriate.

It doesn't diminish the role of that committee; it doesn't remove, in my view, the desire from the members in the other place who put forward this joint committee in the other place. This is probably the most effective way to ensure that this matter, family domestic and sexual violence, is subject to the scrutiny of the committee because there are so many problems in this space. Now, we have the minister responsible for the prevention of family and sexual violence in our House, which is really great, even though it's a pretty big load to carry. We also know there are so many challenges in this space in the approaches that are taken and there are calls federally for royal commissions into this area. I'm six of one, half a dozen on that.

We know what some of the problems are; we have to have the funding and the resources to deal with it. Every time we see another report in the newspaper of some sort of family or sexual violence - I'm not going to cast any aspersions on this because it's obviously a matter for the police at the moment, but we've just seen yesterday an AFL football team being embroiled in allegations of sexual abuse in Melbourne overnight when they were staying there after a game. It really is a massive challenge. If any one of you has read *The Boys' Club*, you'll know that it talks about this horrific culture that has pervaded the AFL. We mustn't look away from this and the AFL mustn't look away from that either. If you haven't read the book, read it because it's - Michael Warner wrote it, a sports journalist for *The Australian*.

From my perspective, this is a relatively simple, straightforward request to include family and gender-based sexual violence in the Gender and Equality Committee's remit. It'll be up to that committee, should that happen, whether that receives a reference from the parliament or from a member or the committee itself, to resolve to undertake an inquiry into this area. I urge members to support it. I believe it makes sense and solves one problem by using a mechanism we already have.

[3.11 p.m.]

Ms LOVELL (Rumney) - I rise to put a couple of comments on record in relation to this motion. I'll say from the outset that I'll be supporting it, although I do want to put on record that it's not my preferred option. I don't think this is the best way to deal with this issue. As I understand it, there was a motion in the House of Assembly to establish a standalone sessional committee, I assume it was to look into family and sexual-based violence. Labor supported that. There were a number of conversations between our shadow minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, Meg Brown, and, as I understand it, the Greens' spokesperson for prevention, Tabatha Badger. I don't believe it was part of a deal with government to hold onto power at all.

Ms O'Connor - It wasn't.

Ms Forrest - I was told it was. I take that back if that's incorrect.

Ms O'Connor - There was no deal. Just to be clear, again.

Ms LOVELL - It was a committee that was collaboratively worked on between those two people and others, as I understand, in the parliament too, particularly some of the crossbench members. I'm not sure why it wasn't progressed. I know to start with there were some issues with filling the Legislative Council positions on that committee, but I also know that there had been some ongoing discussions, and as I understood it, we had reached a point where we did have enough members who were willing to be part of that committee. I was one of those people who had said initially that I wasn't able to participate for lots of reasons. I won't go into those now. But I agreed to take part if that was what was needed for the committee to proceed. I'm not sure why it didn't progress from there.

I don't 100 per cent agree that the best fit for this topic is for it to sit with the Gender and Equality Committee. I believe it warranted its own sessional committee on a standalone basis, but in the absence of that committee progressing - and I know that our shadow minister, Meg Brown, has had conversations with those stakeholder groups who were particularly advocating for a committee, and they have indicated that they are comfortable with this as an alternative option.

In light of that, I'll be supporting this amendment to the terms of reference for the Sessional Committee on Gender and Equality. But I do agree with the member for Murchison that this is clearly - and I would not expect anyone in this place to have any different view on this at all - a priority issue for this parliament. It should be a priority issue for every parliament. Every government around the country needs to have some mechanism in the parliament by which we can monitor the impact of legislation, the impact of policy decisions, all of those things. Because we all know, in this place, that this is still a deep concern for all Australians, and should be, I will support this committee because we do need to continue that level of attention.

[3.14 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Hobart) - Thank you, Mr President. I rise to support this motion, which is a merging of the Gender Committee and a motion which had come up from the House of Assembly, as we have discussed so far in this debate. But that motion, to be really clear, sat on our order of business for the best part of 11 months. I remember having numerous conversations with my colleagues in this place, trying to find people who would gladly put their hand up for that committee work. I found it embarrassing, to be honest, when questions were being asked about why we hadn't progressed the committee that had been proposed and passed by the House of Assembly. This is a path through, here. I don't believe it's anybody's preferred option, but it will mean that the Gender and Equality Committee will no longer be the Gender and Equality Committee. It will specifically capture domestic and family violence and sexual violence in its title as well as in its terms of reference.

I, too, understand from my colleague, the member for Lyons Tabatha Badger, that stakeholders are comfortable with this approach that is being taken. I acknowledge the work of those incredible organisations in this space. There are a number of them in Tasmania - Engender Equality, Laurel House, the Sexual Assault Support Service - that are picking up the pieces of what is an epidemic. It's got a term now: it's femicide. Nearly every week in this country a woman - and it is usually a woman - is killed at the hands of someone she knows, and it is usually, statistically, a man. So far this year, 45 women have been killed through acts of gender-based violence. Last year, in 2025, it was 79. The year before that, in 2024, 106 women were killed by men. Of the 45 women who have been killed this year, all but three

were killed by men. Around 65 per cent of the victims were killed as a result of what we term domestic violence.

There are any number of references that the newly established, more comprehensive committee, in terms of gender and gender-based violence issues, can examine. I refer honourable colleagues, for example, to the police family violence order issues and how this is impacting on victims of stalking and domestic and family violence. According to reporting in the ABC in March of this year, one quarter of Tasmania Police family violence orders were issued against women, and there is a concern that victims are being misidentified. The story goes on to detail the fact that Tasmania Police issued 2600 on-the-spot family violence orders in 2025, a quarter of which were against women. Advocates say these unique police powers are increasing the risk of misidentification of perpetrators. Another way of looking at that is that it is possible these police family violence orders are being weaponised by perpetrators.

The reporting in March indicates the Department of Justice has proposed amendments to allow police to revoke orders that involved misidentified aggressors. I know that that is in train.

There's an increase in the number of women who are being issued with police family violence orders, up from 686 women in 2023 to 710 women in 2025. It's an epidemic. It has been the subject of ongoing national debate. We've had an Australian of the Year in Rosie Batty, and for that whole year, and around that year, there was a very significant amount of Tasmanian and national debate on violence towards women and children. Only seven or eight years ago we recognised it as an epidemic and challenge that required all governments to invest in prevention, and programs for women and children who are fleeing violence. Here we still are: in the two weeks earlier this year in May-June, two women killed by violent men in Tasmania.

I go just to the evidence of the Women's Legal Service in Tasmania, and Yvette Cehtel, who has told ABC Radio following those alleged murders in May of this year. She said:

I was really horrified to find that there's been two deaths in Tasmania since Friday. And one in three women in our communities are experiencing family violence in their homes. Half of all the assaults in Tasmania are family violence related and police are receiving over 30 family violence related calls a day in Tasmania.

That is a huge number of phone calls. Highly dangerous situations, traumatic for any children who are caught up in that mess.

Ms Forrest - Intergenerationally harmful.

Ms O'CONNOR - I understand that very well. Yvette says that's the tip of the iceberg. That's the 30 family violence related calls a day because they're the alleged victims who make the call, or can make the call, or have found that place in themselves to make the call. She said that:

a lot of women don't call the police but they do reach out to support services like ours for assistance. And we are just swamped and we can't meet the demand. When I say we, I'm not just talking about the Women's Legal Service, I'm talking about services like Engender Equality who offer

counselling and eight in ten women are being turned away from shelters in Tasmania too. So we do have a problem. We've got a national crisis and we're experiencing it here in Tasmania too.

She goes on to say:

We've had Royal Commissions in Victoria and South Australia. We've had the Domestic Sex and Family Violence Commissioner calling for these inquiries and recommendations to actually be implemented. So what we've also got is a crisis in response in that we need some leadership, we need some action and we need it now because we just can't wait any longer.

Now, regrettably, Mr President, subsequent to that statement, and I'm sure it's not related, because the government was just cutting services left, right and centre in order to fund its multi-billion-dollar stadium at Macquarie Point; but the Women's Legal Service will face a cut in funding of around \$600,000 over the next few years. The Women's Legal Service, and that's on top of the \$2 million in cuts to Legal Aid over the next four years. That's on top of the fact that the Refugee Legal Service, which assists migrant women, women who are here on visas escaping from domestic violence, the Refugee Legal Service lives on donations.

I do hope that the newly formed Joint Sessional Committee on Gender, Gender-Based Violence and Equality is able to take up a reference or through an own motion, which these amendments provide the opportunity to do, and have that conversation as soon as possible with victim/survivors and with those incredible organisations who are doing that work at a community level, and whose workers are also experiencing vicarious trauma because they can't do everything that they want to do to help these broken families, these broken women and children.

There's a body of work here to be done by this newly formed committee. I'm glad we're getting on with it. I'm very glad that the motion that sat on the books for 11 months unattended to has been resolved. I look forward to hearing about the newly reformed committee's body of work on the prevention of domestic and family violence and sexual violence. I support the motion.

[3.25 p.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - I rise to support this motion briefly. I thank other members for their contributions, particularly with some detail there. I won't add too much detail other than to support those things already stated. I think I'm similarly placed to the member for Rumney in that this isn't my preferred option going forward either. I would have wanted to see the previously planned committee go forward, so I recognise that this is an acceptable plan B.

It's not jarringly unaligned with the committee that it's being inserted into and forming a new remit for. However, it's incredibly disappointing the previous committee that was specifically focused on this area did not get formed in this place. That's the reality of it in this place and it makes me feel quite disturbed actually that's the case.

Having said that, I fully recognise that this is a small Chamber of 15 members, numerous of whom can't do committee work readily because they're either in positions like yourself, or they're in executive government positions holding portfolios. That takes capacity away from this place to undertake its committee work, which is limiting.

The other thing though I can't help but reflect on is the fact that so often when this topic is being discussed in the community, in this place, by service providers, it's women talking to women almost every time, almost every time. As much as I admire the work that's done with the current minister for the Prevention of Family Violence who we have in this Chamber and again, taking that mantle on after previously holding it at other times, and she does an excellent job in the role previously and I have every confidence will continue to do that now. It's no comment on her in the role, but the minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, to my understanding, has always been a woman in this parliament. Why is that? Maybe we need to rename it the minister for the prevention of men's violence, with the expectation that would always be a man who undertakes that portfolio because this is really problematic, as others have mentioned. We have women dying, we have Tasmanian women dying this year as a result, it would appear, of men's violence. We have women being assaulted every day in this state, women we know, women we're related to as a result of men's violence towards women.

When it's just women talking to women about how to solve this, or how we better understand this, or how we better address this, that's clearly not getting us anywhere fast, much as we are all making best efforts in those areas. It's no comment on the women who are trying their utmost as service providers, as members of the community, as family members, as members of this place, trying their utmost for genuine progress here.

We are not making genuine progress, and I can't help but feel that what we're doing here is an indicator of the fact that, again, we've failed to make genuine progress because we've failed to put together a standalone committee on this issue that gave it the prominence and the specific focus that it deserves and requires. And I can't help but wonder whether that's because we're still women talking to women, putting that committee together. Where were the male members of this parliament stepping up for that? Perhaps that's too pointed. I don't mean to reflect in a judgmental way on other members of this place, the male members, but I think there's a question for everybody here to ask themselves about it.

I'm pleased that at least the matter has been resolved when we pass this motion and we have this committee and its remit at least specifically includes 'gender-based violence' in its title. That's one tiny step forward, but it's far from enough. It's far from enough. Every member here should be asking themselves what more should be done to make genuine progress here, to give it the advocacy it needs, to give it the focus it needs, to give it the parliamentary attention it needs. The people who haven't got up to speak on this and who didn't put their hand up for the committee that was proposed should particularly have a good, hard think about that.

[3.31 p.m.]

Mr EDMUNDS (Pembroke) - Mr President, I'll be very brief. I welcome this referral as I think there are only two male members of the committee, that being - to the member for Hobart's comments - I myself, and I believe Mr George from the lower House. I take the spirit of the contribution of the previous speaker and it's an issue that, as a man, I have grappled with a lot. Like on a lot of topics that you deal with, particularly as a Legislative Councillor, I believe, considering the whole knowledge base being a mile long and an inch thick, that certain topics are difficult places for us to tread as men, I would say. Perhaps I'm speaking on my own behalf there rather than on anyone else's. I welcome this referral. I look forward to doing the work on the committee.

What has happened in terms of people putting their hand up, I think everybody who is involved or not involved in those conversations had their reasons and their thoughts on that.

We are where we are. I'm very happy to welcome this change and I look forward to doing the work. I don't make my previous comments as a cop-out. I think that this is now an opportunity to grow and I think that's an opportunity for everybody in this parliament, through this. You could easily see it as an elevation to a committee that already exists rather than some issues that are stood up and then disappear. This is our pathway forward now. I welcome it. Well, I don't look forward to the work itself, but I look forward to being part of this process. Thank you.

[3.33 p.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears - Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence) - Mr President, I want to thank the member for Murchison for putting this forward and it is a pathway forward. I think it is really important that we are prepared to work around the fact that, for whatever reason, people felt they weren't able to commit. I am grateful that there is that pathway forward. I will mention, to the best of my knowledge, Peter Gutwein, when he was premier, was also the minister for the Prevention of Family Violence. I just thought it was worth noting that. Also, there are some incredible women and men who work in this space and who have a great passion and great advocacy and desperately want to see change.

As the minister in this space, there is a huge body of work that is happening nationally and it has been amazing to work with men and women from their respective states and territories on this. Certainly, as the minister, this is the pathway that we're going down. I certainly look forward to working through that mechanism with the committee, but also as the member for Rosevears. There isn't an electorate, there isn't a demographic, and there isn't an age that is not impacted horrendously. I see that every day in my portfolio of Children and Youth, the impact that this has on the younger members of our community. I'm very supportive as the minister but, of course, the Leader will speak on behalf of the government.

[3.35 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, before I speak on behalf of the government, I speak as the member for McIntyre. I just very much appreciate the contributions today that have been provided and, unfortunately, we heard those very sobering facts about the numbers from the honourable member for Hobart and, yes, we should all be very concerned about that and the scourge that this has on our communities. It's a very difficult conversation, but one that we need to have with all people in our community. Absolutely. I support what has been presented here today. and I know that members who haven't spoken, I feel sure, would feel exactly the same way.

While being challenged to think about the reason why we have females mostly taking on this job, I just recall, and I will be corrected if I need to be, that Will Hodgman was also the very first minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, and I may be wrong.

Ms Webb - Maybe this Premier is the only one whose stepped away from it.

Ms RATTRAY - I'm pretty sure I recalled that, but I will stand corrected if that's not the case. It was some time ago.

Ms Webb - I think since Peter Gutwein we've had just women.

Ms RATTRAY - On behalf of the government, I intend to make a brief contribution on the motion before us. The government notes the proposal to amend the title and terms of

reference of the Joint Sessional Committee on Gender and Equality to expressly include gender-based violence. This motion to amend the Joint Sessional Committee on Gender, Gender-Based Violence and Equality is, in the government's view, an appropriate response to the proposed establishment of the Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Joint Standing Committee. Given the significant similarities of this proposed committee's terms of reference, the government believes that the proposed amended terms of reference would deliver the desired outcomes for these very important issues.

Gender-based violence has significant impacts on individuals, families and communities across Tasmania and we've heard that a number of times today. It is an issue that continues to warrant attention from government service providers and this parliament.

The amendments proposed today do not alter the committee's membership or powers of reporting arrangements; rather, they provide greater clarity regarding the matters that may be considered by the committee and recognise the close relationship between issues of gender equality and gender-based violence.

The government also acknowledges the work undertaken by the committee since its establishment and recognises the contribution made by members from both Houses in examining matters of importance to Tasmanians. It's also recognised that gender-based violence is closely linked to broader conversations about gender inequality and disadvantage and, for that reason again, it is appropriate that the committee's remit clearly reflects the connection between gender equality and the prevention of violence.

The proposed amendment acknowledges that relationship and provides greater clarity for the committee's work. Parliamentary committees provide an opportunity to hear directly from experts, service providers, advocates and Tasmanians with lived experience. Ensuring that gender-based violence is expressly recognised within the committee's terms of reference will assist the committee to consider these issues in a structured and transparent way should matters be referred to it by either House or initiated by the committee itself.

The government thanks the member for Murchison for bringing forward the motion and for her ongoing work in this area with the support of others. The government is supportive of the proposed amendments and will support the motion. If the motion is successful, and I have a sense that that will be the case, and the House of Assembly votes in accordance, it's the intention of the government to withdraw the motion to establish the Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Joint Standing Committee, as these expanded terms of reference will allow for effective parliamentary consideration and scrutiny of these critically important matters.

[3.40 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - I appreciate the contributions of members in expressing their views. I acknowledge that it is not the preferred option for a number of members, just as, when it was first proposed, it was not the preferred option of some of the service providers in the space. But what's critically important here is that these issues of family and gender-based violence, domestic violence and sexual violence are recognised as the national crisis they are and treated as such. Not just the deaths. The deaths are one thing, and as horrific and life-altering for those families as they are, there are many women and children living in very unsafe circumstances, sometimes because of a lack of housing, or for a whole range of reasons. We hear about walking on egg shells in a controlling, coercive relationship where there may not be any physical violence, but sometimes the first act of violence is murder. It's something

that we can't look away from, and we need to keep it at the forefront of policymakers, governments and the public conscience. Because if we don't, these terrible lived experiences are often not fully understood and not recognised. It's much bigger than the number of deaths, as absolutely tragic as they are. We need to be intervening well before we get to that point.

I acknowledge it's not the preferred option from the outset, but I believe this is a sensible response. What is critically important in this is the public exposure of this issue, and through a committee process it does enable that public exposure. I was one member who did not put my hand up for that committee, and I want to make that really clear. I don't believe I could have fitted another committee in. I'm already on the Gender and Equality Committee, as well as many others. In fairness to all members in this Chamber, people make their own decisions and have their own reasons why they can't be on this or that committee. It's not like a lot of us in this place aren't pulling our weight. We are.

While it's disappointing that this one couldn't be established in its own right, I believe we also need to be using the mechanisms we have available to us to get the best outcome. From my perspective, the best outcome here is that this issue is subject to more public inquiry, more exposure of the reality, more public ventilation of the reality. Then, hopefully, the government response and interaction with the committee will show us a path forward. It is important to acknowledge the work being done federally, too. I know there is a large body of work being done; the minister herself with her counterparts in other states and territories is involved on that.

In my view, with the workload of many of the members in this place, this is the most expeditious way to get this work done or at least started. It is never going to be done - well, hopefully it will be done one day, but in our lifetime I think that's unlikely. It's a bit easier to sit in the House of Assembly, where they have increased the number of members, with a much-expanded backbench and lots of crossbenchers. We didn't increase our size here; we've still got the same number of members with more committees than ever. There are limitations for us individually and there are limitations for our staff as well in supporting those committees.

This is a matter I care deeply about. I have been actively involved in this space in the past.

I want to reflect on the member for Pembroke's comments. I thank you for standing, taking the call and making those comments. I appreciate that you're also on the Gender and Equality Committee; from our House, you're the only man. I'm not sure who the membership is from downstairs, but you may be the only man. The former member for Huon was the only man at one stage. That said, we have had a few come and go from downstairs, but we do need male champions on this, and I acknowledge the member for Pembroke's comment about the difficulty some men face in knowing how to participate in this discussion and debate. I remember speaking to a group of young men up at the Cradle Coast campus of UTAS during Law Week. We were talking about law reform in a range of areas, but there was this group of young guys there, and I could see them sort of engaged in the topic we were talking about. Afterwards, I spoke to a few of them. During the session I'd said to them, 'I appreciate it must be really difficult for you young guys not knowing what's okay anymore'. Like the rules seem to keep changing for young guys and young men, from the topic we were talking about. I went and spoke to them afterwards and said that the fact it's sometimes more difficult for young men to know how to respond to this is a reason to do this work. It's through doing this work that we understand what some of the barriers are to men's participation in the solution. It is a big and

important part of the solution, but we can't just expect men to know exactly what to do, just as we can't expect all women to know exactly what to do, because we don't.

It is going to take a broad response to address this. But we need to keep it in the public view, talking about it, making sure people don't brush an episode of family or sexual violence under the carpet or diminish it in any way such that it becomes, 'Oh, it's not that important'. It is important, and the lack of gender equality and the lack of respect are the basis for so much of this gender violence. We mustn't forget that.

I thank members for their contribution, and I'm sure there'll be a meeting of the Gender Equality Committee not too soon after this goes downstairs.

Motion agreed to.

[3.47 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I move -

That a message be transmitted to the House of Assembly seeking its concurrence therein.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Gambling Advertising and Sponsorship at State-Owned or State-Funded Venues

[3.48 p.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Mr President, I move -

That the Legislative Council -

- (1) Notes on Tuesday 2 December 2025 the Council passed a resolution calling on the State Government to introduce within one year a complete ban on gambling advertising and sponsorship at all state-owned or state-funded venues including the Macquarie Point Stadium, and on players' uniforms, and further to table an implementation progress report within six months of the passage of that resolution;
- (2) Further notes the six month deadline was 2 June 2026, however the State government has not yet tabled the requested implementation update as it was called on to do by this House;
- (3) Recognises the Federal Government's gambling advertising reforms announced on 2 April 2026, will partially implement recommendations of the 2023 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs report *You Win Some, You Lose More - Inquiry into Online Gambling and Its Impacts on*

Those Experiencing Gambling Harm, and do not preclude the state taking immediate action for state-owned or funded venues;

- (4) Reaffirms that publicly owned state venues should prohibit gambling advertising and sponsorship that normalise or glamorise wagering, consistent with the clear public health responsibility to avoid promoting activities known to cause harm;
- (5) Notes with grave concern the failure of the State government to acknowledge or address the December 2025 resolution passed by this House;
- (6) Formally requests by Thursday 10 September 2026 the State government provides to this House a comprehensive response to the 2 December 2025 resolution, and which is to address both:
 - (a) That resolution's call for gambling advertising and sponsorship at all state-owned or state funded venues, and on players' uniforms; to be prohibited; and
 - (b) An implementation timeframe update.

I rise to speak to motion number 19 in my name on the Notice Paper. The summary title reads, 'Gambling Advertising and Sponsorship at State-Owned or State-Funded Venues', but, in fact, this Chamber has already had that debate and already passed that particular motion. That debate and vote occurred on Tuesday 2 December last year. It would be more accurate for the summary title of the current motion before us to be: government inaction on previous votes supporting a ban on gambling advertising and sponsorship at all state-owned or state-funded venues, because that sums up why I'm raising the matter here today via this motion.

I do not intend to re prosecute the arguments put during the previous December debate, nor should I have to. Instead, for the benefit of the members, I will provide a brief summary to assist in providing context for the current motion before us here today - a brief summary only. Last week, I circulated to members a background briefing paper, which was an updated version of the previous briefing paper provided for the December debate last year. That background paper also contained the text of the previous motion on page 6 passed by this Chamber on 2 December 2025, for members' reference.

Hopefully that document was sufficient to refresh the memories of members who were in the Chamber at the time, and/or to update those members who have joined us since in this place, as to the intent and the content of the initial motion, which sought government action to transform all state-owned and -funded venues to be gambling-, advertising- and sponsorship-free zones, inclusive of players uniforms.

As stated, the intent of that initial motion was consistent with the 2023 federal parliament's Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs' multi-party report called, *You Win Some, You Lose More: Online Gambling and its Impacts on those Experiencing Gambling Harm*. That laudable committee was chaired by Peta Murphy MP and despite the federal Labor government's stated support for all 31 of the recommendations in the report, little

action had occurred at the time this Chamber considered and debated the 2025 motion. We are still waiting for the promised reforms to be delivered at a federal level, in fact.

However, as stated, last year, this Chamber determined that in some areas Tasmanians did not have to be kept waiting. This Chamber recognised that Tasmania could progress in some small yet significant way the need to disrupt the social norm that betting and sport go together. It was recognised that banning gambling advertising and sponsorship within Tasmanian-owned or funded venues is consistent with current state government public health policy to treat gambling addiction as a public health issue, just as tobacco advertising and sponsorship was banned on public health grounds. Further, this Chamber recognised it was prudent to require that this policy commitment be implemented within a specified timeframe, as proposed in clause (5) of that resolution passed in December.

We should have seen by now an implementation progress report tabled in the parliament. In fact, by my calculations, that should have occurred by early June. Specifically, that progress report was to detail the removal of any gambling advertising from current state-owned or funded venues as an interim measure while the complete ban was developed and put in place by December this year. To be perfectly clear, should the current situation be that currently there isn't any gambling advertising or signage at venues or on players' uniforms, that's not an excuse for failing to table the requested update by the stipulated timeframe. In fact, such a situation should have made it a very easy and concise report to prepare and table. However, any report would also have needed to be clear that if that is the happy situation for Tasmania currently, it is just purely by accident, not the outcome of good public policy design. Which is why a formal policy implemented by regulations or other appropriate mechanisms is necessary and should also provide the framing context for the requested parliamentary updates. I also note in passing that in the eventuality there are no current gambling adverts, branding or sponsorship evident in state-owned or -funded venues or on team uniforms, then formally prohibiting any such advertising and branding will not upset the status quo and should be relatively straightforward, I would have thought.

Which brings us to the here and now. Clearly, the June deadline for the progress report has been and gone without a formal word of acknowledgement from the government. I believe this Chamber and the many Tasmanians who've been waiting for implementation progress on the December resolution have been patient. This current motion before us was tabled on 25 June this year. If the government had merely forgotten or the timeframes had slipped a little, surely the tabling of this current motion would have served as a reminder, as a gentle jog of the ministerial memory, perhaps. Tabling of this motion two months ago should have served as a reminder to the government, although really, it is not the responsibility of this place to have to provide reminders to government. It would also have been an indicator that there are clear expectations that the original resolution would be complied with.

The government has had six weeks, in fact, over the parliamentary winter recess to prepare such a progress report delivering upon clause (5)(b) in accordance with December's resolution and then table that response during last week's sitting week when we returned from the break. That is what would have happened under a government that cares - cares both for the welfare of Tasmanians and particularly our young people. A government that cares about acting on evidence-based information, showing the destructive impact persistent and pervasive gambling ads have on communities, families, and our young people. A government that cares about breaking the unhealthy nexus between sport and betting. Further and fundamentally, that

is what would have happened under a government that cares for and respects our democracy, our parliament and this Chamber.

Which gets us to the crux of the motion before us today. This is not just a matter of a deadline slipping someone's mind. A formal resolution was passed by this Chamber, one which was consistent with the government's current position of treating gambling harm as a public health policy matter and which requested a formal progress report be tabled in the parliament within six months of that resolution's date. As stated in the current motion before us today, by my calculations, that date was 2 June this year. I also point out that as we did not know the final 2026 parliamentary sitting schedule at the time the original motion was tabled, I did not seek to stipulate in which House that progress report was to be tabled.

Further, as we all know, we do have mechanisms available by which reports and documents can be tabled should neither House be sitting. We attempted to be as flexible and reasonable as possible regarding that six-month milestone built into to the original resolution, but apparently those goodwill efforts have been snubbed by the government. Which basically boils down to a fundamental disrespect shown to this Chamber, and therefore also to the Tasmanians we represent. This was a formal vote securing a formal resolution by a democratically constituted Chamber of the Tasmanian Parliament. On what grounds can it just be ignored?

Occasionally we'll hear about the apparently limited remit of the house of review within a bicameral parliament. Let's address that briefly here. Members do not need me to tell them that we are working within a bicameral Westminster parliamentary model, but what does that mean when considering the respective powers and roles of our two Chambers? That is obviously an extensive question spanning constitutional law, as well as parliamentary institutional design, practice and conventions, so I'll restrict myself to detailing the elements specifically relevant to this debate. The relevant political science literature identifies a bicameral spectrum within symmetric models at one end, and asymmetric models at the other. The asymmetric model is where one house, usually the upper house, is limited to varying degrees from a legislative advisory and delay review role through to being clearly subordinate to the house of government. Bicameral parliamentary Westminster models considered to be asymmetrical include the Canadian senate, for example. More pertinent to this Chamber is the fact that the Australian Senate is characterised in the literature as an example of the symmetrical model, specifically one that is co-equal, with restrictions. This reflects an equal capacity to introduce, amend and vote for or against legislation, with the limitation of, or restrictions, referring to the fact lower houses and government have a clear priority when initiating or considering financial legislation, also referred to as money bills.

I think we can recognise this Chamber has a similar relationship with the other place, within the institutional design of this Tasmanian bicameral parliament. Other than money bills, the policy space of this Chamber is wide. We can roam across the spectrum of public policy, utilising a range of parliamentary mechanisms available to us. Such mechanisms available to this Chamber include the capacity to establish committees into matters of public policy, to put formal questions to ministers of the Crown with a corresponding requirement that a response is provided, to amend government and non-government bills either originating in this or the other place, to propose bills from this place, both government and non-government, to table petitions on public policy and other matters, and to have dedicated private members' business time that is formally provided for in our Standing Orders.

Further, it's worth restating quite clearly that under our bicameral Westminster parliamentary model, the executive is subordinate and accountable to the parliament. That also applies to this Chamber, which is why questions asked by this place are taken as seriously by ministers of the Crown as the questions asked by the other place are, for example. I thought it pertinent to articulate some of those mechanisms and tools which we utilise to go about our work in this Chamber, on the off-chance there may have been an attempt to try to justify the government's failure to act upon the previous resolution of this place, on the dubious grounds this place is only a house of review and therefore resolutions on matters initiated by non-government members are somehow less serious or real than any other democratic vote undertaken in this place.

Traditionally, yes, we have inherited the role and responsibilities of a house of review, but constitutionally we are not limited to only those responsibilities and that role. I note this reality has caused frustration to a range of former premiers, who have at times wished to corral the Chamber back into that particular box. I recognise how a co-equal, with restrictions, bicameral model can show up a listless and spent government of the day, can annoy a government when its legislative agenda is amended, and frustrate the executive by probing government activities it would prefer remain unexamined. Quite simply, that's just too bad.

As our current model demonstrably holds the government to account, serves as a check on executive power, and furthers the interests of our electorates in the broader community, I'm not going to apologise for working to deliver on those responsibilities. So, please, let's not have our time wasted here today by any such weak try-on that the Chamber exceeded its review remit, to attempt to deflect from the government's failure to respect this Chamber's December resolution.

Having established this Chamber is not subordinate to the other place, I wish to briefly touch upon the principles of comity. I did provide a simple summary in the information circulated to members on Friday, but in the interests of providing as comprehensive a debate as possible here today, it's also necessary to outline some of those concerns.

Sitting suspended from 4 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.

MOTION

Gambling Advertising and Sponsorship at State-Owned or State-Funded Venues

Resumed from above.

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - I will provide an outline of some concerns relating to the core principles of comity between the Chambers. The core principles of comity can be summarised as underpinning the following things. Firstly, equal status, mutual respect between the two Houses, providing independence and institutional balance. Secondly, working relationship: that's to ensure communication between the Houses is open, such as refraining from insulting language or reflecting upon the other House or its members. The third one is non-interference, neither House interfering in the internal proceedings, privilege arrangements or daily operations of the other.

Clearly, the failure of the government to respect and respond to a resolution passed by the Chamber is an affront to that paramount comity principle of mutual respect between the two Houses, independence and institutional balance. By 'balance', I mean the fact that one Chamber is not subordinate to, or has lesser scope and powers than the other, excluding the previously acknowledged financial bills limitation.

Crucially, as previously stated, the executive is subordinate to the parliament. Before I move on, I wish to address a potential furphy relating to that distinction between the executive and the parliament, which may be raised by the government in an attempt to justify its failure to comply with last year's resolution. There may be an attempt to put the spurious argument that somehow this House exceeded its authority or was not in compliance with these comity principles, in calling for the actions contained in the 2025 resolution. To be clear, that 2025 motion did not seek to call on the other place to do anything. If this place had passed such a request, then it would be up to the other place to formally consider, accept or reject such a request. Instead the December resolution, as does the current motion before us, clearly directs the respective requests to the government, which is to say the executive.

In Westminster parliaments, the comity principle of mutual respect, independence and institutional balance is between the two houses, not between the parliament and the executive. Yes, we would want a respectful and open communication channel to exist between the parliament and the executive, but that is not a matter of comity, as it is between the two houses.

As per Associate Professor Richard Herr's testimony on 6 September 2019, before this Council's Select Committee inquiry on production of documents, of which I was a member:

The supremacy of the parliament requires that the government accept its position of being responsible to you, not telling you what it's going to allow you to do to be able to do your job.

Further, he said:

Parliament is the enabler of government. The government doesn't exist if you don't pass laws; the government does not exist if you don't pass money bills. You are the enablers. They are the supplicants to you, you are not supplicants to them.

The failure by the government, the executive, to formally respond within six months, as per the resolution of this place, is a disappointing and unacceptable example of this Chamber yet again being treated with contempt. It is arrogant, dismissive and, to put it bluntly, undemocratic. It's an attempt to snub the principle of comity between the Chambers. We have examples of the executive acting on non-government motions moved in the other place, but not those passed by this Chamber. The cynic in me thinks the prioritisation of equivalent non-government and crossbench private members' business of the other place over private members-initiated resolutions of this place is due to the ramifications of successful censure or no-confidence motions passed by the Assembly. However, a truly accountable government of the day, respectful of the parliamentary foundations and conventions in which we operate, would act respectfully on resolutions passed by either Chamber, without requiring potential standoffs over censure motions.

Earlier I stated that the lack of government action on the December resolution is an example of a vote of this Chamber being treated with contempt by this government yet again. As some members will recall, and for the benefit of new members, it took three votes in this Chamber to secure government action on ministerial diary disclosure reforms. In March 2023, this Chamber passed my motion calling for public consultation on developing a best-practice legislative ministerial diary disclosure scheme, including more timely release of diaries and more detailed content to be provided. Instead, the Rockliff government announced it would move to quarterly disclosures but left it unlegislated, hence voluntary, and without any public input or form of consultation.

Subsequently, on 10 September 2024, this Chamber again voted for my second motion of the ministerial diary disclosure system to be put out for public consultation regarding its adequacy, and requesting the government report back on progress by 28 November 2024. I know we all here will be surprised and shocked by the fact that the date passed without the government acting upon that formal resolution of this place. Again, a year later, on 23 September, this place passed another resolution calling on the Rockliff government to establish a public consultation process on best-practice ministerial diary disclosure models and require the government to provide a progress report by 5 December 2025. Finally, then, in response to that, on 10 November that year, the government released its discussion paper on that topic.

Now is not the time to go into the strengths and weaknesses of the eventual reforms progressed by the government. The point I'm making in recounting this example is that, shamefully, it does not appear the Rockliff government has changed its stripes when it comes to failing to respect resolutions of this place and dragging its feet inappropriately in responding to those resolutions. There is no good excuse or justification for the disrespect shown to this Chamber by this government.

The Council's resolution on gambling advertising in December last year did not demand sensitive or commercial-in-confidence documents. It did not demand privileged Solicitor-General or other legal advice provided to the government. What this Chamber did ask for was for the government to stand up for Tasmanians, particularly our young people and those vulnerable to being preyed upon by predatory and destructive gambling entities, when the community should just be able to enjoy watching, attending a sports game and cheering on their local teams.

It is also pertinent in this context to remind members of the statement presented in this place by the Leader on Wednesday 24 June this year to address concerns raised in this place regarding the attitude of the government to the Legislative Council. We were assured on that day that:

The Premier and his government look forward to continuing to work constructively with all members of this Chamber.

That commitment was in relation to both adjournment matters, conventions and also 'the range of other pathways available to raise matters with the executive'.

In the context of the Council's December resolution, here was the Premier's opportunity to demonstrate that reiterated intent of constructive good faith. How are we meant to interpret that reassurance of barely two months ago now? It will be treated with good faith when it's

convenient, it would appear, and ignored when it's inconvenient, perhaps. That is not how it should work, and shame on any leader, let alone a premier, to think that it would be. This Chamber is not being treated consistently with the respect it should be afforded in accordance with the principles of comity between the Houses and in respect of the Tasmanians we in this place were elected to represent.

There's another faux argument I wish to pre-empt, and hopefully by doing so I will prevent too much of this Chamber's time being wasted on a red herring. As members would be aware, nationally there has been mounting pressure on the federal Albanese government to implement in full its stated acceptance of the 31 recommendations from the Murphy report. I could well imagine there'll be some within government trying to excuse its inaction along the lines of, 'Well, the Albanese government is going to implement the gambling in stadia ban anyway, so there's no need for Tasmania to do so, and there's no need for us to table an update in the state parliament.' Well, wrong, wrong, wrong.

Recommendation 26 of the Murphy report acknowledges the roles of states and territories in the implementation of this particular recommendation and the need for the federal government to consult with those other jurisdictions. Further, I reject the notion that Tasmania cannot be a national leader in this space. In fact, this Chamber's December resolution itself thrust Tasmania upon the national leader's stage in the matter of disrupting the social norm that betting and sport go together. The full compliance with clause (5) of that December resolution requires a statewide ban to be implemented, both on gambling advertising in stadia and venues and on team uniforms. As acknowledged by clause (3) of the current motion before us, we know that, should the federal government reforms pass the Australian parliament, the best-case scenario will not see those reforms commence until 2027.

Further, nothing prevents the states taking immediate action within their own jurisdictions. There's nothing to prevent that. Nothing is standing in our way. In fact, there's no good reason for the Rockliff government to stall the proposed state ban now the federal government has acknowledged the public harm currently being caused and the need to remove gambling advertising from sporting venues and gambling branding from players' uniforms. It will send a strong message regarding the government prioritising the community's welfare over corporate interest. It will be preventative, consistent with the government's stated public health policy, and it would also reduce the opportunity for gambling corporates to attempt a pre-federal ban rush, which we have seen in other areas of public policy reform where affected vested interests attempt to buy in. That is, in this instance, they may seek to install gambling advertising or lock in sponsorship prior to a change in government policy coming into force, in a strategic attempt to slow down those reforms and/or to set up spurious compensation claims, for example.

The current motion before us is very moderate, in my opinion. I've already addressed the ramifications of clause (5) of the motion before us, noting the seriousness of the failure of the state government to acknowledge or address this Chamber's December resolution. It's also worth noting that while this motion may serve a rebuke to the government, not without justification, it does not seek to censure. Instead, it provides the government with a second chance.

Clause (6) of the motion today provides a revised timeframe by which the intent of the original resolution passed by the Chamber last year can still be honoured and implemented. This motion provides an extension until Thursday 10 September for the government to prepare

and return to this Chamber the currently outstanding response to the 2 December resolution and which is to also address both the call for the gambling ad ban in state-owned venues and on players' uniforms, while also providing an implementation timeframe update. By doing so, this motion presents a second chance for this government to demonstrate that it is prepared to put the welfare of Tasmanians before gambling and betting interests, at least in some small but significant way. It also provides a second chance for the Premier to demonstrate he is committed to the statement delivered by the Leader on the premier's behalf to this Chamber on Wednesday the 24 June, and further, that his government does and will continue to respect this Chamber, its role within our bicameral Westminster parliament and the principles of comity between the Houses in action as well as in words.

I hope to hear an apology when the government's response is delivered today, not to me personally, of course, but to this Chamber, for such unacceptable disrespect and breach of the principles of comity between the Houses and to those Tasmanians who welcomed this Chamber's resolution of 2 December 2025 and expected in good faith for this requested action to occur.

In closing, we should not need to have had this debate here today. It is very disappointing that, due to either the inaction or disrespect shown by this government towards a resolution passed by this Chamber, we have had to take our time up again to seek an explanation as well as prompt compliance.

As I stated at the outset, the intent of this motion today is not to re prosecute the substantive matter detailed in the initial motion debate of 2 December last year. Instead, the purpose of today's debate is to, first, place the failure of the government to comply with an agreed resolution of this democratically elected Chamber on the public record; second, to provide a formal opportunity for the government to address the outstanding deadline for the six-month progress report on the 12-month deadline to establish a formal policy ban as per the resolution passed on 2 December 2025; and third, to reiterate the democratic expectation that resolutions passed by this Chamber will be respected by the government of the day and acted on accordingly; further to that, to respectfully require that the government place a formal response before this Chamber by the revised date of 10 September detailing the implementation.

The Legislative Council resolved last year Tasmania should do its bit on the public policy matter of addressing the negative impact of gambling ads and sponsorship in local sport. That resolution should have been respected, acknowledged and acted upon in some way by the government, irrespective of its policy position on that matter. Hypothetically, the six-month report could have simply stated that correspondence from the relevant minister or department had been sent to all state-owned or -funded venues advising them of the Council's resolution that the state has requested an update from its federal counterparts regarding the implementation of the Murphy report's relevant recommendations, but there is nothing further to report yet, for example. I wouldn't have considered that satisfactory, to be honest, but at least it would have demonstrated an acknowledgement of Council's resolution, which required a formal and appropriate response by the six-month deadline.

There have been opportunities between when I tabled this motion in June and now for the government to provide the requested update, which would have saved us time here in the Chamber as well as avoided the unnecessary and concerning compounding of this government's reputation for arrogant disrespect towards this Chamber and for the broader parliament. It's

now incumbent upon the government that in its response to this debate here today, it must either include the required six-month implementation plan update as per last year's resolution or, at the very least, commit to table that update by 10 September as per clause (6) of this motion. So, on that, I commend the motion to the House.

[4.45 p.m.]

Mr EDMUNDS (Pembroke) - Mr President, I thank the mover of the motion for bringing this to us. I also subscribe to the fact that this is not a time to re prosecute the arguments from the previous motion - just to touch on the fact that I spoke about my reasons for reluctance to support that motion around some of the procedural challenges that it may face. However, this Chamber passed that motion and I would expect the similar support, whether people supported a motion of mine or not; if nothing was done about it, I would expect them to support me because it's about the Legislative Council, not the issue itself. I'll just move through the motion and its six or eight points, depending on how you look at it, and outline the reasons for why I'm up here speaking today.

Clause (1), pretty straightforward, I would have thought. It's the Council passing a resolution and calling for a response from government. Yes, no dramas. Clause (2), pretty straightforward as well, I believe, that there's a statement of fact. Clause (3), yes, that's also happening. Clause (4), I've spoken to the mover about this offline, I suppose. I have some concerns about the word 'reaffirms', having spoken against the original motion, but I look forward to the way the government handles it in its response, number 4, and its outlining of what it'll do around dot point 5.

I think dot point 6 is fair enough. It's requesting, with the deadline set by the Chamber being moved, it's essentially giving them a little bit more time to come back with some information, which I'll be all ears to. To sum up, obviously, like most people, I have concerns about - I think the member talked about the sort of interlinkage between gambling and sport. However, it is not an illegal activity, but I do, like a lot of people, probably resent that when you know your kid is helping you with your footy tipping that the odds for that game are displayed to them. It does normalise it. I think there's some really obvious low-hanging fruit that can be dealt with in this area, whether it's by federal or state. I think it should be led by the federal government as I outlined, without re prosecuting the argument, which, as I said, I would not do.

With that said, I'm all ears to the government response and indeed the views of other members of the House and I'll continue to listen.

[4.48 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Hobart) - Mr President, I thank the honourable member for Nelson for providing us with this opportunity to affirm that Council passed a resolution calling for a complete ban on gambling advertising in state-owned venues including the Macquarie Point stadium. It reminds me that this Council also passed a resolution in my name calling on government to prepare comprehensive evacuation planning for the cities and towns that we represent and that, too, has been ignored. I'm not going to make a particularly long contribution.

I think that the member for Nelson has been quite generous to government in providing them another opportunity to respect the will of this place. It is extraordinarily arrogant of the government of the day, particularly a government that is sitting there in minority in the other place, to effectively give this place the middle finger. But, if you put the politics aside, what

this is ultimately about is protecting Tasmanians from the profound harm of gambling addiction.

While we're not here to prosecute the argument for the ban on gambling advertising in state venues, it is worth reminding ourselves of the human cost of this in Tasmania. In line with the decades of really important work undertaken by Anglicare's Social Action and Research Centre, there's a 2024 policy brief that talks about options for reducing harm from electronic gaming machines in Tasmania. The brief reminds us that EGMs, as one example of a gambling product, are the most harmful form of gambling in Tasmania, accounting for almost half of all gambling-related harm. In the 12 months prior to December 2024, 15,400 Tasmanians who use EGMs were at risk of gambling harm and a further 16,300 Tasmanians experienced direct harm as a result of somebody else's EGM gambling. That'll be the partners, children, parents, friends, loved ones -

Ms Webb - Employers.

Ms O'CONNOR - Employers, who have to bear witness of the slow destruction of a person, because of their gambling addiction and a failure of successive governments, in fact, to do anything meaningful, anything at all to stem the high level of gambling in Tasmania.

Through the year of 2024, the total of people harmed, according to Anglicare, is more than 31,000 Tasmanians. That is not a small number. They go on to recommend all the measures that we know actually reduce harm and that this government is wilfully ignoring: caps on the number of venues in EGMs, reduced opening hours for venues, limiting accessibility, restricting advertising. We need bet limits, mandatory pre-commitment, in fact, what we need to do here is to follow the evidence that points us to effective gambling harm minimisation.

What has happened is that state and federal governments, of both colours, have been captured by the gambling industries, and they are, as a result, complicit in the profound individual and societal harm that gambling does. We've seen it here with the expiry of the Federal Group deed and a new gambling arrangement, which is almost guaranteed to cause more harm than the previous deed. We've seen it here when government rolls over to the Tasmanian Hospitality Association, as does the Labor opposition. We saw a glimmer of what Labor is capable of in the 2018 state election campaign, and then the gambling industry came down on the Labor party like an absolute ton of bricks, and they quickly reversed their positions.

We've now got the Murphy review recommendations at a federal level, by the late Peta Murphy, which are effectively being completely ignored by the Albanese government. In fact, in terms of advertising, I read recently that the compromise position that the Albanese government has reached on advertising is to only allow three gambling ads in an hour. That tells us everything that we need to know about how captured both the Labor and Liberal parties are by the gambling industries. The consequence of that is people who lose their lives, their livelihoods, is an increase in family violence, child neglect, mental illness, and all the consequent pressures on our community supports that result from that.

In closing, I just want to take honourable members to the excellent Grattan Institute's report of September 2024 called: *A Better Bet: How Australia Should Prevent Gambling Harm*. What's their number one recommendation, Mr President? Well, that would be the

recommendation that says that we need to ban all gambling advertising and inducements. That's the first recommendation of the Grattan Institute, based on the evidence. The second recommendation is to reduce pokies numbers in each state over time. The third, that we should add a gambling warning label to games that include gambling-like features, such as loot boxes and social casinos. They recommend the establishment of a national mandatory pre-commitment system for all online gambling, and that in each state there be a statewide mandatory pre-commitment system for pokies with daily, monthly and annual limits on losses. There's a lot of good material in the Grattan Institute report, which I'm absolutely sure no one in government has read.

This is an opportunity for the Council to reassert itself. We can't put up with this. It is completely unacceptable, and I totally agree with the member for Pembroke. It wouldn't matter what the motion was. If this Council expresses its will by vote and sends a message to the government of the day, then it is on the government of the day to respond meaningfully to that vote. I don't know what's been written for the Leader for the Government in terms of a response, but there's no excuse for this, none whatsoever. What it tells us, of course, is that the government has no intention of protecting vulnerable Tasmanians by restricting or prohibiting gambling ads in state-owned venues.

Logic tells us that, as part of the Macquarie Point Stadium deal with the AFL, there's all sorts of gambling sponsorship arrangements being put in place.

Ms Forrest - They'll need sponsorship.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, they will need sponsorship in order to help the stadium not break even. But what I think underpins the failure of government to act is that they've already stitched up through their negotiations with the AFL as they continue to sell out Tasmania and Tasmanians. They've already stitched up gambling advertising contracts or negotiations towards contracts via the construction of the Macquarie Point Stadium and the entry of the Devils into the AFL and the AFLW.

I think that's why we're being ignored, and again, we haven't had anyone in government with the courage to say it. Perhaps that's an answer that will come through in the Leader for Government's response, because there's only two options here for why the government didn't respond and they're probably a little bit of both. One is they don't respect this place and the other is that they have no intention of doing what this place asked them to do. That should worry us all, and every time it happens, we need to challenge them, so I strongly support the motion.

[4.58 p.m.]

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT (Huon) - I am in support of the motion because we are discussing accountability and public interest. In December last year, this Council resolved that the government should move within one year to ban gambling advertising at state-owned and state-funded venues, including the proposed Macquarie Point Stadium, and provide a progress report within six months on implementation. That six-month reporting deadline has now passed, yet no progress report has been tabled.

This motion simply asks the government to tell parliament what it intends to do and when it intends to do it. I wasn't here for the debate, but I understand that it was not about whether Tasmania could regulate every gambling advertisement Australians see online, on television or

on their phones. Much of that responsibility, I acknowledge, lies with the Commonwealth. But what we are talking about is areas where Tasmania has influence and control: our public venues, our stadiums, our sponsorship arrangements and the environments we create for families and young people.

The public health rationale is very compelling. We know gambling causes significant distress for individuals, families and communities. We also know that advertising plays a role in normalising gambling, particularly among young people. Research has found that many young children associate gambling with sport and view betting as a normal part of sporting culture. That is very, very concerning. Sport should be about participation, about teamwork, community and enjoyment. It should not be a vehicle through which children are repeatedly exposed to gambling brands and betting promotions.

I acknowledge there are implementation challenges. Existing sponsorship agreements, naming rights arrangements and commercial contracts will need to be carefully considered, but they are not reasons to avoid a resolution already agreed to by this Council. In fact, the existence of those questions is precisely why a government response is needed. I also note that other jurisdictions have already begun moving in this direction, introducing restrictions on gambling advertising in public settings and supporting sporting organisations to reduce their reliance on gambling sponsorship. Tasmania does not need to reinvent the wheel, nor should we wait for others to act. The Macquarie Point Stadium provides a particular opportunity because the venue is still being developed; decisions about sponsorship, naming rights and advertising arrangements can be considered up front rather than retrospectively. It is far easier to establish expectations before contracts are signed than to undo them later. For those reasons, I support this motion as both a public health measure and an accountability measure.

I do have a bit of a question. My understanding is - and I could be wrong here - that motions aren't binding on the government. I'm not sure if I'm correct there or not, but what I do note is that Council made a clear request of the government in December 2025 and the government should now provide a clear response outlining its position, its implementation pathway and its proposed timeframes. For those reasons, I support the motion.

[5.02 p.m.]

Mr HISCUTT (Montgomery) - I wasn't going to stand to speak on this, so, I don't have anything prepared. I just wanted to thank the member for Pembroke for his comments. I, too, struggled a little bit with clause (4) on that because I didn't necessarily agree with the initial motion, but the House spoke, and there was a sufficient number that had it passed in the place. So, his words have given me some comfort to confirm and support the rest of the motion as it's been put. I did note from the member from Hobart two reasons that it could have been: that either we're not respected or they've stitched up a deal; and there's always a third option: Hanlon's razor - never attribute to malice that which is adequately explained by incompetence.

[5.03 p.m.]

Mr GAFFNEY (Mersey) - I rise and choose to speak in full support of the honourable member for Nelson's motion. In December last year, the Council spoke with absolute clarity in agreeing that gambling advertising and sponsorship has no place in publicly owned or publicly funded venues. I will begin by thanking the honourable member for Nelson for putting forward the motion and indeed going to the effort of providing members a background information document - that was very helpful.

The first resolution was one that recognised and appreciated what communities, researchers and service providers have been saying for years. Gambling harm is not an abstract policy concern but a real and growing public health issue affecting families across Tasmania and one that is intensified by the current cost-of-living crisis. The matter of gambling and gaming in Tasmania, and indeed Australia more broadly, is quite unique. It is unique in the sense that members from all sides of politics agree that it is an insidious, incessant issue. Indeed, gambling is well recognised by society as a critical issue that requires serious reform and ongoing efforts by legislators to protect constituents from the harm that it does. As such, I would like to thank the honourable member for Nelson for championing this issue in this place. It is an admirable and important thing.

For all the agreement on the harm that gambling does to Tasmania, it is a matter that stays conspicuously in the fringe of regulation. Indeed, at the same time we reform gaming legislation to end a monopolistic company, we provide them incredible tax breaks. At the same time we see the government just recently looking to reforming our gaming legislation, we see it walking backwards in its commitments to cashless gaming regulation, providing seemingly endless investment in a venue that would inevitably, almost symbiotically enable gambling at a level not yet seen in Tasmania. Throughout these outcomes, all sides of politics have continued to cry for further regulation in the space.

As such, when the Legislative Council makes a timely resolution to call upon the government to take a very small action in the space to act as a leader in protecting young Tasmanians and others from the insidious roots of gambling, it is just another long string of disappointing outcomes. Pro-stadium voters, government officials and indeed members have at times labelled the stadium build as having the potential to be an innovative one-of-one technological marvel right here in Hobart. One must question why, if this is the opportunity to lead Australia, we do not take steps to lead Australia in the space of gambling. A ban on gambling in those venues that are likely propped up by government money would not be out of place. It would be a governmental decision abiding in a code of morality.

In a national context, these perspectives are becoming ever more critical. The federal government's gambling advertising reforms announced on 2 April 2026 demonstrate a national momentum that is shifting decisively towards stronger protections. Those reforms partially implement the recommendations of the 2023 House of Representatives Standing Committee report, *You Win Some, You Lose More*. It is a report that documented in detail the scale of harm caused by pervasive promotion of gambling through the medium advertising. Crucially, the federal reform allows Tasmania to immediately prohibit gambling advertising at state-owned or state-funded venues and, if anything, the recommendations reinforce the legitimacy and necessity of state-level action.

We've also seen the recent national social media ban for those under the age of 16, a move that can play its part in reducing the exposure to harmful gambling advertising and its potential link to problem gambling. There's simply no excuse, governments can act. It's simply a willingness to do something other than to kick the can down the road. Yet, what we see is hand-wringing from a government that promises genuine gambling reform and then apparently kowtows to the preferences and stipulations of the gambling industry. I must ask who or what is in control as from here it looks as though the gambling industry only has to hint at its displeasure for the government to immediately toe the line.

We are not talking about the industry-owned venues, we are talking about publicly owned venues that carry a responsibility to uphold community sensibilities and wellbeing. Allowing gambling advertising in these spaces and on the uniforms of players representing those venues only normalises and publicises an activity known to cause actual harm. It sends the wrong message to young people, families and those already struggling with gambling addiction. We recognised this in 2025 and we should reaffirm that position today.

Of course, such a suggestion requires the government to play hardball with those in industries that have deep ties with gambling, which it has repeatedly demonstrated it is unwilling to do. One must question, after we have acceded to every demand for the stadium, the point at which the government will decide that it can determine Tasmania's destiny without simply capitulating to the demands of interest groups. Will it be after the last brick is laid or once the first game is played? Or will it be years from now when we finally take back control of our state?

With that said, I'd like to stress, as I did when we spoke to the original motion, that:

... this is not an attack on sport or on businesses that rely on sponsorship; it is a decision about the role of government and the messages we are sending from public spaces. We can protect vulnerable Tasmanians. We can reduce the grooming of children into gambling and align our state with national recommendations - while supporting teams and events to find ethical, community-minded partners.

As the honourable member for Nelson noted, the bicameral nature of our parliament entails equal, symmetrical power. Subsequently, it demands equal, symmetrical respect. This place is one side of the coin and it is disappointing when serious, important resolutions such as this one are swept under the rug. It is a matter of good practice. When the Legislative Council calls on the government to act, and particularly on matters of public health and public accountability, it is entirely reasonable to expect a timely and fully transparent response. The government is here for all Tasmanians - not just those it agrees with and those of the most powerful voices that can bend its ear.

More than six months have passed, and we are still waiting on the government's implementation update, with not even a brief apology or attempt to say we are still working on it and it's on the way. That is an absolute failure of the decorum of this place and is almost contempt. When the Legislative Council respectfully asks for an implementation report, it does so to understand the progress and clarity on an agreed resolution. It is also a perfect opportunity for the government to demonstrate an initiative-taking public policy approach in countering the harm that comes from gambling. This process also has the benefit of reducing public exposure and endorsement of gambling by the tacit support of the state and the sport. These expectations have still to be met. The government can and must do better.

I'm not even suggesting the government needs to enact the resolution's recommendations entirely, even if that is the most desirable outcome; there are aspects that would be significantly easier to implement, which would do much by way of demonstrating actual, tangible commitment by the government.

While I appreciate industry and business concerns in this space regarding impact and pragmatism, the reality is there are plenty of actions the government can take that will not

undermine the viability of sports. For instance, I imagine it would be quite easy to ban advertisements on screens in these buildings.

A considered cohesive response to the resolution by the government, rather than simply a speech by the Leader prior to voting against the motion, would have been appropriate in this space and it would have been a good opportunity to see some genuine commitment or skin in the game by this government.

I understand the government has committed to overhauling legislation in the gaming and gambling space, and I appreciate that. Nonetheless, it is the fact that Tasmanians want, and indeed deserve, stronger action in this space. The contents of this motion represent a part of that picture and it's really disappointing to have heard nothing from the government. As was clearly explained when the original resolution passed in 2025, it is a matter of protecting our children. That is not hyperbole. It is well accepted that the gambling industry is preying on and grooming teenagers from a young age. Frankly, if the government does not take appropriate steps, it risks complicity in the creation of a growing demographic of young gambling addicts. This will hurt real Tasmanians - real lives and real families - and it's something that needs to be taken utterly seriously.

The motion does not ask for anything unreasonable, it simply requests that in a month's time the government provide the update it was already expected to deliver and it give a fulsome response to the December 2025 resolution. Tasmanians deserve transparency, and our public venues and team uniforms deserve to be free of frivolous, invidious gambling ads. Gambling is a scourge that undermines so much of the health and wellbeing of some of our most vulnerable in our community. We can and must do better. I fully support the motion.

[5.13 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, first of all, I'd like to acknowledge the honourable member for Nelson and other members in this House for their longstanding advocacy on gambling harm and gambling reform and thank the member for bringing forward this motion.

As I commenced my contribution on behalf of the government late last year, the government acknowledges that for some in the community, the effects of gambling harm are real. It can have a significant consequence on individuals, families and communities. Governments have an important role in promoting responsible gambling and implementing effective harm-minimisation measures. The motion before the Council refers to a resolution agreed to by this place on 2 December 2025 concerning gambling advertising and sponsorship at state-owned or state-funded venues. The government respects the role of the Legislative Council and acknowledges the Chamber's capacity to pass resolutions expressing its views on public policy matters.

Further, the government respectfully observes that resolutions of this Chamber do not of themselves establish government policy and that the government's position was made clear during the debate on the original motion on 2 December that's been articulated here today. The government's position should not be conflated with a lack of acknowledgement of awareness of the issues raised through the motion and the government's position actions to address these issues were canvassed in some detail in the debate late last year.

The government also acknowledges that the House requested an implementation update within six months of passing the 2 December 2025 resolution and that a report has not been provided within the timeframe contemplated by the resolution. Nevertheless, since that time, the government has further considered the resolution, maintains awareness of issues raised by it and has continued to engage with developments occurring at the national level in relation to gambling advertising reform. That the Commonwealth government has now responded to the Murphy report since that time is a significant and relevant development.

Further, given the government's position on the substantive policy issues raised by the motion was outlined at length during the debate on 2 December 2025, in the interest of avoiding unnecessary repetition, I do not intend to restate every aspect of that position today, but rather to focus on development since that debate and the matter specifically raised in the current motion.

Firstly, to outline the government's position relevant to substantive calls of this motion, it is important to recognise that matters relating to gambling advertising and sponsorship are not as straightforward as implied in the honourable member for Nelson's motion. For existing arrangements of teams or venues, the government knows various implementation impediments, including existing contractual arrangements, venue management frameworks, sporting body agreements, sponsorship obligations and the interaction between state and Commonwealth regulatory responsibilities - all points that are not addressed by the motion.

The proposal contained in the motion would also have significant practical and economic implications. Sponsorship and advertising arrangements continue the viability of sporting organisations, events and venues, including community and grassroots sporting activities. Any substantial changes to these arrangements would require careful consideration with sporting bodies, venue operators, community organisations and other stakeholders.

Furthermore, implementing and enforcing a prohibition of the type proposed would require clear legislative definitions, regulatory mechanisms and enforcement arrangements. The government considers that these matters require further consideration and should occur within the context of broader national reforms. These matters cannot simply be resolved by declaration alone.

The government acknowledges the concerns raised by the honourable member for Nelson and others regarding gambling advertising and sponsorship, and recognises that gambling harm can have significant impacts on individuals, families and communities. The government remains committed to reducing gambling-related harm through evidence-based harm minimisation measures. They also acknowledge the importance of ensuring that vulnerable people, particularly young people, are protected from gambling risks and are supported through effective consumer protection measures. However, the government does not support the proposition that Tasmania should act unilaterally to impose a blanket prohibition on gambling advertising and sponsorship at all state-owned or state-funded venues.

As mentioned in the contribution on behalf of the government late last year, it's noted that regulation of online gambling services and gambling advertising is primarily a matter for the Australian Government under the *Interactive Gambling Act 2001*. The Commonwealth has now announced and progressed gambling advertising reforms through the Interactive Gambling Amendment (Gambling Reform) Bill 2026. While the government notes those reforms do not extend to the matter specifically contemplated by this motion, they nevertheless

demonstrate that gambling advertising policy continues to be developed within a national framework. Although state governments may possess the capacity to impose restrictions in some venues under their control, the government considers isolated venue-based measures to be an ineffective and fragmented response when compared with nationally coordinated reforms.

For completeness, it is noted that the government has made a submission to the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee that is considering the Interactive Gambling Amendment (Gambling Reform) Bill 2026 and National Self-exclusion Register (Cost Recovery Levy) Amendment Bill 2026. The submission focused on particular aspects of the reform, including foreign-matched lotteries, illegal offshore gaming websites and issues relating to trade promotions. While it does not specifically relate to the member for Nelson's motion, I am providing that information for the benefit of all members.

I'd like to seek leave to table a document, and that is the response to the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee. I seek leave.

Leave granted; document tabled.

Ms RATTRAY - This particular document was tabled in the other place. To the broader issue raised by the Murphy report, the government's view is that gambling harm minimisation is a complex issue requiring a coordinated and nationally consistent response. Isolated state-based restrictions risk creating regulatory inconsistencies and compliance challenges while delivering only limited effectiveness in reducing overall exposure to gambling advertising.

Tasmania has consistently supported the nationally coordinated approach reflected in the National Consumer Protection Framework for Online Wagering. This framework has already delivered a range of important protections, including BetStop - the National Self-Exclusion Register, stronger consumer safeguards and improved harm minimisation measures. The government considers that collaborative action of this nature provides the most effective pathway for meaningful reform.

In summary, the government remains of the view that venue-specific restrictions implemented in a single jurisdiction would create inconsistencies across national sporting codes, venue operators and sponsorship arrangements without materially reducing overall exposure to gambling advertising; and further, the government does not accept the characterisation that it has failed to acknowledge the resolution or has been inactive on gambling reform.

The government has continued to engage with national reforms, participate in Commonwealth consultation processes and consider the practical implications of venue-based restrictions, notwithstanding that it does not support the policy outcome proposed by the original motion. The government, therefore, does not support the motion.

Nevertheless, the government remains committed to reducing gambling harm, supporting vulnerable Tasmanians and working collaboratively with the Australian Government and other jurisdictions on practical, evidence-based and nationally consistent gambling reform measures. Should the motion be agreed to by this Chamber, the government will consider any request for further information in accordance with normal parliamentary processes and provide such advice as is appropriate.

In conclusion, while the government continues to recognise gambling harm is a significant public policy issue, it does not support the blanket prohibition proposed by the original resolution and maintains that nationally consistent reform remains the preferred pathway.

[5.24 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - After that response, the member for Nelson might need a few moments to collect her thoughts. In any event, I'm pretty disappointed myself in that. I want to thank the member for Nelson for bringing this amendment. Regardless of your view on the content of the motion, it's disrespectful not to get a formal response as agreed by this House. Bottom line.

Aside from that, I think it's important to comment on a few things that the Leader said because her response was quite broad and reaching beyond the actual scope of the motion. And that's okay, that's fine; it's helpful to have additional information on this matter. But to continue to say that this government supports evidence-based harm minimisation measures is a bit of a stretch. Do they support broader federal government reform? Well, of course we all do that. Yes, the state government is engaging in that process, but I refuse to accept that a state-based decision on a state-owned and -funded entity cannot occur, and even if by the Leader's own comments that it would have no material impact on the exposure to gambling, well, it will in Tasmania. It would in Tasmania, in this very expensive thing we're building just down here where we're going to put on footy matches that are broadcast nationally. What a refreshing change for people watching in on their tellies not to see gambling advertising. What a refreshing change that would be. The team will, and no doubt has already, secured some sponsorship arrangements, but there's an ethical basis here and an ethical stance that we should be taking with our state-owned team - or state team - we do put money into it and almost own it. We need to take a stand on something as important as this in terms of the known impact on young people, on people who are addicted to gambling, on behalf of the people of Tasmania, in a venue that's going to cost us a lot of money, that the people of Tasmania will own - regardless of your views on whether it should or shouldn't be built. We could stand up and be counted as a state that doesn't condone gambling advertising being linked with sport. I've watched the footy on many different platforms, including being at games, and I tell you what, the gambling ads do your head in at times. That is a matter for the federal government to work on.

I know, sadly, I'm sure, for the family of the late Peta Murphy, the federal Labor government is walking backwards from some of the very clear recommendations that one of their own led. To say that we can't or shouldn't use an isolated venue and make state-based decisions is nonsense. We can make decisions for our state. We can set a standard that we don't believe gambling and sport in our state should be in the same venue. To suggest that a self-exclusion register will be helpful - I didn't quite get the full context of what the Leader said there, but if you want to go to the footy or to that stadium, a self-exclusion registry where you're not going to be exposed to gambling advertising, for example, what does that mean? You don't go to the footy? You don't watch the footy? I might have taken that out of context. I didn't quite get the full context of that comment. We know how self-exclusion works in pokies venues, but that's not what we're talking about here.

I'm sure that the member for Nelson will have a few words of response, but I don't accept some of the arguments put by the government as to why they can't consider, let alone support, a ban on gambling advertising and sponsorship at all state-owned and state-funded venues,

including the Macquarie Point Stadium and on players' uniforms. Because we can do things differently if we choose to. We can set a standard that others may follow. If you look at - not that this is the same - but look at the lead Australia took on the ban of social media for children under 16. There are other jurisdictions around the world looking at that. Of course, it's not perfect. No-one suggested it was going to be perfect, but it is making a difference. Other international jurisdictions are looking at it. This is that on a micro scale. We could be the leader on this. We have a new team. We anticipate having a new facility. Surely, we can make the rules ourselves.

[5.30 p.m.]

Ms WEBB - Thank you, Mr President. Thank you to members for engaging with the motion. I really appreciate the contributions made by members, and some of them thoughtful and quite comprehensive, others more simply stated, but also supportive and recognising the core elements of the motions. I very much appreciate it.

As the member for Huon said in her contribution, this is about accountability. I'd like to address a couple of things in my summing up here that have come up during contributions. One being, in the first instance what I believe to be the core of this motion today, which I largely focused on in my contribution for the motion, was about the government failing to respect this place and respond appropriately to a motion duly passed here in December last year. This is about accountability and the government's failure to be accountable to this Chamber. Quite frankly, the Leader got up on behalf of the government and spoke about a range of matters, some of which were relevant to the motion last year and some of which weren't. Regardless, certainly the elements that were relevant to the motion passed last year could easily have been put into a short document and tabled in this place by 2 June, in accordance with the call in the December motion to provide an update to this place. It didn't say, 'Provide an update that Meg Webb will be happy with'. It didn't even say, 'Provide an update that the majority of the Chamber would be happy with'. It just said provide an update.

Quite frankly, if the government, via the Leader here today, is able to run through a range of matters, some of which were vaguely relevant here now, when dragged kicking and screaming by yet another motion to do so, it could have been done respectfully and in appropriate accordance with the motion from last year. They could have tabled that and got on with it, we could all have got on with it. We may have wanted to discuss it further via other motions subsequent to it; so be it. There could have been other ways that members here, including me, might have expressed views about the response provided, but it would have been a response. It would have been tabled as per the motion, and it would have been what this Chamber should be able to expect from a respectful government of the day to this Chamber.

Absolutely ridiculous, for the Leader then to say at the end of the government's contribution, that they'll take note of how this motion goes today and respond to it. Well, why on Earth would we believe that to be true? Why on Earth would any of us here bringing any motion at any future date, as the member for Pembroke rightly said in his contribution, we all bring motions at times, and if they're supported in this place, I think all of us here, or many of us here, would have each other's backs in the fact that a motion passed by this Chamber should at least be responded to appropriately and respectfully by the government. Maybe not to the extent that we would all like; we may not have been in agreement with the original motion when it was debated, but once passed it's actually this Chamber's responsibility to hold the government to account to the motion. Which is what this motion was about today.

Thank you to the members who expressed support for that function of today's motion. What an embarrassment for the government. I'm sorry that the Leader had to be embarrassed in that way by the government, because what they had her get up and say here could have just been done two months ago in accordance with last December's motion. We wouldn't have needed this one. It could have quietly gone away.

That's that part of it. The other part - although I didn't go there in my initial contribution because other members brought up some elements relating to the substance of the original December motion last year - I will respond to a couple of those. I could potentially respond to those in some detail, but I will keep it very brief for the purposes of summing up, knowing we have other business today.

I absolutely agree with the member for Murchison. It's a complete nonsense that we could not act on this in a leadership fashion, as a state, particularly as a state, as the member for Murchison said, that has established its own team under a state banner, essentially. We could show leadership and do so on behalf of our community, knowing that that would be well supported by this community in Tasmania.

It's an excuse, and nothing more, for the government to say: things have to happen at the federal level before they can do anything. That's rubbish. We are able to take action on matters that relate to the specific things under the purview of the state government. State-owned venues and arrangements relating to those absolutely fit squarely in that. Yes, there is a national framework that's playing out. Yes, there was legislation that the federal government did finally bring and that I think has actually just been passed through the federal parliament. Let's be clear though, the most contentious parts of that legislation that the federal government was bringing, and that have recently been negotiated there and passed, by the sound of it, in the federal parliament in negotiation with the federal opposition related to the phased-out banning of online gambling advertising. Those were the bits that became contentious, and the inducements associated with that. The actual recommendation from the Murphy report that related to the banning of gambling advertising in stadia and on players' uniforms was uncontentious. That was supported; that is still supported by the federal government. I haven't heard anyone in the federal parliament getting up and speaking against that. That is part of the plan. The Murphy report said the federal government would need to work with state and territory jurisdiction governments to implement that recommendation because the federal government could not do it by themselves because it sits here at a state level, for this state government to be acting in that place. It's absolutely available to this state government to do it, even if it doesn't want to rush into that. If that's what it feels like, if you're requested to do it in a 12-month period - that seems like a fairly reasonable amount of time to give it some thought and begin progress towards it - you could do it in a longer timeframe, but you could start taking tangible steps now.

The fact that the government wasn't able to say, having noted complexities about contract signed, impact on sports clubs, and a whole bunch of other things, it didn't describe taking any action in the time that's transpired since December last year. It didn't describe any action it has taken to try to quantify some of those complexities to try to model out what an impact will be, to gather information about what the scope of this might look like at a state level, even though this is coming down the tunnel because it is part of the Murphy report recommendations that have been accepted by the federal government. It will be progressed in conjunction with the federal government down to the state and territory jurisdictions. There's plenty of work to be done then to work through the complexities. If the government can describe the complexities, then - even if it's slower than we might like - it could be taking steps towards better

understanding, documenting, quantifying and analysing those complexities on its way to arriving at the destination of the required ban.

It wasn't able to describe any of that, therefore, it's simply busywork that they're talking about things that can assist them to give excuses and delays, assist them in explaining why they're doing absolutely nothing - 'Oh, it's all too hard.' No, it's not. If you want to do it, if you wanted to do it on behalf of Tasmanian families, Tasmanian children who want to be able to go to a state venue and watch sport without it inextricably being linked to gambling via advertising there at the venue on players' jerseys when you're trying to watch your local team, of course, it's possible. If the government wanted to do it, it could and it should. I think the Tasmanian community would have an expectation that this government would do so and will applaud if and when it finally does.

It's unquestionable now that we do not advertise alcohol products in our stadiums or on players' jerseys and uniforms. We don't advertise smoking products. We got to that point on those products. They're both legal products, there's nothing illegal about them. We can all purchase those products legally, but we don't advertise them in any way to do with our sporting codes anymore. We haven't for a long time. This is the same direction we're moving in for gambling; slowly, far too slowly in my view, because we all know that gambling is a harmful product. We all know it's designed to be addictive, to entice people into a state of utilising that product to the point of self-destruction. That's what it's designed for, so of course it's a public health issue for us to minimise the impact of in our community. And that will inevitably arrive at us banning the advertising of that product; certainly in situations where we know vulnerable, and particularly vulnerable young people will be exposed to it.

There should literally be no-one in any leadership position in this state who has any doubt about that inevitability of the path that we're on to get to that destination. The only reason we would have any delay in getting there is to be self-serving to the vested interests in that space and the hold they may have over us in some form. It's a shame to have any government provide excuses that aren't about not being able to get something done, it's about not wanting to get something done, quite frankly.

As the member for Murchison quite rightly said, this is a government that makes very questionable claims to supporting evidence-based reforms when it comes to gambling. Wrong. They don't. They turn their back on evidence-based reforms and put forward fake reforms instead. That's an absolutely true fact, indisputable. Our Liquor and Gaming Commission says as much.

This is a government that still uses completely inappropriate terminology when it speaks about this topic. The government's response here today talked about the fact that the government has a role in promoting responsible gambling. There couldn't be a worse way to characterise that. There is no such thing as responsible gambling when it's an addictive product. The people who end up with a gambling addiction, who are victimised by predatory gambling habits through advertising, inducements and the like, are not finding themselves in that horrific situation because they lack responsibility. 'Gamble responsibly' is outdated, incorrect and victim-blaming word usage. It's the 'responsible service of gambling' that should be the focus of any sort of examination and promotion here. The responsible service of gambling is about how we present it to our communities via advertising, how we present it in terms of where it's available and restrictions we might put on that, and how we put protections and consumer protection in place around it. That's the responsible service of gambling.

This government should never speak about responsible gambling because when it comes to addictive gambling, it's nothing to do with a moral failing of the person who's the victim of that. It's a moral failing of the government that fails to responsibly regulate it and put the right consumer protection. There's plenty of evidence-based consumer protection available, but this government rejects all of it. So, let's just be really clear, a government that was genuine, that really did support evidence-based reforms would be doing pretty much the opposite of anything this government is doing in the gambling space right now.

Anyway, more could be said on that, but, as I said, I'll keep it brief for today and I'll again thank members for engaging with the motion. May I suggest to the government, can you pay attention to what happened here today with this motion? Can we not do this again? If we pass a motion in this place and it does something as moderate and simple as asking for a report back in a six-month time period on what may be taking place in response to the motion, could you please just provide a report back to this place within six months, even if it's a report back that we're not going to like or that says, guess what, we haven't done much? Even if it's just that; that respects at least that very moderate, modest request of a motion passed by this Chamber. Can you please pay attention to that and have the respect for us not to have to do this again?

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Tasmanian Government Response to the Report of the Independent Review of the *Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008* - Consideration and Noting

[5.44 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Hobart) - Mr President, I move -

That the Tasmanian Government's disappointing and irresponsible response to the Report of the Independent Review of the *Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008* be considered and noted.

I intend to be quite brief in my contribution today simply because the science of climate change isn't new news and it doesn't need much further explaining. This Council, similarly to the point made by the honourable member for Nelson, supported my motion last September that the *Climate Change (State Action) Act* needs a substantial overhaul to deliver emissions reductions and prepare Tasmanians to adapt to the intensifying impacts of climate change. We called on the Tasmanian government to work with scientists, the community, farmers, business and industry leaders and the parliament to ensure the act is strengthened to reflect the urgency of the times, and we agreed as a collective that this demonstration of leadership would give more young Tasmanians hope for a safe climate future.

I spend too much time trying to understand what's happening to the state of the climate. That's probably why I don't sleep very well.

Here is a heat map. I show these pictures, hopefully with your approval, simply to give honourable members an idea of what is happening in the Eastern Pacific. That is the El Niño event there. It's pretty clear that the eastern Pacific is boiling away.

Mr PRESIDENT - Would the honourable member like to table them?

Ms O'CONNOR - Thanks, Mr President. Here is a more precise global map of the super El Niño which is forming in the Eastern Pacific. The world has never seen anything like it, not in all of recorded history, and they can't find any record of similar in geological records, either. It's a monster. In case anyone thought, and we hear this every now and again, that we've always had hot summers and of course the climate's always changing.

Mr Gaffney - Do you have another prop there?

Ms O'CONNOR - I have another prop, thanks honourable member for Mersey. This is sourced by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the United States of America (NOAA), one of the pre-eminent climate institutions in the world. They produce very reliable and important science. This is a graph going back to 1880 of global annual temperature anomalies, between 1880 and 2024. I don't know if honourable members can see this, but this is when we had hot summers, these little red spikes, and then, over here is this great wedge of heat. That is a temperature anomaly, and that substantial and sharp increase in heat has been happening since the late 1990s.

I seek the leave of the Council to table these climatic maps.

Leave granted; documents tabled.

Ms O'CONNOR - You might imagine that a responsible government, which has access to some very bright scientific minds as well as readily available information from the Bureau of Meteorology, would have a look at what's coming down the line and understand that the times have changed and that there's an urgency here in how we respond to accelerating global heating. Well, unfortunately, we don't seem to have a responsible-enough government.

The review report of the independent review of the *Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008* was released earlier this year. It makes a number of significant recommendations. It points out that stakeholder confidence in the Tasmanian government's ability to deliver meaningful climate outcomes remains low. It states that as a finding, as a fact, because the independent review went through an extensive community consultation process and a whole range of organisations, including the Greens, including the Climate Collective, the Tasmanian Conservation Trust, and other environmental and community organisations made submissions to the independent review in the hope that maybe this time the government would listen. But clearly the feedback in the submissions to that review was that the community's expectations of this government on climate remain low.

It means they won't be disappointed by the government's response, because once your expectations are so low, perhaps you're not able to be disappointed. Perhaps I'm being a bit glib there, but the government's response to the independent review of the *Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008* is woeful. It is reckless. It's dismissive and it's irresponsible. The only reason that the government's response was tabled in the House of Assembly late last week and in this House today - it was to be tabled by 13 August - was by a vote of the House of Assembly. They had to be made to prepare any kind of response to a statutory review of an act which is clearly outdated and not, in fact, achieving its purpose.

On adaptation planning, which at the moment is a personal priority for all the reasons that I've laid out in a previous debate, because I feel responsible to this city and its people and to this beautiful island and its people, I'm very worried about what is coming this summer and next, and I'm very worried that we have a government that doesn't get it. What the review found is that there is a lack of adaptation planning at a statewide level that accounts for all affected sectors and stakeholders. The review report says:

Tasmania's Climate Change Action Plan 2023-25 will lapse at the end of 2025 and a new plan has not yet been developed.

Here we are, nudging towards the end of 2026, and a new climate change action plan has not been developed.

They talk about the government's production of a climate risk assessment but note that the response doesn't include any adaptation implementation plan. They note that there is a gap in adaptation planning.

They find that adaptation was also a priority concern for all stakeholder groups, reflecting the growing exposure of Tasmanian communities and industries to a changing climate. Despite this, the reviewers found:

... adaptation is seen as not receiving sufficient prominence in the Act and there are concerns about effective implementation.

They also found that:

Capacity constraints within both state and local government also limit the ability to plan and implement adaptation effectively.

In broad terms, in the seven recommendations in the review, it was about strengthening governance, accountability, and embedding adaptation and resilience into the act and into the operations of government. If we can't become more resilient in the years ahead, we will be constantly shaped by crisis, and I think we can do better than that.

We're a closely connected, clever island of people with a sense of care for each other that I think is quite rare in the world. Therefore, we have an opportunity here, if we have some leadership from government, to be able to not be lurching from crisis to crisis but to have a clear, concise, well-resourced adaptation plan with clear implementation measures where you've got federal, state and local governments working together and engaging with communities.

The review also recommends that there needs to be greater consistency, transparency and quality of reporting. It talks about the importance of communication with stakeholders, and that appears to be something that the government could improve on as well.

The Tasmanian government's response to the 2024-25 Independent Review of the *Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008* is 11 pages long. But do you know what it says? Not much at all. I hope, honourable members, even if you're not going to make a contribution on this notice of motion, you do take the opportunity to read the government's response. It won't

take you long. You could do it in the afternoon tea break and have time for tea and a biscuit without having to look at it.

It is completely noncommittal. I'll go to some of the points here and challenge the government to do better. They should be ashamed of this response.

It starts with:

The Tasmanian government is committed to practical, balanced climate action.

Then they point to our net zero status. They do manage to give a nod to the fact that that primarily comes from protected forests.

Then it goes on with a bit of background about the review, and then the government's response says the 2024-25 independent review found that the act provides a strong foundation for climate action. It also found that public confidence in the government's capacity to address climate mitigation and adaptation is low. That's not something that you find in the government's response, though. What they talk about, and it's mentioned in the review as well, is the number of plans and assessments they've done. Lots of reporting, quite a bit of planning, a little bit of assessing, not much implementation, very little resourcing. So, it says here:

Following the 2020-21 independent review and legislative amendments in 2022, the government has delivered a range of plans and assessments to guide our action on climate change and reports on our activities and legislative requirements each year.

...

The Tasmanian Government recognises the seven recommendations provided by the independent reviewers. This response to the independent review outlines how the government will embed improvements within our existing framework.

That is code for, 'We're not going to accept in full any recommendations of the climate act review, we're just going to continue with business as usual, and do some tinkering around the edges.' 'This', the government claims boldly, 'will allow us to continue taking strong, practical action on climate change.' Signed by the honourable Guy Barnett MP, Deputy Premier, Minister for Environment and Climate Change.

We should pause for a moment here and acknowledge that, finally, we do have a minister for climate change. It's taken many years. I think it's six or seven years since we last had a minister for climate change. So, at least we have that, and I certainly hope he will take his new role and enormous responsibility as seriously as he needs to.

The government - and this is more blah-blah. The document states:

The government acknowledges the Independent Review's findings that the Act is operating as intended and that most major reforms introduced through the 2022 amendments were only implemented during 2024. The government

considers priority should be given to implementation and evaluation of these reforms -

From four years ago, I might add.

while progressively strengthening governance, adaptation, transparency, and engagement arrangements.

Then, as you go through the review document, there is no evidence of any tangible attempt to strengthen governance, adaptation, transparency or engagement. On the seven recommendations - on the recommendation that governance, transparency and accountability be improved, only support in principle. On the recommendation that the review cycle be changed from four years to 10 years because it's more practical, only support in principle. On the need for stronger, more coordinated adaptation planning, the government only supports that in principle too. On the need for tighter, more transparent decision-making and accountability, only support in principle.

Where we've got support from government - because they say they're already doing it - is on the need for better engagement and communication at a community level. I pause at this point to ask honourable members, when was the last time in your own community you saw any evidence of government, or any of its entities, engaging in a meaningful way on emergency preparedness? That is not to take away from the incredible work that the Tasmania Fire Service and the State Emergency Service do with the resources that they have, because any community that has been able to engage with the fire service or the SES on emergency planning is very grateful and, by the time they've been through that process, feels at least a little bit more informed.

The Climate Collective's submission talks about the state of mind of a lot of Tasmanians. It's one of the best submissions that was made to the review. Thank you, honourable member for Nelson. It was a great submission by Climate Tasmania, an independent group of highly expert, totally devoted Tasmanians. I'm very grateful for their work. The Climate Tasmania submission says:

The critical factor here, though not the only one, is speed of change. Paleoclimate data indicates that nearly all past climate changes, including the world's emergence from the last ice age, happened over thousands or tens of thousands of years. That enabled our species and others to adjust practices and patterns to match changing conditions. However, current global climate is changing several times more quickly than at any other time since humans have existed. Of most concern, many leading climate scientists have observed an acceleration in this rate of change.

Another factor is the awareness and understanding of Tasmanians about the state of the climate. Our community's carbon emissions are per capita among the worst in the world. Past and current mitigation measures, best described as negligible, have led to a low level of public awareness of human-induced climate change and a careless attitude to what we can expect in coming decades.

All of this indicates that while some individuals and segments of the community have become more resilient, as a whole our Tasmanian community is ill-prepared, or lack[s] sufficient resources to make necessary changes to adapt to a rapidly changing climate.

That is why we need some leadership. The government claims in its response to the review that it's guided by three principles. It says it will continue delivering the significant reforms introduced in 2022. One of which, of course, was a net zero by 2030 target, noting that we're already at net zero. And what allows us to claim net-zero status is the protection of our forests.

And, noting that our forest estate is at significant risk from increased and extreme bushfires, our net-zero status, which was legislated in 2022 is potentially at risk - and this is a point that's been made by climate scientists and other stakeholders who inputted to the review - the government also says it will - and this is, I think, the most disheartening aspect of this response - 'strengthen implementation before pursuing further major legislative change'. I'd like to know how long the government thinks we have before they need to get serious about climate.

Then we have some garble as the third of its principles, and that is to 'embed continuous improvement through governance, engagement, and transparency'. Mr President, I don't believe them.

Then the government talks about what it has done, and, so, I'll give them the opportunity by putting on the *Hansard* record again the things that they have done following the 2022 amendments or what the 2022 amendments did:

- A legislated target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions, or lower, from 2030
- five-year climate change action plans
- noting that our current plan has expired;
- five-year statewide climate change risk assessments
- noting that the 2024 risk assessment has been largely, on all the evidence, ignored by government;
- sector-based emissions reduction and resilience plans
- again, plans. No evidence of impetus for implementation;
- annual emissions reporting
- annual reporting on climate change activities.

There's not much there that is tangible in any way. The government makes the excuse that:

Many of the plans and programs created through the 2022 amendments are still in the early stages of implementation and have not yet had sufficient time to demonstrate long-term outcomes.

For this reason, the government's priority is to continue implementing and evaluating the current framework while strengthening policy and administrative arrangements where opportunities for improvement have been identified.

In fact, this gels with the evidence that came before us in general administration, a committee in Estimates last year, when I asked the then - and now disgraced - minister for Climate Change, Ms Ogilvie, how she thought the government would be inclined to respond to the review of the climate act and when we might expect to see some amendments to strengthen the act. It's very clear to me from the former minister's answers that there was no intention to do anything meaningful. When I then asked the temporary minister for Climate Change in this year's GAA Estimates what the plan was now that the review had been handed down, similarly, I had a very non-committal response, but then a claim from Minister Abetz that the government is spending \$250 million on climate. I'm not going to take honourable members through it, but tabled on 24 June this year is a very flimsy document that talks about all these measures that the government is alleging investing money in, but a lot of them have existing resources or zero dollars next to them, or they say things like 'funding unknown' - unknown. 'Existing resources', 'existing resources', and I pick out of this list of allegedly 55 actions less than half a dozen that are specific adaptation actions. We should be concerned.

Big news from the government: while they agree that trust, transparency and accountability are critical to effective climate governance, the government's response to this will be to review and refresh the terms of reference for the Climate Change Reference Group in 2026, noting that until 2014, under the *Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008*, we had a highly expert independent Tasmanian Climate Action Council (TCAC) that was there to advise the government and the parliament on mitigation and adaptation measures. In one of their first pieces of legislation on coming to power, the Liberals abolished the TCAC. But it's okay because they're going to 'review and refresh' the terms of reference for the Climate Change Reference Group in 2026. Well, that'll certainly fix up the climate.

In terms of adaptation, this is what the government says it will do:

- Strengthen adaptation priorities in the next climate change action plan.

Will there be any implementation plan in there? Who can say, and who can say when we'll actually see it?

- Increase emphasis on adaptation outcomes in the next generation of sector-based emissions reduction and resilience plans.
- Improve coordination between adaptation initiatives across sectors.

What are these adaptation initiatives? What does it mean to say that you'll improve coordination? There's no evidence of it and the independent review said there is a lack of it.

The government says it will:

- Strengthen engagement with local government and regional stakeholders on adaptation priorities.

I just take the chance to remind honourable members again that the Local Government Association of Tasmania had a tiny sum of money that was dedicated towards a statewide adaptation adviser, if you like, to all 29 councils. It was a 0.5 FTE position. It was defunded two years ago. LGAT put in a submission to have that position funded again, and twice now in two budgets, they've been told they can't have the money. We need to look at a statement like, 'strengthen engagement with local government' through that lens, because actions will always speak louder than words.

The government says it will:

- Continue implementation of Tasmania's Risk Assessment for Climate Change and the government's response.

Again, the review found that there was no evidence of any meaningful implementation plan in the climate risk assessment. Great news: the Tasmanian government is going to,

- Investigate opportunities to conduct a Tasmanian adaptation pathways analysis.

Whatever does that mean? More bureaucratese designed ultimately to stuff words in place of actual meaningful intent. The government says 'the current framework already provides a strong foundation for climate adaptation'. In fact, the review found it did not.

I could go on all night, but obviously I can only go on for an hour.

Ms Forrest - This was going to be short?

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, half an hour. You wait. I'm nearly there.

On engagement, the government says it will strengthen stakeholder engagement approaches. I'd love to see some actual evidence of that. It will:

- Increase opportunities for ongoing participation.

What does that mean? It's meaningless. It will:

- Improve engagement with regional communities, local government, young people, business, industry and community stakeholders.

Again, what does that mean? How are they going to do it? How will it be funded? And they promise to:

- Continue to apply best-practice engagement principles across climate policy development.

It is highly dispiriting reading. It's a con job. The reviewers might as well have not bothered, so little attention has the government paid to their work. More importantly, so little attention has government paid to the submissions that came in from scientists, community leaders and stakeholders right across the community.

I will seek the leave of the Council to table correspondence to all Tasmanian members of parliament, which is an open letter stating the obvious that Lutruwita/Tasmania deserves a safe and climate-positive future, calling on all of us to ensure that the independent review recommendations are implemented. They point out that young Tasmanians are shouldering the weight in creating innovative solutions for a livable future, despite record high levels of climate anxiety. They point out Tasmanian businesses are looking for ways to transform to climate-safe alternatives. They implore us at the end in saying:

All of us are working towards a climate-positive and safe future for Lutruwita/Tasmania, one where there is food security, protected natural and cultural heritage, thriving, healthy and resilient communities, and most of all, a Lutruwita/Tasmania we can be proud of.

Business as usual isn't going to cut it anymore. It's time to be proactive, not reactive, in responding to climate change and securing a safer future for younger generations.

Signed by the Tasmanian Conservation Trust, the Tasmanian Climate Collective, the Wilderness Society, Environment Society, Surfrider Foundation Australia, Clarence Climate Action, Teros – love the earth, 1% for the Planet, ACF Community Tasmania South, the Tasmanian National Parks Association, Vets for Climate Action, Climate Action Hobart, Red Parka -

- that wonderful little shop down in town -

Climate for Change, the United Firefighters Union of Australia, the Grassroots Action Network Tasmania, Good Life Permaculture, Grandparents for a Safer Future, Environment Tasmania, Doctors for the Environment Australia, Lawyers for Forests, Fishers & Walkers Tasmania, the Climate Reality Project, Extinction Rebellion Northern Tasmania, Standing Up For The Young, the Circular Economy Huon, Climate Resilience Network, Impact, CANWest (Climate Action Northwest Tasmania), and Renew.

I seek the leave of the Council to table this letter.

Leave granted; document tabled.

Ms O'CONNOR - Last word. Last week in private members' time, I also talked about the state of the climate and, off the back of that, someone in our offices put a little clip up from in here on my Instagram. I'm a real slacker with social media. I'm not very good at it, but this clip did something I've never seen happen on my social media before. It's now at nearly 700,000 views. It was bad news. I was delivering bad news about a gargantuan El Niño and the likely effect on human lives. It's been shared all over the world, there's comments from the US, from Germany, from young people, from old people - and what it tells me is that there's a yearning in the community across the world for truth-telling, for a clear articulation of the science, but also, I think, people in the community want to see their leaders standing up, telling the truth and working hard to protect their interests.

I was very surprised by how that really depressing little clip went on Instagram. It was a really important reminder to me that there's a hunger out there for the truth, and we've all got a responsibility in here to tell that, and to tap into it and point to ways that people can contribute to a safe climate. And one of the most important ways that we all in here can contribute is keeping on raising these issues with the government, but also engaging in our communities about what's coming up in this summer and the next. So, I hope honourable members will support my motion pointing out that the government's response to the interim review of the climate act is irresponsible.

[6.17 p.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - I rise to make a contribution in response to this motion, and I thank the honourable member for Hobart for bringing it. We were just here discussing the independent review report in the recent sitting week, and now we have the government's response, and I agree largely with your sentiments in relation to that. So, I'll make some comments I think that are probably aligned to the ones you've already made and won't go into quite as much detail.

People watching here tonight could be forgiven for thinking this Chamber is stuck on some form of perverse repeat loop. It was only last Tuesday we called for a comprehensive response from the government to the fourth independent review report of the *Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008*. Barely a week later, we're here again and because, sadly, we must be here again. The government's response to this critical independent review report - a response which was finally released on 12 August, a day after our debate in this place, following also, I think, prompting from the other place - cannot be allowed to be the last word on this matter which is so crucial and paramount to the security of Tasmania and our community, not just now but also, of course, into the future.

Tasmanians could also be forgiven for wondering whether and when their government is ever going to take seriously the immediate threat the climate crisis poses to our state, our island, our way of life. Because this flimsy 12-page document that constitutes apparently a so-called government response does not indicate a responsible government grappling with a public policy crisis of the magnitude that this is, patently. As I considered the government's response document, I recalled a statement made some time ago by representatives of Climate Tasmania, and I quote from that:

If Tasmania is to be a climate leader, then it needs leadership from its government.

Well, if this response is anything to go by, we will be experiencing that desperate leadership void for sure. The mover of this motion has spoken at some length and detailed a good analysis, I think, of the government's response and its shortcomings. It doesn't actually take very long to do that, sadly. I'm not going to repeat everything, but I'm going to say I endorse the analysis provided already. I do wish to present a brief summary of some key takeaways that I took away when I was reading this long-awaited response.

My first, relatively unfiltered thought was along the lines of, what in Lutruwita's good name am I reading here? How is this serious, and where is the rest of it? The first sentence of the government response document states the government is 'committed to practical, balanced climate action'.

Well, putting aside the common sense or otherwise of attempting a balanced response to a clearly imbalanced crisis, that assertion by the government is then promptly contradicted entirely by its response to the careful, considered, very practical seven recommendations presented by the independent review. Page 41 of the independent review report states very clearly:

Together, the recommendations provide a roadmap to evolve the Act in a pragmatic way, focusing on deliverability, value and moving from planning to action.

Further:

Collectively, these recommendations position Tasmania to move from planning to delivery - focusing resources on accountability for outcomes rather than processes ...

Surely, there's not too much light between the definitions of practical and pragmatic, I would have thought. Yet, as the cop-out support in principle response from the government to the five critical recommendations regarding reform in the act clearly indicates, the problem is the expectation of meaningful action. We expect meaningful action. Silly, silly us.

Once again, we see the habitual pattern of this government hibernating back into its comfort zone and resorting to self-congratulatory spin to bat away independent, evidence-based roadmaps for real action. This pattern must be challenged every single time it crops up, and, depressingly, it crops up again and again. We cannot afford to keep ignoring the evidence, the science, the independent advice of experts who are trying to help. I could go on regarding that disturbing pattern, but I'm going to move on instead.

Additional to the government's lazy reliance on procedural changes rather than action and outcomes, as emphasised by the independent review report, is its shameless reiteration on Tasmania's apparent reduction of carbon emissions, while carefully not acknowledging the crucial warnings that our net-zero status is under threat due to the failure to focus on delivering broad-based decarbonisation across all Tasmanian sectors. Members would have received a media statement this afternoon from Climate Tasmania. I imagine, I think it probably came through to all of us. That media statement from Climate Tasmania makes this extremely important point:

The group has called for parliament as a whole to force the government to accept that our emissions from petrol, diesel, gas et cetera are not being reduced, and to act decisively to pass dramatically stronger laws which make it clear that it takes the threat from climate change seriously.

That sums up what should have been at the forefront of the government's response to the independent review report, as an acknowledgement that we must act on broad-based decarbonisation of all sectors, rather than a blinkered reliance upon carbon sequestration from land use in isolation, plus immediate legislative reform to strengthen our climate act, both of which sound like practical and balanced actions to me, but neither of which we are getting from this government.

I agree with Climate Tasmania in this regard, and further agree that clearly we cannot rely on the government alone to heed the advice of independent experts in a manner which reflects the urgency of the climate challenge which confronts us as a community. It's going to take a concerted effort by this parliament and the broader Tasmanian community to shake the government from its complacency and lethargy.

It's worth noting the government's response does not provide any good reason for its lethargic 'in principle' support to the independent review recommendations, which in some quarters are considered rather conservative and minimalist in themselves. The government just doesn't seem to want to, it just doesn't seem to get it. Without comprehensive, ambitious and focused climate action, the brutal fact is Tasmanians will pay the price economically, environmentally and socially. Yet, somehow the government, as indicated by its minimalist and unsatisfactory response to this two-year independent review, just refuses to get it.

Before I wind up, I want to use this opportunity to draw attention to the photograph illustrating the front of the government's response to the 2024-25 independent review report document. I hope members may have the copy of the document in front of them. It's a beautiful photograph on the cover. It's one which depicts a narrow band of rugged Tasmanian coastline. The momentum of that wild ocean can be felt through the page; I almost expect to hear the crash of the waves rolling in to break on those rocks. It's a masterful photograph and it's the work of Chris Crerar, to whom I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute. Chris was a lovely genuine, compassionate man who, while immersing himself in his environmental and social justice pursuits, gave just as much back to the Tasmanian community. I had the privilege of getting to know Chris when he was working with Reconciliation Tasmania on the Yes campaign for the Voice referendum of 2023. It was a deep and shocking loss when he was taken from us too soon in 2024. However, Reconciliation Tasmania established the Chris Crerar Reconciliation Scholarship, which is available to a Tasmanian Aboriginal student commencing a bachelor degree for the first time in any discipline at the University of Tasmania. A wonderful legacy to honour Chris, the dedicated social justice advocate, journalist and photographer. It's bittersweet to see Chris's beautiful work on this document. It would be all any government of the day could hope for, to leave an equivalent legacy of courage, determination and beauty that speaks to and inspires Tasmanians now and in the future, just as Chris achieved with one evocative photograph which preserved something so unique, so special and so Tasmanian as this wild coastline.

To return to the government response to the 2024-25 independent review of the *Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008*, I consider that response to be disappointing, inadequate and irresponsible in the extreme. I could say a lot of other words that would be much stronger in tone but also far, far less parliamentary. Despite the fact that the government's response is head-in-hand inducing, we cannot afford to throw our hands up in the air and give up. All members in this place and the other have a responsibility to keep reiterating to the government whenever necessary, 'Do not stop. Do not keep your complacency at this level. Try again.' This lacklustre, ridiculously complacent, self-congratulatory government response could not be further from what is required. It's not good enough, in fact, it's quite shameful. This government needs to get out of the parallel universe in which it appears to have conveniently ensconced itself, face up to the climate change reality that presents such serious challenges, along with some opportunities for Tasmania and Tasmanians, and get stuck into the task at hand, not just the rhetoric.

To close, I return to that earlier Climate Tasmania quotation I cited. However, I think it requires amending. I think it should be, 'If Tasmania is to be a climate leader, then it needs leadership from its government and it requires continual vigilance from its parliament and pressure from the Tasmanian community.' Because no matter how repetitive it may seem, I will continue to take every opportunity, as I know many others in this place will, to remain vigilant on behalf of my electorate and the Tasmanian community more broadly and demand that this government take all necessary evidence-based action to address the impact of the climate crisis.

As per the motion before us, I do note the government's response to the report of the independent review of the Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008, and I do so with an incredibly deep sense of disappointment and grave concern. On that, and noting the time, before I complete my contribution, Mr President, I move -

That the debate stand adjourned.

This is for the purpose of a dinner break.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

[6.30 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I move -

That the sitting be suspended until the ringing of the division bells.

This is for the purpose of the dinner.

Sitting suspended from 6.30 p.m. to 7.32 p.m.

MOTION

**Tasmanian Government Response to the Report of the Independent Review of the
Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008 - Consideration and Noting**

Resumed from above.

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Mr President, I believe I had concluded my remarks, noting the government's disappointing and irresponsible response to the independent review of the *Climate Change Act* report. I'll conclude at that. Thank you.

[7.33 p.m.]

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT (Huon) - Mr President, I'll be brief.

Climate change is not a distant or abstract threat, it's already here. I think we can all accept that. Tasmanians are experiencing more extreme weather and that is why it's not enough for the government to simply agree with recommendations in the review in principle, or to say

that existing frameworks will continue to be strengthened over time. Tasmanians need to see clear and measurable action that matches the scale of the risk. We should be moving faster to reduce reliance on petrol, diesel and gas; supporting households and businesses to transition to cleaner and more affordable alternatives; and making sure major emitters were properly accountable for the pollution they create. Climate change requires more than delayed commitments. We really need leadership and practical reform.

I believe the parliament accepts that the science is clear and the risks are real. Our laws and our policies, then, must reflect that seriousness. I was personally disappointed in the 'support in principle' responses by the government. I think we can all recall extreme weather events. I'm just thinking back in the last 15 years that I've been back in Tasmania, I remember in 2018 my accommodation suffered during the floods that occurred in that year. I don't know if people remember 2018. My accommodation was flooded, and then it was only a few years after that that there were bushfires down my way, and I actually hosted people who are fleeing the bushfires in my accommodation. So, I think these extreme weather events are recent in people's minds. It's not something that happens every 100 years. Those 100-year events are actually occurring more and more frequently.

Tasmania has an opportunity to be honest about the scale of the challenge and ambitious about the response. Agreeing in principle is a start, but it cannot be the end. The government should give Tasmanians confidence that climate action is being treated with the seriousness that it deserves, and that's why I'm a little bit disappointed in the government's response and I will be supporting the motion.

[7.36 p.m.]

Mr GAFFNEY (Mersey) - I rise also to speak briefly in support of the motion regarding the government's recent response to the 2024-25 independent review of the *Climate Change (State Action) Act of 2008*. I would begin by again extending my thanks to the honourable member for Hobart for doing her ongoing work in the climate space. I'll keep it brief, noting that we spoke to the initial report just last week.

It was interesting to see the government's response to this report come out almost immediately, with little by way of any agreements to progress. Pertinently, when we last discussed the report, I mentioned how the Tasmanian climate situation is one which makes it very easy for a government to hide in the murkiness and difficulty of legislative reform or otherwise deflect to our amazing environmental assets as some sort of evidence that we are doing better than the rest of the world. I'm concerned that the government response is an example of the latter.

I also made the point that our climate success is not a chicken-and-egg debate, but rather quite clearly that our environmental assets are those which have given us such a head start on the climate discussion. We are world leaders in climate policy in large part due to our climate assets, not the other way around.

With that in mind, I would like to turn to the government response. I do recognise the point in the response that was made regarding the timeline for implementing the most recent amendment legislation. I recognise that this is an ongoing process, especially at a time when significant government capital is being put towards massive cost cuts and 'efficiencies', which actually means cutting jobs, supports and services.

I suppose we should at least be thankful that the government has not removed all political impetus for implementing those reforms. With that said, if we look to the most recent Budget put forward by the government, the budget for environmental initiatives is being gutted. For all the talk of seeing the reforms through until 2029, one must question if there will be a budget to do so after the gutting of the public sector that is being used to pay for the Macquarie Point development and the catastrophically over-budget *Spirit of Tasmania*.

The government is right to identify in this report that significant, immediate progress can be made in government practice and policy, not just legislation. Indeed, last week I made the point that 'internal practices, communication and process management are ground-up processes that are often cost-effective and deliver significant and timely improvements'. Where the government goes astray after recognising this potential for improvement is that it glosses over the importance of further legislative reform. Unfortunately, fixing one issue does not rectify another, independent issue. One legislative amendment cannot be used to excuse another. It is the same reason the government has tinkered with local government governance and continues to do so.

Having sidestepped the calls for legislative reform, the government then shifts to a policy focused platform supporting 'in principle' five of the seven recommendations. The first warning sign here is the use of the term 'in principle'. This term exists for a reason: to show genuine, willing acceptance of a policy recommendation that cannot be implemented for logistical or pragmatic reasons. Unfortunately, it's all too often actually used to mean 'we don't want to do anything about this recommendation but don't want to see political backlash for the decision about not doing anything'. I'm concerned that this response employs the latter approach to the term.

Without going down the recommendations line by line, which have been followed by other members in contributions, it should suffice to compare the sentiments, overarching tenor of the report and the response. The report quite strongly called for better governance, solid steps towards improving trust in government and improving legitimacy and public involvement. On the other hand, the government response was tepid, making minor changes, minimal commitments of any substance and tinkering around the edges.

Unfortunately, this is the reason there is so little trust in our government and indirectly in our parliament: tinkering around the edges, making unrealistic or improper statements and representations about the current government and its commitments and then inappropriately managing, or outright ignoring, the inevitable public outcry when things get worse due to this inaction.

To conclude, while it is appreciated the government has recognised priorities, this response is at a far distance and commitment from what is needed for Tasmania. I hope the government considers and commits to further action in this place. I note the response and commend the motion.

[7.41 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - I rise today to note the Tasmanian government's response to the 2024-25 independent review of the *Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008*. This review is an important milestone in Tasmania's climate change framework. It provides an opportunity to assess the progress,

consider where improvements can be made and ensure the government's approach to climate action remains practical, effective and focused on outcomes.

The review's central finding is clear. Tasmania's climate change act provides a strong foundation for climate action and is operating as intended. The review found that all major planning and reporting requirements under the act have been delivered and that Tasmania continues to achieve its legislated net-zero emissions target, and that the significant reforms introduced through legislative amendments in 2022 have only recently been implemented and require time to be fully delivered and evaluated.

Tasmania has a strong story to tell, first achieving net zero emissions in 2014 and having maintained that position ever since. At the same time, the state has continued to experience economic growth and population growth. This demonstrates that environmental responsibility and economic prosperity can go hand in hand.

The government welcomes the review and supports its overall findings. The government recognised the seven recommendations made by the independent reviewers and has carefully considered how they can best be implemented within Tasmania's existing legislative framework. This response supports two recommendations in full and five recommendations in principle. Importantly, the response is guided by three clear principles: continuing to deliver the substantial reforms introduced in 2022; strengthening implementation before pursuing further major legislative change; and embedding continuous improvement through stronger governance, engagement and transparency.

The government agrees that effective governance, accountability and transparency is essential. The government will strengthen existing arrangements by refreshing the Climate Change Reference Group, updating its terms of reference, broadening representation and increasing transparency around its work. The government believes there is merit in strengthening current governance arrangements before considering the establishment of any new statutory body.

The review also highlighted the importance of climate adaptation and resilience. Tasmania already has significant adaptation mechanisms in place, including the statewide climate change risk assessment, climate action plans and sector based resilience planning. Building on these foundations, government will give greater emphasis to adaptation priorities, improve coordination across sectors, and strengthen engagement with local government and regional communities.

The government supports providing greater transparency around emission trends and sector performance. Tasmania already publishes annual emissions reports and detailed sector information, and will continue to improve how this information is communicated and made accessible to the community.

Government also acknowledges the need for climate considerations to be increasingly embedded in government decision-making. Through implementation of the Government Climate Capability Framework and related initiatives, agencies will continue to strengthen their consideration of climate risks, resilience and emissions impacts in planning and policy development.

A key theme emerging from the review was the value of engagement and communication. The government fully supports recommendations aimed at strengthening participation and ensuring Tasmanians have access to clear and accessible information, and will broaden engagement with communities, business, industry, local government and young people, while improving the way climate information is communicated, including through the development of a dedicated climate information website.

I just want to touch on those couple of recommendations, recommendations 6 and 7, which were fully supported by the government. I know the honourable member for Hobart did read out some of that part, but I'll just restate it for completeness.

The government supports stronger, more inclusive and ongoing engagement on climate change. Extensive consultation has occurred under the Act, and future efforts should focus on improving inclusiveness, participation and feedback mechanisms.

It goes on to say:

The government will:

- Strengthen stakeholder engagement approaches.
- Increase opportunities for ongoing participation.
- Improve engagement with regional communities, local government, young people, business, industry and community stakeholders.
- Continue to apply best practice-engagement principles across climate policy development.

Moving on to recommendation 7, which is communication, and is fully supported:

The government supports improving communication, transparency and access to climate information. The Independent Review found that important climate change information is available but not always visible or accessible to stakeholders. Improving communication is critical to transparency, public awareness and stakeholder confidence

It goes on:

The government will:

- Update climate communication and engagement approaches.
- Develop a dedicated climate information website.
- Improve accessibility of information and reporting.
- Increase visibility of progress under the Act.

There's a little bit more to each of those, but given that they were fully supported, I felt it was important to put that on the record.

The government's priority remains implementation and delivery, and over the coming years will continue delivering Tasmania's Climate Change Action Plan, our risk assessment for climate change, sector-based emissions reduction and resilience plans, annual emissions reporting, and action that reduces emissions while building resilience across the economy and community.

This response reflects a balanced and practical approach. It recognises that Tasmania already has a strong framework in place while committing to continuous improvement in governance, transparency, adaptation, engagement and communication.

I commend the government's response to the Council.

[7.49 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Mr President.

Ms Forrest - I wonder if *Hansard* can record sighs.

Ms O'CONNOR - What we just heard then was an amalgamation of some of the bits of the independent review and some of the bits of the government's response to that review. It was like a cut and paste; there was no new language in there. We even had the regurgitation of the opening lines to the government's response to the review, which is that the government wants to take a balanced and practical approach to responding to climate change.

We had - and this is not on the Leader for the Government - but we had an absolutely 'She'll be right, mate' response to this motion. It is in a very similar vein to the 'She'll be right, mate' response that the government made to the independent review. The Leader for the Government said that the independent review report is a milestone. Well, it's not, actually. It's a statutory requirement on government to undertake an independent review of the act every four years. That independent review report is a wake-up call, and it is dispiriting to say the least that the government is still asleep.

We've got a business-as-usual response from the Leader for the Government. We had an allegation that the government is focused on outcomes, but no actual outcomes that could be pointed to apart from a number of plans and assessments, and a commitment, for example, to 'explore opportunities' in various areas of public policy.

We had a speech that referred to the climate risk assessment, which was undertaken by the Tasmanian government belatedly, which has been completely ignored by government, and which is mentioned in the review for the lack of implementation measures.

We had reference to the Climate Change Action Plan, which as the review pointed out, has expired, so we've got the government saying they'll continue to deliver under the Climate Change Action Plan, which has expired.

Then we've got emissions reduction and resilience plans, which at the moment are just plans, and as our greenhouse accounts tell us, across all sectors of the Tasmanian economy, apart from land use, land use change and forestry, emissions are not going down. I found that response from the government unfortunate but not particularly surprising.

I'd like to thank the honourable members for Nelson, Huon, Mersey and -

Ms Forrest - The Leader.

Ms O'CONNOR - the Leader, for their contributions to this notice of motion, and their quite clear-eyed analysis of the government's response, with the exception of the member for McIntyre, but I understand your position in this, honourable Leader. But anyway, we've had this debate, the government's woeful, limp, pathetic and irresponsible response to the independent review has been considered and noted. I'm sure the government understands this is not the last time this year that this Council will discuss accelerating global heating and the responsibility that we all have to keep the people we represent, and love and this place as safe as we can.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Referral of Short Stay Levy Bill 2026 to Government Administration Committee A

[7.53p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - I'm sure this motion won't take long because either you agree or you don't. But I do move this motion to refer the Short Stay Levy Bill 2026 to the Government Administration Committee A for further scrutiny and report.

I have not settled my position on the bill, and I remain open to being persuaded either way. Having listened to concerns raised during briefings and in communication with key stakeholders and others, I am persuaded of one thing: that we don't have at this stage what is needed to make a properly informed decision. The right response is not just to wave the bill through, or just say no on the strength of principle, or reject it on the strength of the lack of information. That's my perspective.

I believe a review by the committee would enable far greater consultation and understanding of the likely impacts in terms of cost to the sector, as well as revenue to the state, because both are important. I do commend the government for actually being willing to even have a conversation about a revenue-raising mechanism. I do give credit for that, but you have to do it right, too.

This is not, from my perspective, opposition to a short stay levy in principle. I believe a narrowly targeted levy substantially borne by visitors rather than Tasmanian households is, in principle, a more defensive way to raise revenue than the alternatives, and I have not changed that view. That's in broad terms, not just on this particular levy.

This is a motion about process because I think the substance of this bill will be better, not weaker, for a committee taking time to test it properly. If the aim is a levy that works, doing it right matters more than doing it quickly. Not that you could claim the government has done this quickly, really. The Treasurer confirmed in the House of Assembly that no economic modelling of the levy's impact on visitation was undertaken before this bill was introduced, noting it was first announced in 2024 as one of their election commitments then and repeated in the 2025 election. For a measure touching a sector that contributes significantly to the gross state product and supports close to one in six Tasmanian jobs, we need to be sure we're doing

it right. In my view, a committee is the appropriate forum to pursue this and hear directly from Treasury and industry on what impact, if any, is expected.

In addition, the amendments made in the other place excluding accommodation and dwelling also occupied by its owner, and exempting farm-stay and agritourism operators, respond to concerns that were legitimately raised, and I welcome them as amendments in the original draft and now we have the bill that's passed through the lower House. But I'm sure the revenue-raising impact and the cost of administration associated with the bill before it was amended, and also resulting from the amendments that narrow the base, necessarily narrow the revenue. Clearly we have no costings on what that \$11 million original estimate now looks like with those carve-outs, and you need to hold that against the cost of compliance, the cost of administration as well.

In briefings, the Tourism Industry Council had made a fair governance point, regardless of what one thinks of its opposition to the bill overall. The 2030 Visitor Economy Strategy is a joint government industry framework and this levy was developed outside of that, so there was no discussion as part of that strategy. A levy that will be collected and partly borne through the tourism sector deserves to be worked through with that sector inside the structure of government itself, established for exactly this kind of policy conversation, but it was done completely outside of that process. A committee inquiry would give industry, including operators in regional Tasmania who will feel this potentially most directly, a formal opportunity to be heard on the record in a way that progressing with the second reading debate in this Chamber does not at this point in time.

There is a range of other areas I believe would benefit from additional scrutiny and some of these were raised in the briefing we had this morning, including who the collection base captures, who has to actually collect it, how the revenue is allocated between first home buyers and other purposes. They didn't raise that, but that's another matter that was raised in other forums, including crisis homelessness accommodation and the impact on regional and intrastate travel. In my view, these questions could be better explored and perhaps better understood in a committee setting.

So, in broad terms, I don't propose this as opposition to the principle. I want to be really clear about that. I raise it because a levy of this kind, done well, could be a defensible and modest contribution to the state's revenue base. But, done without full and proper costings of its amended form, without modelling and without full engagement of the industry that will collect it, risks being neither well designed nor well understood by the time it takes effect.

There are always opportunities in this place, I know, to amend it further during the Committee stage if this motion is not successful, but I think it'd be far easier to amend a piece of legislation with an evidence base that sits behind it. We always run into trouble when we try to amend things - well, not always - we can run into trouble when we try to amend things on the run without that full evidence base behind it.

Referral to committee is the mechanism this Chamber has to close that gap and to be more fully informed in that debate. I welcome the contribution of members. I commend the motion and we will see how it goes.

[8.00 p.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Mr President, I'll briefly speak on the motion. I'm not convinced that the committee inquiry process will add to the debate and scrutiny of this bill. This bill has been out for consultation and public input for quite some time. This is not a new bill and it has not, in my opinion, been rushed. It's taken time. It's been the subject of much public commentary as well as through formal consultation processes. We're continuing to hear this week from relevant stakeholders as well as our constituents and communities.

What we need to remember is that the industry needs certainty now. Tasmanian tourism operators and events have come to seriously rely on short-stay accommodation as a means for tourists and travellers to be able to attend our state and our regions. As we now look to the warmer months and the increasing number of events in our state, we need to be ensuring that the tourism and accommodation industries are not left alone to do what they do best, whether this bill passes or not. We must also remember that many short-stay accommodation owners are in fact regular people who are just trying to get by. I don't believe it's fair to keep these regular people in a holding pattern when it comes to understanding how their investment might be affected.

Just a comment from the TCCI - and I did check and they were very happy to have their comment with regard to referral to a committee read in, which was:

The TCCI strongly discourages such a referral. The issues raised by the bill have already been well canvassed through public debate, consultation and submissions provided to parliament. A further inquiry would only delay resolution and prolong uncertainty for short-stay operators, tourism businesses, investors, and the broader visitor economy.

And a comment by Jade Hoskins from Airbnb, who was also happy to have her comments read in:

This is already as well understood as it's going to be, the levy has been canvassed since 2024. Government consultation ran for two months. Industry councils and community groups have all made submissions and briefed elected reps. An inquiry likely only adds complexity. The bill already contains multiple exemptions that are subject to amendments through the upper House and the inquiry only risks widening the levy's scope or adding further carve-outs and complexity to the bill, making it harder for the tourism industry and small booking platforms to understand and comply with and harder to administer for the State Revenue Office.

What has been suggested is that should the bill succeed in being passed - and I might speak about this more should we reach the second reading debate for the bill - a statutory review into the bill take place instead. That might be more appropriate, that we look at the legislation if it's passed and implemented to see if it's achieving what it sets out to achieve. Then we would be presented with an opportunity to make well-informed policy and legislative decisions to ensure that the proposed levy is assisting with supporting first-home buyers break into the market.

That's probably more content for the second reading debate, but I raise it now to simply and briefly mention that there are options other than sending it to a committee for a review and

report. I'm not convinced it's necessary in this case to send it to an inquiry. I believe there are other ample options in considering this bill, both here in the Chamber during debate and after a time should it be passed. I believe the industry needs certainty now. I don't support the motion.

[8.04 p.m.]

Ms THOMAS (Elwick) - Mr President, I listened carefully to the arguments the member for Murchison made for referring this bill to Committee A and I accept that there are serious deficiencies in the evidence that the government has provided to support what is effectively a new tax. However, I'm not persuaded that those deficiencies of themselves justify asking a parliamentary committee to undertake work that the government should have completed before introducing this bill.

This policy was announced during the 2024 election. The government has had approximately two years' access to Treasury and departmental expertise and the benefit of an extensive public consultation process. How it chose to engage with the feedback received through that process is also a matter for the government. It should not be the work of a committee, in my view. It has received numerous submissions from industry, local government, housing organisations, platform operators and the members of the community. If, after all of that, the government cannot provide credible modelling or explain the expected economic, regional and housing impacts of its proposal, that is a failure of executive policy development. A parliamentary committee should not be required to interrogate it and make recommendations on how to repair it.

Key stakeholders, as the member for Launceston just pointed out, both opposed to and in support of the bill, including the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI) and Airbnb, respectively, are themselves urging the Council not to refer the bill to a committee. Their position, as the member for Launceston outlined, is that the issues have been well canvassed and that a further inquiry would prolong uncertainty for operators, tourism businesses and investors.

Now, I do not accept every assertion made by opponents of the bill without evidence. Claims that the levy will reduce supply, increase prices, damage regional employment and discourage visitation must be tested just as rigorously as the government's claims. But that does not necessarily require a committee inquiry. Members have access to briefings, submissions and the Committee-of-the-Whole process. We can question the government, consider amendments and ultimately decide whether the government has demonstrated this proposed new tax is in the best interests of Tasmanians.

I'm also mindful that our committees are already undertaking a substantial workload, much of it examining serious failures and difficulties arising under this government. The capacity of these committees is not unlimited, nor is the capacity of the staff who support them. It's neither fair nor sustainable to continually task parliamentary committees with completing policy work for which the government has departments, Treasury officials and ministerial advisers.

The government can't have it both ways. It cannot introduce a new tax without presenting an adequate evidence base and then expect a parliamentary committee to build that evidence base on its behalf. Nor should members later be criticised for failing to support a revenue measure if the government has failed to demonstrate that the measure is equitable, economically sound and properly designed. If this bill does proceed to debate and fails, that is

entirely on the government. Tasmania's serious budget position creates a need for responsible revenue measures but does not justify accepting any revenue measure put before us. The responsibility for establishing a case for this tax rests entirely with the government. A failure by the government to make its case is not by itself a reason to ask a parliamentary committee to make or disprove that case for it. It may instead be a good reason for the House to reject the bill. For the reasons I've outlined, I don't support the motion to refer this bill to a committee.

[8.08 p.m.]

Mr HISCUTT (Montgomery) - First, let us acknowledge that this is, we call it a levy, but, as the member for Elwick said, it is a tax. It's the first tax in a generation, I believe, in Tasmania, and so we do need to take the time to get it right.

Ms O'Connor - No it's not. I don't think that's correct.

Mr HISCUTT - Depends how long a generation is. It has been a little while anyway - well, the first one I can remember.

I think there is some confusion here. There's a lot of confusion on the definitions and who will be carved out, who won't be carved out, whether something is camping, is it glamping, is it primary production, is it farm stay, is it all these sorts of things? Acknowledging that the bill was made better in the lower House, I still don't think it's very clear on where some of these things sit.

I also think there's confusion on the actual impact. We don't know exactly what this is going to look like, no modelling done, no impact assessment. We don't want to waste money, but 'Is it going to be enough to cover the cost?' as the member said. Not really sure.

There's been a lot of confusion about how it affects direct bookings, and I acknowledge that the government certainly made some changes to the bill due to the consultation process. That was intended to certainly support it not affecting direct bookings, but there has been a lot of confusion shown about whether they have actually achieved that goal.

I guess the other thing the bill purports to be is to support more housing in Tasmania - less short-term accommodation, more houses for people to move into. But, again, I don't think that's been credibly established yet.

So, I think there is certainly merit to consider this going to committee to hopefully get some of those answers. I acknowledge the member for Elwick's comments that it's not the committee's job to do that, but it is the parliament's role to get this right. The question I have, and having not been involved in committees, and I can't unfortunately say I'm the newest member anymore, I thought I'd have a little bit more to do that. I would like to ask what will the committee be able to provide. What answers will it be able to provide with the resources that it has to it? I wouldn't have thought it would have the ability to make that modelling happen that we've asked for; maybe it can. I would appreciate some answers to what the honourable member for Murchison thinks it may be able to achieve. Will it be able to figure out what those effects are? How we can talk to the government? We've had briefings from the government and the industry. What is the outcome that will be achieved by sending it to committee? That's a genuine question, as a newer member.

I also get a little bit concerned with the idea that, apparently, we should just get this done because there's an uncertainty. That uncertainty has been there since the announcement was made in 2024. I know that's a long time but, again, it's more important to get it right, to set a precedent, than to just rush in because we've got to do it. I'd rather see it succeed correctly than fail incorrectly. It will have an effect, yes, there'll be some more uncertainty, but I certainly think it's more important to get it right. So, my first impression is being inclined to support this motion, to see more clarity put onto this so that it can be right. But I certainly acknowledge the fact that it should have been presented to us correctly in the first place and we shouldn't be having to do this work ourselves.

[8.11 a.m.]

Mr GAFFNEY (Mersey) - I rise to briefly speak in support of the referral of the Short-Stay Levy Bill 2026 to the Government Administration Committee A for consideration and report. From the outset, I will note that irrespective of one's stance on the bill or its intent, be that revenue raising or freeing housing for long-term rentals, it's not a settled matter. Rather, the housing crisis and government budgetary crisis both remain a significant point of contention and, indeed, there is a significant polarisation when it comes to proposed solutions.

To my mind, this bill represents a small but direct attempt to regulate these issues. I'm hesitant to speculate as to if it is aimed at the revenue situation or the housing situation, being that the government seems to pivot its pitch depending on which narrative is more convenient. Nonetheless, it is attempting to regulate a live issue. Consequently, I'm in support of more information, more investigation and more evidence to support a considered decision and appropriate outcome, noting the very little information that is currently available.

I have, and we all have, received a good deal of correspondence for and against this levy. I'm sure that many of the other members in this place also have a list they have heard from. This includes: economist types writing to me regarding its efficacy as a 'silver bullet tax', or safe revenue-raising device; some Tasmanians saying they are concerned about the housing market, rental crisis and doing whatever possible to free up accommodation for those in need; concerned short-stay operators outlining their current financial situation, as well as the possible impact of such a levy, both administratively and fiscally; rural Tasmanians who feel the bill will cost rural communities and accommodation offerings more than it will help their housing and affordability situations; and those who have concerns regarding the interaction between council-imposed taxation on short-stay and the levy, noting the action taken by some councils in this space, the difference between Hobart City and other communities within Tasmania. I've also heard from the government, and interest groups regarding their intent, support or concerns with the bill.

My point here is not that people have concerns with the bill. Of course, some will, and a good many Tasmanians will also staunchly support it. My point is that there is an ongoing discussion, indeed debate, across the aisle. This debate is one that is not aided by significant information or independent investigation. The government has introduced truly little by way of modelling or publicly available justifications.

The situation in Victoria demonstrates the significant effect that such a levy can have. I do note that Tasmania is significantly more reliant on tourism and hospitality than Victoria. As a percentage of gross state product, the proportion attributable to tourism in Tasmania is approximately three times that of Victoria. The jobs as a proportion of the state workforce are near double.

I'm aware the government is proposing a smaller percentage than that which was proposed in Victoria of 7.5 per cent, but given the lack of public information on this matter, I'm concerned that we risk plucking a number out of thin air. Consequently, I do feel it is appropriate that decisions be made with a thorough understanding of ramifications, potential and possible outcomes, and expert modelling and opinion on the matter.

I am aware of and indeed appreciative to hear from those who would rather not have this legislation go through an inquiry/committee process. It does add some delay, but as we heard, it was started in 2024. There's another question mark in the process, but we do benefit from these things, and the Tasmanian public do as well.

To bring my contribution back to whether we should have a committee, one of the reasons these committees exist is for times where members are concerned, confused or unsure about the impact, need or role of proposals, or don't have enough information in front of them. I would suggest that this is one of those times and that tinkering with taxes and levies for young industries, especially those that are heavily intertwined with our broader tourism economy. I would ask the honourable member, before I conclude, is that in your summing up, whether you could give us an indication of the timeline that you're thinking about for the inquiry, because that may impact on the way I feel about it. It would be nice if you had some sort of indication of what sort of inquiry committee process you're looking at.

I thank the honourable member for raising this matter and support the motion.

[8.17 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Hobart) - I'm usually all for greater scrutiny and the capacity that committees have to ask the questions and make the recommendations that this parliament so often benefits from. I can't really see the argument for referring this bill for a committee inquiry. I understand there'll be impacts on short-stay property owners. I understand that the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI) doesn't like a 5 per cent levy on short stay, but that is hardly a surprising position for the TCCI to take. The fact that there's no economic modelling on modelling of the impact of this proposed levy to me is really neither here nor there. Many is a time that government makes policy absent of economic impact, invariably absent of social or environmental impact modelling.

We've had a government that's pursued aggressively the expansion of finfish farming in coastal public waters. I never saw any social or environmental modelling on the impact of that government policy, but invariably when matters of the fish farming industry come before parliament, a majority of members will roll over and support the salmon farming industry. I don't hear questions being asked about whether or not there's been social or environmental impact modelling in these cases.

I think what we're dealing with here is a failure of government to regulate short stay and this bill, in some ways, seems to me to be like government signalling that they're doing something about short stay.

I should pause at this moment and make a declaration, which I think everyone should, who speaks on this subject, that I don't own a short-stay property. I know that there are members in the other place who do, and in the other place, when this came up as a matter of debate some years ago, we sought to have those government ministers who own short stay, who were voting

against regulation, declare their conflict and exclude themselves from the vote. But they did not.

What we're dealing with here is a failure to regulate, a failure to make sure that there are not more whole homes going onto the short-stay market, a failure to work in good faith with local government about making sure we've got tailored responses to short stay across our municipalities because those issues will be different in Hobart than they will be in St Helens.

What I do know in Hobart is that we have one of the highest saturations of short-stay accommodation of any capital city in the country. We have the lowest vacancy rate in the country of any capital city, and those two things are connected. We've had a government here that ever since Airbnb short-stay accommodation became a thing - and I think it's terrific in so many ways, don't get me wrong - it has proven absolutely resistant to take any effective regulatory step to rein in short-stay accommodation, and resisted working cooperatively with local government, which wants to have some of the planning tools to be able, at least, to prevent whole homes from being put on the short-stay market.

I'm going to say something slightly controversial here.

Ms Forrest - Surely not.

Ms O'CONNOR - I think it is a fact that while the short-stay market has a heavy preponderance of syndicates - investors who buy multiple homes as part of their portfolio of short-stay accommodation - what we heard this morning in the briefing is that in Tasmania the principal owner of a short-stay property is a single investor. But if you just compare wealth metrics: anyone who has an extra property that they can put on the short-stay market is, by a global understanding of wealth, quite wealthy. If you've got a spare place, I'm not talking about someone who rents out their principal place of residence part time if they're working on the mainland, or someone who rents out on short stay a part of their home for a time. I'm talking about people who have a whole property to spare.

I have no doubt that a 5 per cent levy will impact some short-stay homeowners. I have no doubt at all. We're in here dealing with a bill that's basically about the government's failure to regulate, and I don't think it's going to solve anything if we send this quite narrowly focused bill to a committee for examination. I challenge something the honourable member for Mersey said, that this bill is not a regulatory bill. It doesn't make any regulatory change. It simply levies a 5 per cent take, if you like, on short-stay earnings.

It's a discussion we've been having - certainly in the parliament of Tasmania, whatever House it's in - for the best part of a decade. A government that's failed to do anything about it presents a fairly narrow piece of legislation that is, more than anything else, a revenue-raising measure and not particularly complicated. But we have, as the honourable member for Launceston said, many tools at our disposal to ask all the questions that we need to ask.

The stakeholders that haven't been empowered or able to email us about their objection to this bill, or their support for it, are the Tasmanians who are on the waiting list for social and affordable housing; the Tasmanians who are lining up with 30 or 40 other people on the weekends looking for a rental property; the Tasmanians who are being forced out of a home that they've lived in for a very long time because the rent keeps going up. Those people are not

being represented through this bill or in this debate that we're having tonight, particularly. They are the people I'm thinking of right now.

I've got great respect for the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, but I have more concern for Tasmanians who are being shut out of the housing market, the affordable housing market primarily because this government for the last 12 or 13 years has been too gutless to take on short-stay accommodation; too gutless to take on Airbnb; too gutless to work with local councils about getting some sophisticated planning tools to reduce the social impact of short stay while making sure we can enjoy the benefits of the economic impact.

I regret to say it to the honourable member for Murchison because normally she's on the money, but this time I won't be supporting the motion.

[8.25 p.m.]

Mr EDMUNDS (Pembroke) - Mr President, I don't own a short-stay property. I don't own any property, as I think we can all find out about each other when we do our returns in October, so perhaps we don't need to all reel that off. Anyway, I don't support this referral, respectfully, member for Murchison, in part due to many of the reasons given by yourself and other members. I don't think anyone's particularly far apart in terms of their thoughts on this bill; however, I don't think that the resources that we have at our disposal are necessarily best used on this referral. I do thank you for bringing this forward for us to discuss.

This, as others have said, has been pretty well ventilated since 2024. There's been a consultation period. I think the bill is pretty well understood one way or another. My biggest fear for this referral is that it becomes bigger than *Ben-Hur*. I think there's limitless rabbit holes and hobby horses and views on short stay that aren't in the scope of this policy. If then, what happens next? I think we can see, unfortunately, committees can outgrow their scope and I wouldn't envy yourself as chair of that committee should those bits of feedback start to come back telling those stakeholders et cetera that 'No, you're not in the scope. We're only looking at the bill.' I think that the pressure might get even worse from there.

Anyway, no, I don't support that referral. I think that the scope of the policy is pretty well understood. I think there are challenges around resourcing. As we discussed in one of the previous motions today, our committees are overloaded and I'm very sympathetic to arguments made by, I think, the member for Elwick around government resources. Committees are things at our disposal as either members of opposition parties or Independents to use the resources of parliament to do a bit of policy development, I suppose, but also to thrash out issues. They're not levers for the government to pull. I think the attempted referral of Rushy Lagoon was another example of just a complete misunderstanding of what committees are about by the government, frankly. We shouldn't have to do their work for them, particularly when there are so few backbenchers to do that work.

I won't keep us much longer. I understand the arguments about certainty, one way or another. I also think that this is a bill that is well understood and can be voted on. Mr Hiscutt talked about how we have to get it right, but on this one, Mr Hiscutt, I'm not sure we can. For that reason, I don't support a referral.

[8.28 p.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Mr President, I rise to speak on the motion to send the Short Stay Levy Bill to committee. Thank you to the member for Murchison for bringing it to this place

for consideration. It's an interesting one for us to consider. It has been fascinating listening to contributions. Thank you to members for sharing their thoughts on it because it's an interesting insight into how people see the balance of things in terms of our role and how we go about it and what resources we have available, et cetera.

There are a few comments I would like to add on the record on my view on the prospect of sending the bill to a committee. First of all, I think most members here would agree that I'm fairly consistent in sharing my views about the housing catastrophe that we face in this state, and the absolute, horrific urgency of addressing that. We have Tasmanians utterly unable to be housed in secure, affordable accommodations. We have lives on hold because of that. We have children being impacted every day in terms of their ability to attend school, to be well and healthy, to form family relationships that are appropriate and meaningful because without a home that's secure and affordable to be in, you can't do those things. We have adults who are in supreme risk for health conditions, for all sorts of other wellbeing conditions because they are without homes and have no prospect of getting one, or are, in fact, living daily with the sword of Damocles over their heads that they will lose their housing. It's absolutely appalling.

There's no question in my mind that we have a housing catastrophe and that we should be, and the government should be, doing everything in its power to address that. Clearly they aren't even close to that, not even remotely close to that. And on the matter of short-stay accommodation, this government persistently, for the whole tenure it has had since 2014, has persistently refused to do anything meaningful about regulation.

In terms of us choosing how to best get the balance right between the benefits of having this form of accommodation in our state as part of our tourism offerings and all of that side of consideration, against the housing needs of our state and the needs of our communities, that's a very diverse question. Different communities in different regions of the state, split across urban and regional, are all different. What are our communities' needs in terms of the balance of those things?

This government has utterly failed to do that; it has pigheadedly refused to, to be honest. That is unfathomable to me and this bill does nothing about that. This is not a regulation bill of short stay. It does nothing to pick up the responsibility of addressing this head on. I have grave reservations about the bill because I don't think it delivers anything clear to us, but we're not here to debate the bill. We're here to debate whether it goes to a committee.

I just want to be clear that my thinking on the bill is in light of my extreme concern about our housing situation. I don't have anything to declare in terms of a short-stay property. I don't own one. I haven't ever owned one. I do think on the matter of conflicts of interest, while we do have a register of interest that's put up each year on the public record, I think it is also important in these debates to be nice and upfront about conflicts of interest.

I always admired the previous member for Hobart, Rob Valentine. It's the second time I've mentioned him in this place today, but he would always, members will recall who were here with him, whenever we spoke about something that he felt he needed to declare something about, he would do so to an extent I think that was probably unnecessary. We would talk about education in some sort of sense, and he'd always make sure he'd say that his wife was a teacher working in the public education system. Now, that's probably taking things to a level that's unnecessary. However, there's a principle there that I think is valuable and I think the more we

practised it here the better, particularly if people do have a direct pecuniary interest of some sort in the matter at hand before us. But back to the point here.

I think it's really important to understand that this prospect of sending the bill to a committee is a standard part of the work of a chamber of parliament, particularly a chamber of review, actually standard practice, standard work. The fact that we are busy with committee work and that we're stretched thin because we're a small chamber, of course, it's a consideration we have in mind, but it shouldn't take away from the fact that we're here to do our work and this is a core piece of work for a chamber of the parliament.

It also isn't doing the government's policy work. Committee work isn't policy work often, particularly when it's in terms of reviewing a bill. We review a bill as a standard piece of parliamentary work in order to better inform the Chamber and to have a deeper dive into a bill that the Chamber feels it needs more information about and more consideration of beyond what can be delivered in the context of our usual bill scrutiny process. That's standard and normal and expected and the fact that our parliament and this Chamber doesn't do it as often as might be expected probably is partly a function of it being a small chamber, but I think it's something that there should be a greater appetite for, not a lesser appetite.

There are various things that can be an outcome of conducting an inquiry into a bill on behalf of the Chamber by whichever committee it might get sent to. You could have a bill be inquired upon and then brought back to this Chamber and the recommendation could be that the Chamber pass it as is, or the recommendation could be that the Chamber not pass it at all. Or the recommendation could be the Chamber pass the bill with amendments and the committee provides some recommendations about amendments, because the process can also look at potential amendments that have been proposed and be able to provide an informed view back to the Chamber from the committee.

We literally look to committees to do this sort of parliamentary work all the time as the Chamber. It's the reason we have a Subordinate Legislation Committee. Previously, of course, in times past, all subordinate legislation would come through the Chamber without being considered first, and it would be on the Chamber. That's a huge power of work for the Chamber to do as a whole. Thus it became standard for subordinate legislation committees to be put in place in order to undertake that work more thoroughly on behalf of the whole Chamber and come back to the Chamber with a recommendation about whether the regulations should be passed through or perhaps shouldn't be. Standard parliamentary work.

I did look at some of the suggestions from some of the people who have contacted us on this matter about the idea that we could just pass the legislation and then put a review clause in the legislation so that we might look at it later to see if it delivered what it was supposed to deliver. The problem with that being, of course, there's absolutely no clarity about what the government actually expects it to deliver, necessarily. There are no nice, clear outcomes specifically built in that we've all been made aware of. There are thoughts about what it might or might not do, but if we were to review it later to see whether it 'worked', I think that we'd be in a pretty difficult space to do that.

I'm also not persuaded by arguments about certain sectors needing certainty now about this. It has been around since 2024, since the election commitment. Yes, time has passed since then. It's up to any government of the day to decide when it wants to bring forward attempts to action election commitments made. This government has dragged its feet to do this. Some more

time passing for the purpose of an inquiry and a review by committee I don't think is here or there in terms of certainty. The main focus for this Chamber should be its own certainty and should be how to best furnish the right information so that it can do what it considers to be its job in relation to reviewing this particular piece of legislation, as we do with all legislation.

There are a few thoughts there. I support the motion because if there's a selection of members who feel that there's a strong reason to put a bill to a committee for an inquiry, that's an indication that it's going to be a pretty messy time of it in the Chamber, particularly if there are amendments to be considered. I'd rather we were well informed about that process.

I also am entirely unconvinced that this bill will do anything meaningful to address our housing situation in this state, so I'm not in a crushing rush to see this bill pushed through for that reason. It simply does not have any certainty about delivering on that front.

I support the member for Murchison's motion. I suspect that that's probably not the side of the debate that's going to prevail here in the Chamber, but it's important for us to have considered it. It's always a good conversation when we discuss our role here and how we each see the importance of different aspects of that role. I'm pleased to have had a chance to do that. Thank you to the member for Murchison. I'll be supporting.

[8.39 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Thank you, Mr President. I appreciate the contributions that have been made and acknowledge the honourable member for Murchison in bringing forward this motion for consideration. If there's been a request to declare, I did look at a possibility of having a short-stay arrangement for a property, and it was overwhelming; and I just decided it wasn't for me, what was required to have a short-stay property. Instead I have two children who are in long stay, that's probably more accurate. If there's a long-stay levy, then I'll probably have to declare that.

Mr Hiscutt - Charge them 5 per cent extra.

Ms RATTRAY - You wait until your children have grown up and see how you go. Good on you. I thought in the interest of that request for declaration, I would accede to that.

At the outset it is important to recognise that the short-stay levy is not a new or unexpected proposal, nor are its key policy features. It is the implementation of a clear election commitment taken to the Tasmanian people at the 2024 election, with a policy statement published by the government at the time of the announcement and still available online.

As was taken to the 2024 election, the levy is designed with the objective of supporting first-home buyers, while maintaining a strong visitor economy and respecting property rights. By way of background, the Short Stay Levy Bill was developed following the Tasmanian government's 2024 election commitment to introduce a 5 per cent levy on short-stay accommodation: stays of fewer than 28 consecutive nights. One hundred per cent of the levy would be directed to assisting first-home buyers, and the levy would be introduced on short-stay accommodation such as that advertised on Airbnb and Stayz. The levy would not apply to accommodation operators such as hotels, pubs, bed and breakfasts, and caravan parks. The short stay levy would be paid by those using short-stay accommodation, not the property owners.

Other key aspects of the government's position were outlined in the election policy, and included that a short-stay levy would not impact demand, as demonstrated across Europe and North America where similar levies exist. The levy would be paid overwhelmingly by interstate and overseas travellers, with 83 per cent of short stays in Tasmania used by non-locals. The purpose of the levy was and remains clear, and as put by the Treasurer in the other place:

The primary purpose of the short stay-levy is to raise revenue to support first-home buyers. However, the levy may also result in making more housing available for long-term rental.

Which is consistent with the Government's 2024 election platform and the policy statement released at the time.

The bill leverages similar levy arrangements already operating in Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory, and expressly adopts several features from those jurisdictions, including exemptions for principal places of residence, which are exempt in both jurisdictions, and direct bookings, which are exempt in the Australian Capital Territory, as well as aspects of the compliance framework.

In the case of this bill, broadly consistent laws across jurisdictions will make it easier for individuals and businesses operating across multiple jurisdictions, and is administratively efficient in leveraging proven legislative models for the short-stay levy.

A draft of this bill was released for public consultation from 17 December 2025 to 25 February 2026, and public consultation was open for 10 weeks, with 220 submissions received. Unless otherwise requested by the party submitting, consultation responses can be viewed on the Treasury website.

Subsequently, the bill was refined by the government following consideration of that feedback. One significant change was the exclusion of a short-stay premises that is a dwelling usually occupied by the owner from the levy, as is the case in Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory. In effect, this means that if a homeowner rents out a spare room in the dwelling they usually occupy for short stays, that booking will not be subject to the levy. A second significant change was narrowing the scope to only apply the levy to bookings made through a booking platform provider; that is direct bookings will not be subject to the levy.

Liability to pay the levy, therefore, rests entirely with booking platform providers that facilitate bookings for short-stay accommodation in Tasmania.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Point of order. Sorry, I don't know what the standing order number it is, but, respectfully, is this your second reading speech? Because we're actually discussing the referral.

Mr PRESIDENT - Yes, so, if the honourable Leader can just confine her comments to whether the government feels it should be referred to a committee or not, and not into the broader aspects of the bill, please.

Ms Webb - I thought it was relevant. She was talking about the consultation, which is relevant to the question.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you, Mr President. I'll just take a moment to have a look over my notes, seeing the honourable member for Huon has made a point of order.

I expect that the members of this House would acknowledge that most short-stay providers would prefer not to be subject to a levy and the government, supported by the Department of Treasury and Finance, can assure honourable members that it has worked hard to ensure the bill is robust, well designed, and administratively efficient, and that relates to the bill itself. In this context, the government questions what material changes could realistically be achieved by referring this bill to a committee, and this is particularly relevant given the extensive public consultation already undertaken, the significant reductions in the scope of the levy made in response to stakeholder feedback, and the fact that key elements of the legislation are based on established levy frameworks operating successfully in other jurisdictions.

In conclusion, the government considers this levy to be measured, modest, consistent with interstate practice and improved through consultation. This is not a proposal that has appeared without warning and the question to the Council will be the same: does the Tasmanian community support this new revenue measure or not? In this context, the government respectfully requests members not to support the motion.

[8.48 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - As always, I'll respect the will of the House, clearly, and I can count, but I just want to make a couple of comments and answer a couple of questions that were posed during that debate. I really appreciate members' contributions on this. It was quite a varied range of views and that's really great to hear.

It is no secret that this has been coming, but, as I said, the important thing is to get it right and make sure it does work and I'm not sure that that's what we've got here. I do hear what other members say and I do wholeheartedly agree with the member for Elwick that we shouldn't be fixing up the government's problems all the time when things aren't fully considered, and where the modelling and evidence that should sit behind such a policy decision is available.

Ms Webb - The inquiry might say it's rubbish - don't pass it.

Ms FORREST - That's right, it could do, and this is what could happen to the member for Montgomery's question, where, when committees look at bills, does it do what it says? This is what it says it does, does it do it? Does it need to be strengthened or amended to actually make it do what it's supposed to do? The committee could make recommendations on amendments and, if you look at what the gender and equality bill did with - what bill was it now? Oh, the expungement legislation. We made some very detailed and good amendments. Well, I drafted up amendments to put into the bill in our House - another election - but, thankfully, the government picked them up as they were and put them in. That's how it can work. And, so, it can be really valuable to determine something that perhaps is unclear or needs further elucidation during the process. It's easier to get in through a committee process where you can test ideas and particularly with stakeholders, not just sitting around the room here where the only advice you have is out of the advisers.

Ms Webb - Who might not answer the question in the first place.

Ms FORREST - True. Well, that's the thing, isn't it? Getting an answer can be a challenge. As far as the timeline for inquiry, it is hard to say, but I do take on board the point

made by the member for Pembroke about the scope. That's a matter for the committee to determine, to keep the scope narrow and focused on the actual provisions in the bill and do they do what they say and are they appropriate? I think that is important. I think, and going to the member for Launceston's comment, the least this would need is a statutory review. But what are we actually measuring if you don't know how it's supposed to really work? That's problematic, but I absolutely respect the will of the House.

It is a revenue raising-measure. It's not a regulatory measure, as the member for Mersey rightly said, and in my view it'll do stuff-all or nothing. This is something we'll come to in the second reading in fixing the housing problem. And I do have an issue with hypothecation anyway. But that is a parliamentary term: 'stuff-all or nothing'.

Mr PRESIDENT - It is now.

Ms FORREST - It is now, and I could have said worse. I do also appreciate that industry representatives don't and won't support such a move. I mean that's the reality we're living in. Sometimes you have to make decisions that will upset a certain member of a community, because it is the right thing to do. I'm not saying that's the case here, but I'm just saying that the fact that certain parties are opposed to say we shouldn't be looking referring to a committee either, that's a viewpoint and we should hear it and respect it, but that's not the only voice we should hear.

Down this other side of the same point is that it's pretty clear from the Fiscal Sustainability Report we need to pull all three levers that are available to governments: revenue raising, cutting costs and reprofiling infrastructure spend, potentially selling stuff. And this is the first and only real form of revenue raising the government has even been willing to put the flag up on. So, I think it does deserve careful consideration.

I personally feel that it may be difficult for me to proceed with the bill this week, if that's the plan, without some further consideration to amendments that may be necessary.

In any event, I will respect the will of the House. The uncertainty that the sector is experiencing is a bit of a furphy in my view because nothing changes until something changes. So, they just continue operating as they are until there is a change, and the changes proposed; there's no certainty in this world with legislation until it gets through the House, no matter how much you might say this is going to affect me really badly. It has to go through the parliament and get royal assent before it is a thing. The uncertainty, yes, may be a thing, but, in the meantime, we just get on.

So, anyway, Mr President, I will sit down and await the vote.

Mr PRESIDENT (Mr Farrell) - The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The Council divided -

AYES 4

Ms Forrest (Teller)
Mr Gaffney
Mr Hiscutt

NOES 10

Ms Armitage
Mr Duigan
Mr Edmunds (Teller)

Ms Webb

Ms Glade-Wright
Ms Lovell
Ms O'Connor
Ms Palmer
Ms Rattray
Ms Thomas
Mr Vincent

Motion negatived.

STATUTORY HOLIDAYS AMENDMENT BILL 2026 (No. 14)

Second Reading

[8.57 p.m.]

Ms LOVELL (Rumney) - Mr President, I move -

That the bill be read a second time.

The Statutory Holidays Amendment Bill 2026 will recognise Easter Sunday as a public holiday in Tasmania, as it already is in every other Australian state and territory. It is a straightforward bill, but it will make a meaningful difference in the lives of working Tasmanians.

At present, Easter Sunday is not recognised as a public holiday in Tasmania. Tasmanian workers are, therefore, treated differently and less favourably than workers doing the same job on the same day elsewhere in Australia. If this bill passes, employees who would ordinarily work on Easter Sunday will be entitled to a paid day off. Those who work will receive the public holiday entitlements provided by their award or agreement, and employees will have the rights associated with requests to work on a public holiday. That is not radical, it is not complicated, it is simply fair. The bill corrects a clear gap in our law through a simple amendment to the *Statutory Holidays Act 2000*.

I begin by acknowledging the thousands of Tasmanians who work over the Easter long weekend. They give up time with their families so that others can enjoy the break. They work in hospitals, residential care and disability services, looking after members of our community who need support. They work in retail, hospitality and tourism. They work in emergency services, keeping us safe. They work in transport, logistics and industry, keeping Tasmania moving. They are in communities throughout our state and all of us rely upon them.

For many, going to work on Easter Sunday is not simply a matter of choice. They need the shift and they need the income. They're trying to keep ahead of rising rents, mortgages, power prices, groceries and other household expenses. The people working on Easter Sunday are often also those with the least bargaining power at work. They are often casual workers. They are shift workers. They are lower- and middle-income workers. They are young Tasmanians. This bill is for them. It says that when a person gives up a significant day with their family and community, that contribution should be properly recognised and fairly compensated.

The inconsistency in our present system is difficult to justify. A person who works on Good Friday receives the applicable public holiday entitlements. A person who works on Easter Monday receives the applicable public holiday entitlements. Yet a person who works on Easter Sunday, the day at the very heart of the Easter period, is treated as though it was simply another Sunday. That does not make sense. Tasmanians know it does not make sense.

Easter Sunday holds particular significance for many Tasmanians. For Christians, it is the most important day in the religious calendar - a day of hope, renewal and new beginnings. Churches throughout Tasmania welcome some of their largest congregations of the year. Families attend together, often across generations. For some Tasmanians, it is one of the few services they attend each year and they choose that service because of the special meaning of Easter Sunday.

Its importance, however, extends beyond religious observance. Easter Sunday is also about family and community. It sits at the heart of the Easter long weekend. Families plan around it. Communities plan around it. Businesses alter their hours and operations because of it. Families gather and share meals. Children wake up excited to see what the Easter Bunny has left for them. Communities come together for services, events, markets, sport and celebrations. It is clearly not an ordinary Sunday.

The question for this Council is, therefore, a simple one: if Easter Sunday is treated as a special day in practice, why should our law pretend otherwise? Why should workers who give up that day be treated as if it has no special significance? And why should Tasmania remain the only Australian jurisdiction that does not recognise Easter Sunday as a public holiday? This bill does not invent a new occasion or impose an unfamiliar observance. Easter already exists. Tasmanians already treat it as a distinct period. The bill simply brings the law into line with that reality and with the standard that now applies throughout the rest of Australia.

Members will be aware that concerns have been raised about the potential economic effect of this change, particularly for small business. Those concerns deserve to be considered seriously. Businesses are facing genuine pressures. Employers in hospitality, retail and other industries operating on Sundays will need to manage additional wage costs. We should acknowledge that honestly, but those costs must also be considered in their proper context.

The McKell Institute has undertaken a detailed assessment of the likely economic effects of recognising Easter Sunday as a public holiday in Tasmania. Its analysis of Australian Bureau of Statistics payroll data found no statistically significant employment effect in jurisdictions that have already introduced an Easter Sunday public holiday. The experience elsewhere does not support claims that recognising Easter Sunday will cause widespread job losses or force businesses across the state to close. The report estimates that the additional wages payable to Tasmanian employees would be between \$5.3 million and \$6.48 million. At first glance those figures may sound substantial, but in the context of Tasmania's total wages bill, they represent between 0.024 and 0.029 per cent. Put another way, the statewide increase would be less than 1 per cent of the value of a standard annual pay rise.

The McKell report also makes an important economic distinction. Additional wages paid to employees are not in themselves a loss to the Tasmanian economy. They are principally a transfer of income from employers to workers and much of that income will be spent in local shops, hospitality businesses and communities. A genuine loss of economic output only occurs when activity is cancelled and not recovered, relocated or undertaken on another day. After

modelling those effects across 19 sectors of the Tasmanian economy, the report estimates an overall economic impact of between \$3.77 million and \$5.3 million. That is between 0.009 and 0.012 per cent of Tasmania's gross state product, equivalent to approximately \$7 to \$9 per Tasmanian. And those estimates do not account fully for the benefits that will offset part of that impact. Those benefits include additional wages being spent in the local economy, increased travel and leisure activity within Tasmania, additional demand flowing to businesses that remain open, improved employee satisfaction, and the social and economic value of people spending more time with their families and communities. The report's conclusion is clear: there is no meaningful statewide economic impact that would justify paying Tasmanian workers less on Easter Sunday than workers everywhere else in Australia.

That does not mean the effect on every individual business will be identical, or that no employer will face an additional cost. Businesses will make decisions appropriate to their circumstances. Some may adjust staffing, some may move non-urgent work to another day. Some may apply a public holiday surcharge, as already occurs on other public holidays. Others may choose to close, while businesses that remain open may benefit from increased demand. But these are familiar decisions; Tasmanian businesses already make them on Good Friday, Easter Monday and every other public holiday. This bill asks them to apply that familiar framework to one additional day, a day already recognised by the community and by every other Australian jurisdiction. In some Tasmanian workplaces, Easter Sunday entitlements are already provided through agreements between employers and employees.

In preparing to bring this bill to the parliament, Labor had conversations with the TCCI, Hospitality Tasmania and the Tourism Industry Council. We understand and accept that they do not support this bill, and we understand why. But Labor still believes that this is the right thing to do. That should come as a surprise to no-one.

The SDA, United Workers Union and the Health and Community Services Union have also been involved in the consultation on this bill, and this is a change that will benefit their members. I acknowledge those unions for their ongoing advocacy on this matter. They have been instrumental in achieving the support this bill has so far received and that I hope to see it receive here today.

I acknowledge SDA Branch President Isabell Wells, State Secretary Joel Tynan, Olivia and Brayden, who we met with earlier this morning in a briefing, who have waited around for a long day to be here to witness this debate. I also want to acknowledge Maddie, who we also heard from this morning, who wasn't able to stay for the debate. Also, Jody, who members may have seen. Jody is a disability support worker and a HACSU member, who spoke publicly about what a difference this bill would make for him yesterday, and all of the other workers who have advocated for this bill, and for this change, for a long time now.

The bill will establish a clear and consistent statewide standard. It will provide certainty for employers, it will provide fairness for workers. It will bring Tasmania into line with the rest of Australia. Most importantly, it will recognise the contribution of the Tasmanians who give up time with their families and communities so that the rest of us can receive care, travel safely, buy what we need and enjoy the Easter period. This is a modest and practical reform. It reflects how Tasmanians live; it recognises the significance of Easter Sunday. It supports working people, and the economic evidence demonstrates that Tasmania can afford to make this fair and overdue change.

I commend the bill to the Council.

[9.09 p.m.]

Ms THOMAS (Elwick) - I rise to support the Statutory Holidays Amendment Bill 2026. At its heart, this is a very simple bill. It inserts Easter Sunday into section 4 of the *Statutory Holidays Act 2000* as a statutory holiday. For me, the principle behind this is equally simple: Tasmanian workers should not be treated as second-class workers compared with workers in every other state and territory in Australia. As we just heard from the member for Rumney, Tasmania is now the only Australian jurisdiction that does not recognise Easter Sunday as a public holiday. I find it very difficult to identify a compelling reason why a retail worker, hospitality worker, health worker, disability support worker, emergency services worker or any other employee working on Easter Sunday in Tasmania should receive lesser recognition than somebody doing exactly the same job on exactly the same day elsewhere in Australia.

The fact sheet accompanying the bill makes it clear that Tasmania already recognises Good Friday and Easter Monday but not Easter Sunday, creating an obvious inconsistency across the Easter period. On the fundamental question of fairness, I think this bill is difficult to argue against.

We heard through the briefing process that the current arrangements do not affect every Tasmanian worker in the same way. Some workers are already covered by enterprise agreements which recognise Easter Sunday and public holiday entitlements, but thousands of other Tasmanian workers are not.

The SDA material describes this as a two-tier system. Some employees receive higher public holiday pay and rights associated with working on a public holiday, while others doing the same work on the same day do not. This inequity is particularly relevant for award-reliant and casual workers, and I think that is an important point.

We're not necessarily talking about the people in our community with the greatest capacity to negotiate their own terms and conditions. We're talking about retail workers, hospitality workers, young workers, casual workers, people working in the care industries and those who work weekends because that is when the work is available and they need the income. For many of those people, whether they work on Easter Sunday, is not simply a lifestyle choice.

As the material provided to us points out, under the existing arrangements, a person rostered to work on Easter Sunday who wants the day off may have to seek annual leave or unpaid leave, subject to their employer's approval.

Recognising the day as a public holiday extends the protections applying to public holidays, including giving award-covered workers the right under the National Employment Standards to refuse an unreasonable request to work. This is important. We heard this in the briefing this morning, and I thank the members who are here today and who came to talk with us this morning.

A public holiday does not necessarily mean that nobody works. Of course, people work on public holidays. Our hospitals don't close and emergency services don't stop. Aged care and disability support services continue and hotels continue accommodating guests. Many restaurants, cafes and tourism businesses choose to trade on public holidays. What our public holiday says is that if we ask people to give up a day that the broader community regards as

significant, there should be appropriate recognition of that and Tasmania should not provide a lesser standard simply because those workers happen to live south of Bass Strait.

Tasmania is the outlier here and the question is, do we want to be? The national comparison is quite stark. The material provided to members shows that Easter Sunday became a public holiday in New South Wales in 2010, in the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria in 2015, in Queensland in 2016 and in Western Australia in 2021. Tasmania is now alone in not recognising it.

Tasmania also has fewer public holidays overall than any other Australian jurisdiction. The comparison provided to us identifies 11 public holidays in Tasmania in 2026, compared with 13 in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, 14 in Victoria and 15 in the Australian Capital Territory. Feeling a bit ripped off here. I'm sure many workers are.

We also heard something else during the briefing that I found quite interesting. Joel Tynan from the SDA told us that Tasmania has fewer restricted trading days than any other state, just two I think it was, compared to five in New South Wales, for example. I think that broader context is worth reflecting on here too, because perhaps this debate should cause us to look beyond Easter Sunday. Perhaps our *Statutory Holidays Act 2000* and the broader framework around public holidays and restricted trading days is overdue for a more comprehensive review. Add it to the list, I'd say. I'd certainly be interested in that conversation.

There's another aspect of this debate which is less easily captured in an economic model, and that is the value of stopping. We live in an increasingly 24-hour, seven-day-a-week world. We're constantly connected, constantly available. Shops are open longer, services are available longer, emails arrive at all hours. We can order something online at midnight and expect it at our door almost immediately. We've become accustomed to convenience. Yes, there are many benefits to that. But sometimes I despair that in that process we've lost the concept of there being a few days in the year that are simply different: days when society collectively slows down; days when there's less expectation that everybody should be working, out shopping, producing or consuming; days when people are encouraged, or sometimes effectively forced, to stop, to rest or spend time with family, connect with community, go to church if that's what's important to them, visit people, take the kids somewhere, or simply to do very little at all because I don't think there is anything wrong with that. Doing nothing is underrated.

Members - Hear, hear.

Ms THOMAS - In fact, we could probably all do with a little bit more of it.

I recall my first job at Purity, as it was called back then, at Glenorchy Central - I'm showing my age now - nearly 30 years ago. I worked every Saturday on the 7.00 a.m. to 6.30 p.m. shift. We finished at 6.30 p.m. because the store closed at 6.00 p.m. and we used to have all the markdowns. People might remember the markdowns, where all the bakery items, all the meat items were marked down, and you'd have hundreds of shoppers coming in for the 5.30 p.m. markdown bargains, and the queues would be lined up at the checkouts. It was a mad rush to get out of there and get everything cleaned up by 6.30 p.m. - and we'd have Sunday off. The store was closed, which is why everything was marked down. That feels like a very long time ago now, although not that long ago, really.

Easter Sunday has profound religious significance for many Tasmanians. For Christians, it is the most significant day in the Christian calendar. But its importance in contemporary Australian life extends beyond religious observance. For many people, Easter Sunday is fundamentally a family day. It's the day children wake up looking for Easter eggs to see if they can see the footprints of the Easter Bunny; we heard how important that was again in the briefing this morning. It's the day extended families and friends get together for lunch, for community events, church services and traditions that have existed across generations. For others, it might simply be a rare opportunity to have one of those quiet days. The SDA material points to worker wellbeing, family time and community participation, as broader benefits associated with public holidays, and these things do have value. They may not all appear neatly in a balance sheet, but they do have value nonetheless.

Having said that, I want to acknowledge the concerns raised with us by the TCCI, the Tourism Industry Council, Hospitality Tasmania, and individual businesses. I appreciate them coming to brief us to share their concerns and their views too, and I do not dismiss these concerns. The evidence provided to us demonstrates that for some individual businesses the financial impact will be significant. Hospitality Tasmania surveyed 136 businesses and, of those, 44 per cent said they would close entirely if Easter Sunday became a public holiday, 23 per cent said they would reduce their hours, 13 per cent would reduce services, and 21 per cent said there would be no change. The broader survey results are sobering: 59 per cent identified increased wage costs as the main reason for changing their operations, 68 per cent expected the day to be loss-making, and 24 per cent expected to break even, 79 per cent said they would need to increase prices to offset their costs, while 66 per cent said they would reduce staff numbers.

The comments from individual operators make these concerns very real. Regional businesses said they feared there would be fewer dining options for tourists, that some communities could be left without a hospitality venue open and that some businesses might close for more than Easter Sunday because the cumulative cost of Good Friday, Easter Sunday and Easter Monday would simply be too great. I empathise with those businesses. Small hospitality businesses are dealing with increasing wages, food costs, electricity, insurance and other operating expenses, often while customers themselves are dealing with cost-of-living pressures and have limited capacity to absorb further charges.

The individual financial information provided to members illustrates this point. One Launceston accommodation venue provided figures showing its food and beverage operation already makes a loss of around \$770 on Easter Sunday at existing Sunday penalty rates before overheads. Its modelling indicated that moving to public holiday rates would increase that loss to around \$3300. Another restaurant in the Derwent Valley area estimated that moving its Easter Sunday roster from Sunday rates to public holiday rates would increase its wage bill by approximately \$7400 for that day. These are not insignificant amounts to an individual business, so I do not accept that we should simply wave those concerns away. But acknowledging those concerns does not necessarily mean that the answer is to maintain inequity for workers.

There's also a distinction between the effect on an individual business and the effect on the Tasmanian economy as a whole. As the member for Rumney articulated, the McKell Institute report commissioned on this proposal estimates the additional wages payable across Tasmania would be between \$5.3 million and \$6.48 million, representing between 0.024 and 0.029 per cent of total wages paid in Tasmania, less than 1 per cent of a standard annual pay

rise. Importantly, those additional wages are not simply money disappearing from the Tasmanian economy. They are, in economic terms, largely a transfer from employers to employees. Those workers then spend that money on their rent or mortgage, groceries, fuel, entertainment and in businesses in their own communities. The report estimates the broader economic impact at between \$3.77 million and \$5.3 million, or between 0.009 and 0.012 per cent of gross state product, around \$7 to \$9 per Tasmanian. It also notes this figure does not fully account for offsetting benefits. I appreciate that Tasmanian Labor commissioned this report by the McKell Institute to provide us with this evidence and data.

Perhaps most significantly, the report found no statistically significant impact on employment in Australian jurisdictions that already have introduced an Easter Sunday public holiday. That interstate experience is important because Tasmania is not being asked to undertake some 'out there' industrial experiment. We are the last jurisdiction to do this. Other states have been doing it for years. If recognising Easter Sunday as a public holiday inevitably devastated hospitality and tourism industries, we should be able to see that in the experience of those jurisdictions, but the evidence provided does not establish that.

I acknowledge that some businesses will have to make choices. There will undoubtedly be individual businesses that decide it is not financially viable to open should this bill be supported tonight. I understand this. These are decisions businesses already make, though, on other public holidays. And to be clear, this bill itself does not create additional shop trading restrictions. The fact sheet expressly states that Easter Sunday would be treated as a standard public holiday for trading purposes. We are not legislating that Tasmania must close. We are saying that where Tasmanians are required to work on Easter Sunday, they should receive the same recognition and basic industrial treatment as workers elsewhere in Australia. Perhaps, if one consequence is that some businesses decide to close and some of us cannot get a coffee or go shopping or eat out for a day, that's not necessarily the worst thing in the world. Perhaps there should still be a handful of days where our first response is, 'Where can I shop? Where can I eat? What can I buy?' Perhaps there is value in saying that, on a few days each year, as a community, we slow down. Where we do require people to work so the rest of us can enjoy those days, we properly recognise them for doing so.

I acknowledge the impact, should this bill be supported, will not be evenly distributed. For some hospitality businesses, particularly small and regional businesses, the additional wage costs will be challenging. Their concerns are genuine and I empathise with them. But, ultimately, in making this decision, I come back to the fundamental question of fairness. Why should a Tasmanian worker doing the same job on Easter Sunday as a worker in other states be treated differently? I don't think they should. I've not heard a sufficiently compelling answer to those questions. This bill simply brings Tasmania in line with the rest of Australia, recognising that Easter Sunday is not simply an ordinary Sunday and people who give up time with their families and communities to work while others enjoy the Easter break deserve to be remunerated accordingly.

I think the evidence we've heard about Tasmania having comparatively fewer public holidays and very few restricted trading days raises a broader question that's worthy of consideration, but that is a question for another day. The question before us today is simple: should Easter Sunday be recognised as a public holiday in Tasmania, as it is everywhere else in Australia? I believe it should. On that basis, I support the bill.

[9.24 p.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - I thank the honourable member for Rumney for bringing forward this bill. I believe it's an important debate for us to have. I'm very conscious of the fact that we're trying to make a very delicate and considered decision here. I thank everyone who briefed us - Joel from SDA and I think it was Olivia, Jayden and Matty who came in. That can't have been easy coming and facing all of us there. And for the first time that you've come in. I'm really pleased that you actually came down today. Thank you very much. It must have been hard leaving Launceston.

Mr PRESIDENT - You had to get that one in, didn't you?

Ms ARMITAGE - I have to be a little parochial. I always find it's difficult leaving Launceston.

I do thank everyone for briefing us - the SDA, the TCCI, the THA - and everyone who has emailed us and sent their opinions. It's easy for us because we have choice. We have the luxury of taking any Sunday off we choose. We don't need to open a shop, shop front, hospitality venue, attend to essential services - even though we can choose to be available to our constituents at any time - but what we have is choice. Many workers, businesses and essential services don't have that choice.

I've been very conscious during this debate to listen to all sides. There's really a compelling case being made by workers and proprietors, and making a decision that's fair and reasonable has been very difficult. I want to first be clear that I understand that Tasmanian businesses and service providers, especially those who operate on weekends, holidays or after hours, do make a significant contribution to our communities and our economy. We know that many businesses operate on extremely slim profit margins, they work incredibly hard, and they provide employment to a significant number of Tasmanians. We need them. They are essential for our state's economic health and for the wellbeing of our communities. Every dollar, every cent counts. I don't want them to be burdened by any regulations or laws that are unnecessary.

This is also a matter of equity for Tasmanians: Tasmanians who work just as hard as workers anywhere else, who go above and beyond for their employers and customers and clients, and who feel the cost-of-living pressures more acutely than elsewhere. In Tasmania, working on Easter Sunday does not endow you with the same rights and the same pay that someone on the mainland has. That's not how I want our state to be perceived. I want Tasmanians who work on Easter Sunday to have their time away from their families, from rest and relaxation time, to be acknowledged and compensated fairly.

I know that Tasmania is different to the mainland. I understand that. We have an economy which is entirely different to other states and territories, and we have regional communities that have different needs to those elsewhere. Moreover, I understand that this is actually an untested policy here in our state, that we don't exactly know how this is going to work until it's implemented. I understand completely the apprehensions being held by businesses, especially small and medium enterprises, about how this might affect their profit and loss sheets. As the member for McIntyre would probably say, Western Australia is somewhere that I go fairly regularly. It is one of the many states that have Sunday as a public holiday, and I would have to say that I have never in my life seen a state or a city more alive than Perth. Whether businesses choose to close, certainly in Perth they don't. I'd have to say that the one thing they

do is that many of the supermarkets and the shops have early closing hours, but the hospitality seems to remain open regardless of which day it is or what public holiday.

A number of estimates have been supplied to us from business and interest groups. I've read these and I take them extremely seriously and I won't read them again. I notice the member for Elwick read out many of the things from the THA. I believe it's reasonable, however, to look to other jurisdictions to get a better idea. Again, I'd emphasise that Tasmania stands alone in not having Easter Sunday as a public holiday.

I've not seen evidence to this point of other jurisdictions just as small as Tasmania to implement an Easter Sunday public holiday that it has had significant and serious consequences. In a place where many Tasmanians work on Sundays - not because they necessarily want to, but because they need to - bringing compensation up to parity with other jurisdictions could have very meaningful consequences for people who are already at a serious disadvantage.

I do appreciate the difficulty, particularly with regard to hospitality, and the concerns some may consider not opening at all and those workers losing a Sunday's pay. I understand the costs of opening, as many here would know that my husband had a hotel for 42 years. Many times, I questioned why he opened on particular public holidays or Sundays, given that many in hospitality would close on Sundays and Mondays, but he always told me it was for the customers, that there needed to be somewhere for them to go. He would say if you weren't open, tourists particularly would have a bad opinion of our city and that simply wasn't on. In fact, his hotel only closed on Christmas Day.

I admit that maybe on a public holiday I might have been working at the sink in the kitchen, sometimes behind the bar, but he always made sure that all the staff had a fair turn of public holidays. It was very important if they wanted to work, that they all had a turn of getting that extra money. I think that's really important. I might add that opening did not always make a profit, and I certainly can remember that. But it kept the patrons happy and they rewarded you by coming back and being loyal. That was something he always said to me: if you don't open, sometimes they'll go elsewhere and they may not come back. So even though you don't always make a profit, sometimes you might lose money, you pick it up on other days. It's swings and roundabouts and you open because that's the right thing to do.

I appreciate that some businesses might feel they can't open, but having a husband who had a hospitality business for a long period of time, I also understand the other side that sometimes it's not all about making money. Sometimes it's about providing a service, and the loyal customers will return.

I know this has been a reasonably contentious topic, and I don't think it's a matter of being on one side or another. I don't believe there's anyone in this place or the other place who does not want to see our businesses and services succeed and thrive. I also believe that Tasmanians work extremely hard and that working on Easter Sunday deserves to be acknowledged and reasonably compensated. I support the bill.

[9.32 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - I welcome the opportunity to speak on this bill as well. It's a private member's bill being brought in by the member for Rumney. I also appreciate the briefings that have been organised on this bill seeking to provide differing viewpoints, which

is always really important to have your initial thoughts or your latter thoughts tested or verified or challenged, and to also understand the potential impact that you may not be fully aware of. I have been challenged by this bill as I appreciate the genuine concerns raised by business and industry in relation to the costs of staffing on a public holiday.

But I also note that Tasmania is now the only state that does not recognise Easter Sunday as a public holiday, and that the workers who staff our hospitals, our aged care, our disability services, our shops, cafes and our emergency services on that day should be entitled to the same recognition as their counterparts on the mainland. That's a fairness argument, and I accept that.

But I do think, in doing our job properly, we can't simply accept the strongest version of either side of this case. I will support the bill and know that my support does come with some reservations and some questions. I will put those on the record and hope the member for Rumney can provide some responses to a couple of the points.

One piece of evidence provided to us was the McKell Institute's modelling that was commissioned by the Tasmanian Labor Party on the economic impact of an Easter Sunday public holiday in Tasmania. We also heard from the McKell Institute, who confirmed that the modelling did not break down regional versus rural impacts. I believe this is important, particularly representing a rural and regional electorate, but then most of Tasmania is, let's be honest. I wish to set out what that modelling actually says, as I understand it, because it's being used by both sides to support conclusions that go further than I think the report actually does. The McKell analysis draws on the Australian Bureau of Statistics' payroll data from jurisdictions that already have an Easter Sunday public holiday, and they found no statistically significant employment effect from the change. It estimated that the additional wages payable to Tasmanian employees are between \$5.3 and \$6.48 million or, as the member for Rumney noted in her contribution, around 0.024 to 0.029 per cent of the state's total wages bill.

According to the McKell report's modelling across 19 sectors of the Tasmanian economy, the net economic impact, after accounting for the fact that wages paid are substantially a transfer of income rather than a loss of output, is estimated at between \$4.2 million and \$5.3 million, a state average of \$7 to \$9 per Tasmanian. I accept that this modelling is the best available estimate of the statewide aggregate effect. But numbers don't mean a lot to people who are struggling to get by. I think we need to put the numbers in context and recognise that there are some businesses who'll find this a real challenge, should it be supported.

The report and the numbers do tell us that this change is affordable at a macro-level, and that claims of broad economy-wide job losses are not supported by the experience of other states. Tasmania has a far more dispersed population than the other states; we have to be careful and not just say, 'Well, because it happens in this place, it'll be the same impact in that place'.

What it does not tell us, and does not purport to tell us, is what happens to our individual, small businesses - say, a small business in Stanley, Wynyard, Queenstown, on King Island or Bicheno, or some of the other small communities around the east coast, and down the Huon, and all our smaller regional towns, where businesses operate on a 2 or 3 per cent margin, for whom an extra day of penalty rates is a real challenge, and a real consideration in their budget.

The state average of \$7 to \$9 per Tasmanian sits comfortably alongside the genuinely difficult decision for a particular cafe, motel or tourism operator on the north-west coast. It sounds like a small number, but that was across the state. We do need to be conscious of the

fact that whilst there might be a state average, it doesn't necessarily apply to every business around our state. Both things can be true at once. I don't think we serve this debate well by citing only the aggregate number. As I said, it answers the questions for every business.

The Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry has written to members opposing the bill, and I don't think anyone would be surprised by that. We've also heard from them that Hospitality Tasmania, Tasmanian Small Business Council and the Tourism Industry Council raised similar concerns. I absolutely understand why they would be concerned. Tasmania already has a public service public holiday on Easter Tuesday, that's to understand what it is, maybe the member for Rumney can clarify that. It is not a statutory holiday - it's not really a public holiday as such, because it is not the public. It's treated as a public holiday, an additional day off as agreed to in enterprise agreements in lieu of other benefits, such as higher wages in other jurisdictions, for example. I know that language is often used: a public holiday on the Tuesday, but it's actually not. That language is used, perhaps, to describe the fact that some people, under their enterprise agreements, actually get the benefit that is like a public holiday.

A concern that's been raised is that, in practice, this change could suppress trade across the state, well beyond the public service itself, because so much of the private sector either closes in step with government or gives its staff a day off regardless. I'm sure it's really hard for some businesses, when they see all these other people taking a day off, not to think: 'Well, I'll take an extra day, and I might have a couple of days annual leave as well and make it a decent break.'

However, it could also be argued that this could stimulate the tourism, hospitality and retail sectors as those with an additional day off are more likely to take a few breaks, often in our regions - get out of the cities and enjoy the best we have to offer. There are swings and roundabouts in this and you do need to look at the full picture.

The TCCI's point would be a fair one if the argument for this bill was national consistency. This is the matter where there is an extra Tuesday too; they're saying that that's an extra public holiday and that needs to be addressed, but it's not a statutory holiday as I've just tried to describe. I hope the member for Rumney can clarify that.

In my view, we do need a proper, broad review of all statutory holidays, especially as many are regionally based. Now we've got to a point where some of them are linked to a show that doesn't even happen. I think there is a need for a broader look at this, but that's not a matter for this bill. Regardless, I don't think that inconsistency is a reason to vote against the bill.

The other issue that was raised was the compounding effect. If this bill passes, Tasmania moves from three days of Easter trading disruption - Good Friday, Easter Monday and the de-facto Easter Tuesday for many - to four consecutive days spanning Friday to Monday plus Easter Tuesday for many workers, with Easter Sunday becoming a full statutory public holiday in the middle of it.

The TCCI cites its own survey of members where 78 per cent were opposed to the change. Mind you, when I did go through some of the comments that were provided, there were some who acknowledge that they employ people in other parts of the country, and it seems only fair that they treat their Tasmanian workers the same. There are differing views, and we need to listen to their views because they are legitimate, as are the views of others.

We also need to remember that Sunday penalty rates currently apply according to the awards that various workers work under, so it's not the same and I think the member for Rumney alluded to this as well. It's not the same as going from an ordinary rate of pay to a public holiday penalty rate. It's going from a Sunday penalty rate to a public holiday penalty rate. Yes, there's an increase, but it's not a massive jump. It's an incremental increase. I'm not suggesting, though, that that's not an issue for many small businesses, it can be. I'm just stating it as a reality.

If some choose to close, for those who predominantly use casual staff to fill weekend shifts, these workers may well miss out on the income altogether and that may not be a good outcome for them. A lot of casual workers who are uni students, for example, do rely on weekend shifts. When the business that they work in is closed, there is no money for those people. I guess it comes down to the likelihood that this will be the outcome. Research we have from the McKell Institute suggests it isn't likely to have a large negative impact in Tasmania, as it doesn't in other states.

The concern around regional and tourism trading over what is one of Tasmania's busiest visitor periods is a legitimate one. It's precisely the regional communities that I represent that depend on Easter trade. But I also know that in some of our small towns, everything does shut, not because of the Sunday penalty rate now, it's just difficult getting staff. People don't want to work, they want to have time with their families, or it is marginal and they close anyway. We do need to be conscious of making that any worse because it can damage the reputation of the town as a tourism destination.

I also note, in fairness to the bill's proponents here, that the TCCI's submission acknowledges that Tasmanian businesses already navigate exactly this kind of decision on Good Friday and Easter Monday every year. They have mechanisms like surcharging, adjusting hours, rostering choices. They're not new, and this bill is asking them to apply them to one additional day, not invent a whole new system.

Before I wrap up, there is one group I want to put on the record before I come to my conclusion, because I feel they don't feature prominently enough in the debate that has really been centred around hospitality, retail and the tourism sector, which are really important. But a great many of those who will stand to benefit from this bill have no say at all on whether they work on Easter Sunday. Nurses, cleaners, police, ambulance officers and other essential and public safety staff rostered on that day do not get to decide whether the ward or station or depot opens. They don't put a surcharge on. You don't have to pay an extra little tab to the ambo when they pick you up. It opens regardless, because the people who depend on them need them to be there. Under the law as it stands, these workers are on shift in the middle of a long weekend - or a long, long weekend in this case, particularly - for less than a colleague doing an identical job on the identical time of day one day later, on Easter Monday.

Those are workers for whom holiday periods routinely mean time away from family and friends, while the rest of us - myself and every other member in this Chamber included - as the member for Launceston said, are free to spend time with the people we care about and take a longer break the Easter period allows. That is simply the nature of essential work, and having spent much of my own career in nursing, it's not something I take lightly. These shifts were notoriously difficult to fill. To think, if I worked on the Sunday, I could have Friday, Saturday, Sunday with the family and I could work Monday, I'd get paid the public holiday rate on Monday, but not on the Sunday. Regardless of whether you're religious or not, it's still a day

that's important to family, and particularly those who have little humans around, who would like to see if the Easter Bunny has been, or not. Hopefully been.

These workers work because that's what the job requires. What this bill proposes to change is whether they are paid to work on what is really a public holiday in the midst of an Easter break, at a rate that they will get from any other public holiday and any other state in Australia. These are Tasmanians who give up part of that weekend for the rest of us. I think this is a significant and often overlooked group of people, and their circumstances deserve the real weight of consideration in this bill.

On balance, Mr President, I think the fairness case is the stronger one. The McKell modelling gives a reasonable level of confidence that this change does not carry an economy-wide risk, as some may suggest. It may definitely impact some smaller businesses in our region, I'm not denying that.

Tasmanian workers who give up Easter Sunday for the rest of us should not be paid less than workers doing the same job everywhere in the country. Easter Sunday is not just any other Sunday. It falls in the middle of, for some people, a very important religious festival. For others it's often a time of family. It seems extraordinary that a Monday would attract more money than a Sunday in this case.

I will be listening carefully to other members' contributions, but I also seek some clarification on those matters from the member for Rumney. I want to note, though, that the businesses' concerns are not baseless simply because the statewide modelling nets out at limited or small impact, and I don't want my support for this bill to be read as any dismissal of those concerns.

[9.49 p.m.]

Mr HISCUTT (Montgomery) - Thank you, Mr President. I would like to note that it is by an interesting quirk of timing that we have not one but two amendments to the *Statutory Holidays Act 2000* on the Notice Paper. I wanted to note this up-front and clear the air to the Chamber that, although they look very similar, they are very different.

Mr President, one question that hasn't been asked is why Easter Sunday isn't recognised as a public holiday. It was actually in this Chamber in 1983 that my uncle Hugh, the member for West Devon at the time, gave his inaugural speech on the much-lauded amendment to the *Shop Trading Hours Act 1981*. He spoke in his inaugural speech about the fact that they were going to start opening shops on Sundays and he spoke strongly that they shouldn't be able to do that. I guess that's a reflection that the reason we probably haven't had a public holiday for Easter Sunday was that traditionally it was a day people didn't work, and so there was no need for it to be recognised as that public holiday. I just thought that was an interesting quirk of history that that was the bill he spoke on.

I thank the honourable member for Rumney for bringing forward this bill in this House. Today, we look at a day that is known to everyone. Everyone understands its purpose and it is considered one of the most holy days in the Christian calendar. Yet it does stand as an anomaly to not be recognised as such - an anomaly to those of religious faith, but also to the rest of Australia.

Easter Sunday as a public holiday has been sweeping across the nation as state after state has adopted it, and although we are different and we have different needs, we currently are the state with the fewest public holidays anyway.

I see this as the tale of two stories. On the one hand, we have the employee who has worked hard and will have to sacrifice if they are to work on this day, more than any other day. On the other hand, we have an employer who will need to set aside extra cash, take home less profit and may not open at all. Let's explore these two sides a bit, shall we? There will be a bit of maths involved, and you can tune out if you want and check *Hansard* later for accuracy, if required.

Let's take the story of Wally Worker. I was going to call it Luke the Labourer, but I thought that was a little bit close to home. He earns \$60,000 a year as a chef at Clarence Cafe. This puts him on around \$30.36 an hour. As a full-time worker under the restaurant industry award, he earns 150 per cent loading for working on a regular Sunday, putting him at \$45.54 an hour. If this bill was introduced on Easter Sunday, he would be earning a 225 per cent loading, or 2.25 his normal pay. This would make it \$68.31. Now, this is \$22.70 more than his regular pay. For his 7.6 hours worked, this nets Wally Worker an additional \$173.05 for the day, and essentially for the year, if that is his standard working hours five days a week. If we now took his annual salary, \$60,000, his annual salary is now \$60,173. This makes his new hourly rate \$30.45 compared to his original rate of \$30.36. It's a nine-cent per hour pay increase for Wally Worker, or a 0.3 per cent increase.

Now, the minimum wage has increased 4.75 per cent last year, so if this bill were to take effect, instead of receiving a 4.75 per cent pay increase, Wally Walker would have only received a 5.05 per cent increase, barely a scratch above what it was. Yet it's enough for Wally Worker to take his wife Wanda out for a nice date that they haven't been able to afford for the past couple of years. It also puts him in line with all the other workers in Australia.

On the flip side, we have Eric the Employer. He has five Wallies working for him. This means every year from now on he has to find an additional \$173.05 for each employee, totalling \$865.25. Now, Eric's had a tough go of it lately. Every man and his dog is now charging a fuel excise fee on his food products and storage boxes. Things are tough. He currently turns over about \$400,000 a year. This means he only grosses about \$1540 a day if he works a five-day week for 52 weeks a year. Now, that's not profit, that's gross.

He decides to put a 15 per cent surcharge on for the Easter Sunday because that is as much as the locals are willing to pay. That means Eric the Employer now makes an additional \$230.76 for the day. If we take that out of the original amount, he still needs to find an extra \$634 for this new and extra holiday.

There may be some minor errors there, and it obviously doesn't take into account many other factors, such as super or, on the flip side, community benefit. But these are the two very real scenarios that we are facing, and the reason why this bill is not making its way through parliament without concern. Make no mistake - this is a new public holiday for Tasmania. There was never an intention for there to be an Easter Sunday public holiday. However, as mentioned, this public holiday is given in every other state in Australia.

Some businesses will be able to accommodate these additional price rises. Perhaps they put up their popular scones by 5-10 cents for the rest of the year. Perhaps they are making up

for this by being the most sought-after place in town. However, some businesses will struggle with this. It may lead to them closing their doors for the whole Easter period, as public holidays make it notoriously hard to earn positive incomes.

The money, of course, is not lost. It's still in the economy. Perhaps Wally comes back to buy something on his day off that he normally wouldn't have. Or Nancy Nurse decides to buy a pie instead of eating a homemade sandwich. However, there is no denying that this will be an impost, and times are tough.

Unfortunately, painting the picture as I have has not really made a decision on this bill any easier. It just shows the facts that for the employee, this is a modest increase and for the employer, this could be a change between a profit and loss or not opening at all. Both of these can be true. For me, I guess it comes down to a balance of what is fair, because as Australians, we are about a fair go. I think if you ask the average Joe, 'Should all Australians receive the same number of public holidays?', their answer would be yes.

There is also evidence to support the fact that this change would be modest and would be absorbed. Like the points given previously, changes in pricing occur constantly. Increases in the minimum wage, changes to fuel prices and subsequent on-costs and regulation costs - let's not go towards regulation costs, Mr President. I'll tell one story here, if I could. A local cafe wanted to move its coffee machine from one side of the counter to the other. Because they had to extend a pipe by about a metre, they were required to submit a plumbing application to council to have drawings done and all manner of submissions. I would argue that this is where the government should be focusing if it wants businesses to thrive in Tasmania - not denying workers a legitimate public holiday given to the rest of Australia. Anyway, I'll end my rant on that topic there, otherwise I could use my whole hour of debate on the topic of overregulation.

As I have previously stated, all other jurisdictions in Australia have now passed an Easter Sunday public holiday, and studies have shown that there is no significant impact on employment. They show that the economic impacts can be offset by the economic benefits. The member for Rumney has run us through these, and these insights have been provided to us by the McKell Institute.

All in all, I find myself a little bit conflicted. On the one hand, I've been an employee all of my life. Since leaving casual work, I've worked eight-hour, Monday-to-Friday jobs, as would the vast majority. These jobs will not be affected. I also appreciate that when I did work in retail, working the public holidays, I made a lot of spending money working over the Christmas break with our huge sales at Burnie Harris Scarfe on Boxing Day. They were legendary. However, it did mean time away from my family on days where others were able to enjoy that time together. Easter Sunday is a significant time for many, and although many are not religious, it does not mean that special days cannot hold family significance.

I'm inclined to support this bill brought forward on the basis that it is fair across Australia and that days of significance should warrant exceptional circumstances. I acknowledge that it will have an effect on our small-business sector, and I encourage the government to look at ways that they can make up this change with the reductions to regulations and red tape that cost businesses way more than a single Sunday being a public holiday ever could. I look forward to further debate on the bill.

[9.58 p.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - It's a real pleasure to stand in support of this bill, and congratulations to the Labor Party for bringing it forward to this Chamber, putting the work in and consulting and walking us through it, providing briefings as required. I think that's a great effort and well done to you. Also, congratulations to the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association (SDA), United Workers Union (UWU) and the Health and Community Services Union (HACSU) as the unions who were working alongside the Labor Party to advocate for this bill and these changes, particularly for the members of those unions who have done that in a really active, personal way, including coming to speak with us here in briefings. It's no small thing to do that. It's out of the ordinary and no doubt was an interesting new challenge, so well done for all the individuals who did that and were prepared to generously give their time to assist us in understanding the full impact of the bill.

I don't really need to speak too long on this bill; I just want to make a few clear points. Others have made very comprehensive and very articulate contributions on the bill, which I concur with absolutely. Key things are this: this is a fair way to treat Tasmanian workers, to bring us into line with other states and to have Easter Sunday, a special day, recognised as a public holiday, as it should be. Tasmanian workers deserve to be treated fairly in this way. In particular, we're talking, in many instances, about workers who would be at the vulnerable end of the scale for workers - people who are in potentially low-paid jobs in industries like hospitality and the like, but also workers who are essential workers in our community who we have great appreciation for in terms of being prepared to work to make sure we've got key services delivered and available on days like Easter Sunday. Those workers deserve to be treated equally and fairly as well as others around the country.

In terms of impact, we can look to other states that all have this in place already, and learn from there that the sky is not going to fall in. Having said that, I absolutely acknowledge that we have heard from a range of industries where there will be an impact. The sky not falling in is certainly not a risk, but it will impact certain businesses, and I'm not dismissing that from the equation. It's just that we always have to take these things in a broad perspective and in balance and figure out, on balance and on fairness, where we think the best course lies. In this, when we think of it generally and broadly, the cost is modest for business and in various sectors. When you think about, yes, it will cost more to open on Easter Sunday for businesses that will be paying workers for that day, in the context of a whole year, it's a fairly small increment.

I appreciate the modelling and even here on the Floor, bits of maths being thrown around about it. I don't need to do the maths down to the last cent to appreciate that all businesses are going to have busier days and less busy days. They're going to have costs higher on some days and lower on others. They'll have profit higher on some days and lower on others, and smoothing those things out across the course of the year is something that's a challenge that all businesses have to face and grapple with and figure out what works best for them. There are of course some adjustments that can be made in some instances for businesses to help offset the direct impact here.

In terms of an economic impact broadly for the state, I take members' points that we don't necessarily fully understand, particularly the regional impact of this around the state that will remain to be seen. I don't think it's an argument to stand against the bill. I think it's one for us to be particularly mindful of seeking to find out more about once the bill comes into play. I do think there are so many opportunities to creating an Easter Sunday public holiday and having

more time available potentially for Tasmanians to be out in the regions and exploring the regions with their family as a holiday period, as it is extended across that whole weekend.

I really appreciated hearing from a range of Tasmanians on this bill, from all sides of it. I know that there will be people who are disappointed if we pass this bill tonight and will find it a challenge and more difficult. I'm sorry we weren't able to deliver on what you were hoping, but for the thousands and thousands and thousands of Tasmanian workers who will benefit from this, to be better supported by this and, importantly, to be treated more fairly by this bill passing here today, I really welcome this change as an opportunity going forward for those workers and for our state as a whole.

That's really, in a nutshell, my thoughts on the core components of this. I do thank the Labor Party for bringing it forward. Look what you can do, Mr President, even if you don't happen to be in government. It's positive to see the Labor Party step up and do something very positive for Tasmanian workers and for our state.

[10.04 p.m.]

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT (Huon) - Mr President, I actually left my speech over there because it largely repeated everything that everybody said, so I've just picked up the last page for the sake of brevity.

Ultimately this debate comes down to competing interests. On the one side are the concerns about increased business costs. On the other side, the bill would provide recognition and entitlements that workers in most other Australian jurisdictions already receive.

When I weigh those competing considerations, I come to the view that the balance falls in favour of this bill. The reform is modest, it is legally simple, and it aligns Tasmania with the overwhelming majority of Australian jurisdictions. It recognises the significance of Easter Sunday in our community and, most importantly, it provides fairer treatment for workers who are required to work on a day that many Tasmanians regard as special. For those reasons I am supporting this bill.

[10.06 p.m.]

Mr GAFFNEY (Mersey) - I rise to speak on the Statutory Holidays Amendment Bill 2026 and acknowledge the briefings, the numerous contacts from constituents, community groups and business organisations, and the efforts of the honourable member for Rumney. I suppose I've been here long enough to know that I appreciate the brevity of the member for Huon, but in this place, whether you speak first or last, you still need to put on record what you believe your community would want to hear.

What I initially saw as a straightforward proposal quickly turned into a tiff in the lower House, with the government's opposition and the clear flaws in the way it had been put forward. Indeed, while I'm supportive of the sentiment behind the bill, I find myself with consistently mixed sentiments regarding its inception and indeed its operation. While on the one hand, I was quite happy to see a pro-worker piece of legislation, I do have some concerns regarding its impact on the role and perception of secularism in Tasmania. I also felt it was too little too late by the primary opposition by way of pro-worker, pro-economic development proposals.

On one hand, I was pleased it was a relatively straightforward proposal. On the other hand, I was seriously disappointed to learn of the lack of consultation, groundwork, or support that had been garnered for the bill prior to its introduction, making it less straightforward.

Additionally, as was noted in the other place, there is a process for creating new public holidays which the Tasmanian Labor Party has not followed. Of course, with a government that is obstinate and unwilling to work on this matter, that is not totally their fault.

On that note, it was also disappointing to see the government attempt to turn this into a wedge issue rather than working with communities and businesses to get a realistic compromise outcome for them. When compared to the significant hurt which has been foisted upon them in the long run through spending priorities that have been supported by both the government and the primary opposition, it was disappointing to see the framing by the government in an attempt to win political points.

Before I move to the bill proper, Mr President, I would state that it seems that this bill is another in a long string of bad-practice decisions made by our major parties and inappropriately responded to by the other. It does not suggest to me that our parliament is a strong system - a contest of democratic will - when the first thing the primary opposition has put out under its leadership is a minor change to public holidays that it has failed to consult upon, and has failed to do the groundwork needed to make a smooth, proper proposal.

Of course, the substance and the outcome of the bill is not particularly surprising, nor is it particularly unexpected. I'm aware that Easter Sunday receives public holiday status in other Australian states and territories, and it is also congruent with other holidays we have. It's worth noting the step in favour of workers' rights, equity and consistency.

I've received a good deal of very good, compelling correspondence from both sides on this matter. Indeed, I greatly appreciated the variety of input on this matter from individuals, groups and businesses. I believe that I have a positive relationship with constituents in my electorate, from whom I've received a good deal of correspondence and meetings.

To my mind, the substance of the legislation is a commonsense, good idea. That is why I was disappointed to see the debate in the other place and the staunch opposition by the government. At the end of the day, the point has been made by others in this place and indeed the other remains, that the government is one in minority and must learn to work with other political parties and members. As such, it was disappointing to see the government take a staunch wedge approach to the matter. I'm not saying it's not their prerogative to do so, but I do note that the reality of parliament and politics is not one which always begets or benefits from such mindless opposition.

This legislation is not untested. We are not deviating from the norm here - we are moving towards the norm. I'm aware the Tasmanian Labor Party put forward some statistics indicating a minor GSP impact per capita of \$7 to \$9, not including any economic benefits arising from a public holiday. What's interesting to see in the report shared by the Tasmanian Labor Party from the McKell Institute titled *The Economic Impact of an Easter Sunday Public Holiday in Tasmania*, is that Tasmania has the least public holidays of any Australian state by far. Indeed, the following passage was quite interesting to read:

Analysis of weekly payroll jobs data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) shows no statistically significant impact on employment from the introduction of an Easter Sunday public holiday in Western Australia. In the two years prior to the introduction of the public holiday, employment in Western Australia was very slightly lower than the national average (relative to their respective pre-COVID benchmarks) in the week of Easter Sunday compared to the week preceding it, and slightly higher compared to the week following it. This remained true over the three years following the introduction of the public holiday.

Similarly, over the five years covered in the data series, employment in Tasmania was slightly lower than the national average in the week of Easter Sunday compared to the week preceding it, and slightly higher compared to the week following it. If the existence of an Easter Sunday public holiday had any meaningful impact on employment, Tasmania, as the only state without an Easter Sunday public holiday, should show less change over the Easter Sunday week than other jurisdictions. Yet it does not, and in any event, the differences in the results of Tasmania, Western Australia and the other jurisdictions are so small they should be considered statistically irrelevant.

I have heard from everyday Tasmanians, community organisations and, of course, religious organisations that support and encourage the implementation of this holiday. Each email I have received in support has outlined the significant value that this proposal has to the individual, to the worker. Indeed, at a time in which everyday Tasmanians face significant economic hardship, such changes to legislation matter in image as much as substance.

I would be entirely remiss not to mention the needs and concerns of the Tasmanian industry and business community. I've also heard from those concerned business owners and Tasmanians who are worried that this is simply parliament imposing a further cost in a time when prices are rising, consumer spending is tenuous and the business environment is becoming more and more hostile. We heard only very recently from the Tasmanian Hospitality Association outlining the impact of the proposal on real Tasmanian businesses. I sympathise entirely with those business communities and owners who are really hurting.

However, it is my view that to vote in favour of or against this proposal solely on the basis that it may have an impact on business is inappropriate. This change pales in comparison to the changes that have been made to the business environment over the past years at a federal, state and even local level.

This holiday is not out of the ordinary, nor has it significantly harmed other states and territories, and indeed, even once it's implemented, we will still have fewer than other states and territories. In that sense, Tasmania is already more friendly for business than others. Again, I must stress that I do sympathise and remain concerned regarding the business environment, but I do not feel that voting against this bill is an appropriate remedy, nor will it be a significant impact in light of other recent changes. Indeed, it will remain an area of significant effort for this and future Tasmanian governments to rectify and heal our business environment from the damage that is being done to it currently through budget cuts and infrastructure outlay, notwithstanding Easter Sunday.

It is also disappointing that the government has taken these concerns and, in quite poor faith, parroted them to parliament to drive its wedge rather than working with the business community. To me it seems rather astounding, first for the government, often with the help of the primary opposition, to push through legislation and spending priorities that it knows will do drastic, almost unconstrained hurt to our bottom line, to our communities, our industry and our small and medium businesses. Having done so, they then move to block legislation that will have significant benefit to working Tasmanians on the basis of its insignificant harm to the business environment. At best this is either stupidity, bad faith dealing or both. At worst, it is a shocking example of political conniving, manoeuvring for the sake of it.

The Labor report models it to be between 0.024 per cent and 0.029 per cent increased wages paid, or \$22 to \$27 for an average, full-time earner. I wonder if one were to do modelling on the impact of the last string of state budget cuts, financial outlays and commitments, what the impact would be on our GSP or our wages paid, or the health and wellbeing of our businesses, communities and, indeed, Tasmanians. I dare say it would be significantly more.

While I have been disappointed to see how the proposal has been put forward, what has been more disappointing was the response of this government. I'll be supporting the legislation as it is a commonsense, rational and not at all out-of-place proposal. I congratulate the member for Rumney.

[10.15 p.m.]

Mr EDMUNDS (Pembroke) - Mr President, I'll speak briefly about this this bill tonight, having had my colleague from Rumney do such a great job with her second reading speech. I'm sure she will sum up as Sarah the Specialist, perhaps, to lean into Mr Hiscutt's gags from before. I rise as Luke from the Labor Party, and of course I support this bill.

It has ingrained in it fairness and looking after our workers, who have been here to speak to us as recently as today, but over a very long journey on an issue that, I believe, is pretty well understood within the Tasmanian community. I think that speaks to the quality of submissions that we have on all sides of this debate - people knew exactly what they were walking into when they provided their opinions. I'm proud to stand in support of this bill. I thank the member for Rumney for her efforts and her second reading speech.

Workers who sacrifice time with their families at key times of the year deserve a decent return for that sacrifice. Yet under the current industrial relations system, workers who work on Christmas, New Year's Day or Easter can go without any additional compensation unless the state recognises those days as public holidays.

Research shows that low-paid workers, including award-reliant workers who would receive higher incomes under this reform, are likely to spend that additional income quickly in Tasmania's pubs, bars, restaurants, the broader visitor economy and, indeed, retail. We've been told by some business groups that these are among the busiest periods of the year for tourism, hospitality and related industries as people travel, eat out and spend more. In other words, these are periods where businesses are generating more revenue and therefore have the greatest capacity to absorb higher labour costs. It should also be noted that the Easter Tuesday public service holiday means that there are more public servants travelling across the state and capable of spending money in our great regional businesses.

Evidence from the reduction in penalty rates in 2017 also tells us that relatively small changes in labour costs, such as the difference between Sunday and public holiday rates, do not determine whether businesses open or how many shifts they offer. The claims from business lobby groups that higher penalty rates will lead to widespread closures, particularly in regional areas, are therefore not particularly supported by the available evidence. The evidence instead suggests that the principal effect of reducing penalty rates is to leave businesses with a larger share of the revenue generated during these periods than if it failed to legislate Easter Sunday as a public holiday, rather than passing more of it on to workers who make that revenue possible. That is particularly difficult to justify when so many Tasmanian workers are already struggling to make ends meet.

This reform is not only about hospitality, retail, pharmacy and related workers; it's also about our nurses, paramedics, doctors and other essential workers who give up weekends, public holidays and time with their families to serve the Tasmanian community. If we choose not to recognise these days appropriately, those workers will continue to make that sacrifice without receiving the additional compensation that workers doing the same thing receive in every other state. This is not a fair outcome and is a gap Tasmania should address.

I'd like to thank the SDA, HACSU, UWU and other unions for their advocacy over a long period of time, indeed, including this morning - it's still Tuesday. There's no compelling reason, as others have said, that a Tasmanian should be paid less than anyone on the mainland for working on Easter Sunday. It's a special day for people of faith, of course, and it's also a special day for those of us who might not be.

I've worked in retail, and I don't remember being put in this position, but I also have - I mean, it's not the same and I'm not claiming it's the same - been on call on Easter Sunday and you are not present, you're not the same, you might be out on the phone. To multiply that by eight or 10, depending on how long a shift that a worker is doing, those are memories that you can't buy, and that some extra money in your pocket can help justify. As we've heard, if you are going to miss those important days with family, you should be appropriately compensated, and, indeed, you could do something else to put that money straight back into the Tasmanian economy and create memories with those family and friends.

I also echo the comments from the member for Montgomery regarding red tape and regulation. We will probably discuss a motion on this matter in the next sitting block, but we want to make meaningful impact for the cost of doing business in this state, there are so many other well overdue levers that can be looked at, and indeed have been promised by this government to be looked at, which they are not looking at. I think that's where we could probably sharpen our focus if we really are genuine about lowering the costs of business in this state.

Mr President, this is fair and it is overdue. I commend the bill.

[10.21 p.m.]

Mr VINCENT (Prosser - Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - I was amazed to first find out that Tasmania was the only state that didn't have the same rates on an Easter Sunday as every other state. I find that quite amazing at this point in time.

Ms Lovell - Let's fix it, then.

Mr VINCENT - However, I do want to rise to comment and thank everybody for their comments so far of trying to weigh up a discussion between just rewards for working on public holidays and what this will potentially do the businesses. I've just made some notes. I haven't written an elegant speech like some of the others have.

This will affect towns. I can't speak for metro areas. I'll speak mainly about regional areas, country areas like the east coast where tourism is such a big thing - but only at select times. We're already starting to see the effect on the hospitality industry around Hobart itself, when things aren't quite right.

Mr President, I should declare that I do have an interest in a hospitality industry that will be affected by this, so I will try not to say 'I' and 'we' all the time, but I just want to level a few things up here. In all my years of owning businesses, managing business and running businesses, I don't think I've ever paid anybody wrong, and I would never ever consider paying anybody other than what they exactly earned. But to say everything will just go on and things won't be affected because it's only Easter Sunday - it is the accumulation of a thousand different cuts that keep hurting businesses. Although the plumbing of changing a pipe around in a business might be an overhead or something, when you look at it, especially in the hospitality industry, penalty rates are the most awkward thing a hospitality has to deal with because most of the hours of people using a hospitality place are outside of normal trading hours. There is an accumulation effect that doesn't - and the honourable member for Pembroke just mentioned about spreading it out. I can't remember the exact words you used there.

The best thing about having IT and computer systems in business now is that you're able to tell exactly what you turned over for the day. You can go down to every 15 minutes or five minutes and see what you turned over and what your staffing levels were for that. You can measure your cost of goods down to the smallest margin. You can measure your cost of staff, and you make adjustments year on year. Hopefully there's some consistency there. But on Easter Sunday or Easter Monday or any other day, you work the best to cut your costs so that you can make a profit.

If you look at a lot of the regional areas, there's only four, maybe five months of the year that they actually make a profit. If they don't make it then, they certainly don't make it for the rest of the year, because they're in a loss situation. The town is affected by how much casual work there is, how much permanent work there is. You need to always be adjusting that. To say it's not going to have a big effect - and it might be nice to be able to move around the state if you don't have to work on an Easter Sunday or any other day. The days you drive up the east coast, if anybody goes to drive up the east coast at the moment, the takeaways are now opening later. They're closing earlier. The owners are doing more all the time. That's not a reason for not paying the penalty rates, it's just the pressure that's on businesses these days. If you all think it's going to give extra money into pockets, I'll just raise the fact that we all pay a public holiday surcharge when we walk into most businesses now for every drink, every salad roll. Not all businesses do it. If they don't do it that way, they have to raise their prices to cover costs.

We think we're getting paid more in one hand, but we're losing it because we're paying extra surcharges or price increases. We're paying it over the course of a year because everything should average out over that time. It has an effect on all of us. We don't realise it at the time, but all of a sudden that \$100 you walked into a cafe or a pub or a club with, you don't get the same amount for it anymore.

The old guys coming in to sit at the bar might only have five beers instead of six before they go home.

Ms Forrest - It might be a good thing.

Mr VINCENT - Well, it can be. It might be their mental health day, though, so it might be a good thing that way.

As I said, rural businesses are very susceptible to this and I guess it'd be no different in a metropolitan area like Salamanca and other places.

I was almost proud of a lot of the contributions that members have made here, because most people can see the balancing effect. The member for Montgomery, to use some of your examples. (We weren't allowed to use Luke the Labourer, were we? That's a bit too cosy. But Wally Worker then.) I've been Wally Worker and I've been Barry Bottleshop Operator, and I've also been - as my father was - Eric the Employer.

If you go back to when I was younger, and it was probably about 1974, when the seven-day-a-week trading came in and my parents were corner store operators, I remember Dad saying, 'This will be the biggest disaster for corner store operators, community people and kids working in little corner shops of a weekend.' He was quite right. Within two years in Devonport, 90 per cent of the corner stores that had been the backbone of all the different suburbs and everything were closed. You won't find too many newsagencies around the place. Try and find a butcher shop or somebody to come out and serve you at a service station.

This is the death by a thousand cuts that every business is feeling because of corporates coming in and the pressure on businesses. Some of it has been good because there's a bigger selection and more opportunity.

The other thing that seven-day-a-week trading did was, it took away the family unit because my father used to work and play during the week, and then weekends were family time. Then, all of a sudden you had KFCs, McDonald's and Woolworths. I remember the Purity and Roelf Vos days quite well. All of a sudden, your family wasn't the same anymore, so it changed the whole way of life.

We forget about these things and what's affected us over the last 40 or 50 years. It's this evolution of how business is changing. Somebody said how the 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week businesses are great; you can almost always find some place open. However, we're still working on the mentality that we pay everybody an 8-to-5 or a 9-to-5 sort of job; we haven't changed the way we think about our workforce and what people need to operate and what they'd like to do. I certainly don't want to use any of these as excuses, but rather I want to paint, as some of the other members have, a picture of how things change and what affects businesses.

Most small businesses now are under enormous pressure from the corporate world. Try to find a hardware store that's locally owned anymore. They're not there anymore. They're not employing locals anymore.

Ms Forrest - There's one in Wynyard.

Mr VINCENT - Yep. It's the same in my game in the rural industry. There are only a couple of us independents left. It's all been taken over by multinationals that are outside this country. Once again, it's this changing environment that we have to be conscious of and the pressure this will put on businesses, even the business I'm associated with, which will affect me by an extra \$3500 for Easter Sunday. Every business will have to look at how they adjust and how they do it. It is a lot of pressure that comes to bear on the business, on what it can operate and how it can be part of a community, because most locally owned businesses consider themselves to be very much part of their community. They always want to pay their workers exactly what they are due, a fair price, and work with them as best they can. But they're all part of the same community in most areas.

More and more backpackers are coming in now to sort of change that environment where you can't get the workers, but at the end of the day, the local people are still the community.

Please, do not anybody think that this isn't going to affect you. It will affect you on surcharges. It will affect you on prices increasing, and it will affect you because places will not be opening as much in one way or another. They're all options that businesses have to cope with, but at the end of the day we pay the price. You might have to drive to the next town to find a place that's open, or you might have to go to the next coffee shop to find that place. But it will affect us and we have to be conscious of that.

I wanted to raise those points and, once again, thank everybody for trying to be fair and understanding about this. As I said, I was staggered to find out that we were the only state left with it. I wouldn't have been doing right by myself not to stand up and mention a few of those things because we think it's somebody else - that it's Eric the Employer all the time. It's not. It's the person in the community who's paying the sponsorship to clubs and sporting organisations and communities. That's all part of what makes a community go round. Another little cut is another little problem. That's less money that will be donated to the footy club or the cricket club or the little athletics. We always, and I don't want to speak against the right thing being done, but I do want to let you know there is an effect on all of this. Thank you.

[10.32 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Thank you, Mr President. It is really nice to see a former colleague in the House tonight, Josh Willie, and his colleague as well, Ms Haddad.

A couple of things I would like to say before I commence the government's contribution. Seven-day-a-week trading commenced in our state on 1 December 2002, and I remember it well.

In 2002 my dad was a member of this place and at the time it was an even split on numbers, and it in fact took the vote of Colin Rattray, the member for South Esk and the member for Apsley, to implement that. That was a big thing for a conservative guy from up in the north-east. If anyone would like to hear the history, they might just give Paul Lennon a call; he will talk about it for as long as anyone is willing to listen. A bit of a clarification there. It was something that we talked about in our house for a while, when my dad was still with us.

I acknowledge all those who have participated in the briefing process and who made representation to me individually. I expect that all of those are acknowledged as well by other members in this place.

It is important that we do hear from people. I can assure you when the requests come in to the Leader's office for people to brief the Council, the office does its absolute best to facilitate those briefings. It's not always easy to make sure that they all have their opportunity. Perhaps things might have to change in the future because we did interrupt private members' day with briefings this morning, so I've taken that on board and we'll see how that works into the future.

I particularly appreciated listening to honourable members' contributions, as I always do. Some of them are easier to listen to than others, but we all have a job and we have a role in this place. I've made a decision to have this role, and so therefore, I rise to speak on behalf of the government and do so against the Statutory Holidays Amendment Bill 2026.

At the outset, the government wants to make clear what this debate is and what it is not. This is not a debate about whether workers deserve fair pay - they do. This is not a debate about whether Easter is important to many Tasmanian families and communities - it is. The issue before this Council is whether the parliament should impose another public holiday cost on Tasmanian businesses without adequate consultation with the very people who are expected to carry that cost.

Mr President, these important conversations with Tasmanian businesses matter. On that test, the bill falls short. Consultation matters because legislation has consequences beyond the walls of this parliament. It matters because the people most affected by a proposal often understand its practical impact better than most. It matters because good lawmaking should be based on evidence, engagement and honest assessment of consequences. In this case, the concern from business is clear. Labor did not properly consult with the businesses and business groups that would be directly affected by this bill. Where was the meaningful engagement with the Tasmanian Small Business Council and the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry? Where was the engagement with regional chambers of commerce? Where was the consultation with the hospitality sector, tourism operators, retailers, cafes, restaurants, supermarkets, accommodation providers and family-run businesses? Where was the business case? Where was the modelling which would include evidence that small businesses could absorb the additional cost?

Mr President, these are not minor questions. They go to the heart of responsible lawmaking. There is little doubt this bill would affect businesses across Tasmania, particularly small, owner-operated and regional businesses, and it would affect employers who are already dealing with rising costs such as interest rates, fuel and energy costs. Now is not the time to be adding additional costs onto business, and it is certainly not the time to do so without proper consultation.

The Tasmanian Small Business Council has been very clear in its opposition to this proposal. Its chief executive Robert Mallett said:

An additional public holiday imposes genuine costs through increased penalty rates and reduced trading days.

That warning should be taken seriously and should have been heard before this bill was brought forward. Mr Mallett also said:

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For businesses open on Easter Sunday, the decision becomes brutal: close and lose revenue entirely, or stay open and absorb double-time and half penalty rate costs many simply cannot afford.

There is one other option. Owners work the days themselves without additional staff. That is the practical reality this bill failed to properly test. A restaurant cannot simply absorb higher costs because parliament has decided it should. A cafe cannot simply invert extra revenue to cover a new impost. A local retailer cannot simply carry another mandated cost without making changes somewhere else. The choice has become very real: reduce hours, reduce staff, increase prices, apply surcharges or close. If a business closes, workers do not receive public holiday rates, they lose the shift. Mr Mallett made the point directly:

The real casualty is the worker. If a business closes, employees earn nothing whatsoever.

Mr President, that quote should concern every member of this Council. This bill is presented as a measure to support workers. But if the practical outcome is fewer shifts, shorter hours or closed doors, then workers may be worse off, not better off. A public holiday loading only helps if the business opens. A higher hourly rate means nothing if the roster is cut. A casual employee does not benefit from a shift that no longer exists. That is why consultation matters. Had business owners been asked, they would have heard these concerns directly. They would have heard that Easter is already a difficult trading period for many operators and would have heard that Sunday penalty rates already apply. They would have heard that the cumulative impact of public holiday penalty rates and rising input cost are already placing pressure on small business viability. They would have heard that many businesses are not opposing workers, they are trying to remain open so workers have shifts in the first place.

The Small Business Council has also raised a broader concern about the basis of this proposal. Mr Mallett said:

This proposal lacks any independent business case for Tasmania. We're being asked to follow other states without demonstrating genuine economic necessity. That's policy by imitation, not sound governance.

That is a serious criticism. Tasmania should not legislate by imitation. There is no need to copy other jurisdictions. It's acknowledged that our state is unique. Tasmania has its own economy, its own regions, its own labour market, its own tourism patterns and its own small business environment. Good policy must reflect Tasmanian conditions. That requires strong engagement, that requires evidence, and that requires listening. On this bill Labor has failed to demonstrate that work was done.

The Launceston Chamber of Commerce has also opposed the proposal, backing concerns raised by the TCCI and warning that it would place further strain on northern Tasmanian businesses. Launceston Chamber chief executive Alina Bain said:

Fuel, freight, wages and compliance costs are all rising. Adding another public holiday over Easter increases costs at a time when businesses are working hard just to maintain margins.

That is the environment into which this bill has been introduced. Businesses are not sitting on unlimited reserves. They're not waiting for parliament to add another cost, they're trying to stay viable, and Ms Bain made the consequence very clear:

When costs become unmanageable, businesses simply don't open. That means fewer hours for staff, less economic activity, and less revenue flowing back to government.

This is precisely the kind of practical consequence that proper consultation is meant to identify before legislation is introduced. If businesses close, staff lose hours. If staff lose hours, workers lose income. If fewer businesses open, visitors have fewer options. If regional centres are quieter, the local economy suffers. If trading activity falls, the state loses revenue. That is why this proposal cannot be treated as a simple calendar change. It has real economic consequences. Ms Bain also said:

This is not about consistency, it's about sustainability. Right now, this proposal risks adding cost without delivering benefit.

That is the point: Labor may say this is about consistency with other jurisdictions, but consistency is not a business case. Consistency does not pay wages. Consistency does not keep small businesses open and does not guarantee that workers get more shifts. Tasmania needs policy based on sustainability, viability and evidence.

The concerns are not confined to peak bodies; they are also raised by operators themselves. The culinary director Massimo Mele from Peppina said:

Easter is one of our busiest weekends but one of the most expensive to operate. Adding more cost without broader support risks venues scaling back or not opening at all.

That is a direct warning from the hospitality sector. A venue can have customers through the door and still struggle if the cost of opening become too high. That is the difference between political theory and business reality. Co-owner Bianca Welsh from Stillwater said:

Hospitality businesses are already managing one of the most complex operating environments we've seen. Another public holiday across Easter adds cost at a time when margins are already tight.

She also warned:

For many small owner-operated businesses it becomes unsustainable. If we were to open, we simply couldn't afford it, and that means businesses don't open, staff lose hours, and the broader economy misses out.

That's the issue in one sentence: businesses do not open, staff lose hours and the broader economy misses out. How can a bill be said to help workers if it risks taking away their shifts? How can it be said to support regional Tasmania if it makes it harder for regional businesses to open? How can it be said to support tourism if fewer venues and services are available to visitors? These are important questions that should have been worked through in consultation with business before the bill came before parliament.

The TCCI material also includes a very practical example from the CEO of Cripps, who said:

It is becoming increasingly expensive to service a seven-day retail market without the addition of a 25 per cent penalty on wages for the public holiday.

He indicated that if the holiday was gazetted, the business would need to consider not baking and delivering fresh product on that day. That is what this bill may mean in practice; less product and service, less trading resulting in fewer hours and a weaker customer experience. Bruce Webb, owner of Your Tea Shop, made a similar point:

Retail businesses in particular feel the cumulative impact of public holidays. Easter already brings a challenging trading environment. Adding another layer of cost makes it harder for small businesses to stay open and serve their communities.

Businesses are not looking at this proposal in isolation. They are looking at it in the context of all other pressures they face, and now the bill proposes another cost without demonstrating that the affected businesses were properly consulted or that they can absorb it.

Mr President, this is not how good policy should be made. Good policy should start by asking who will be affected, what the cost will be, whether the benefits outweigh the risks, whether workers may lose shifts, whether regional businesses may close, whether tourism operators may reduce services, and whether local communities may be worse off. It should ask those questions before legislation is introduced, not after the backlash begins. This bill appears to have skipped that essential step.

Ms Thomas - Government would never do that.

Ms Webb - Never. This will never come back to bite the government, will it?

Ms RATTRAY - Mr President, I've listened very carefully to everyone's contribution tonight. The result is a proposal opposed by key business voices, criticised for lacking an independent business case, and warned against the very operators it would affect. Don Cameron, who owns Mudbar Restaurant among three venues, has said there are several things wrong with the idea. It hasn't been discussed with the industry and Mr Cameron is considering whether to close. He warns that you will find towns in Tasmania that are going to be shut if this goes ahead.

The government supports fair wages, fair conditions, and supports workers being treated properly. The government also understands that workers and employers depend on each other. A job depends on a business that can afford to employ, and a shift depends on a business that can afford to open. A tourist economy depends on businesses being open when visitors arrive. A regional community depends on local businesses remaining viable.

This bill puts that balance at risk. It asks businesses to carry another cost at the very time many are telling us they cannot absorb more. It risks fewer hours for staff, higher prices for consumers, fewer businesses opening during a peak trading period, and it risks reduced activity in regional Tasmania. Rodney Dunn, the owner of the Agrarian Kitchen, says he will he will

close on Easter Sunday if this legislation passes. It means one trading day for Easter at Agrarian. Unfortunately, it means casuals will miss out on work.

This Council should be particularly cautious about legislation that imposes statewide consequences without adequate consultation. On the evidence before us, business was not sufficiently consulted, small business was not heard, regional operators were not listened to, and the practical consequences were not addressed. For those reasons, the government is unable to support the Statutory Holidays Amendment Bill 2026, and therefore the government will be opposing the bill.

[10.50 p.m.]

Ms LOVELL (Rumney) - Thank you to members for those really thoughtful contributions. I'm going to work through the questions that were raised and then sum up with a couple of comments at the end.

Just to put one thing on the record - it wasn't a question that was raised, but something that was mentioned a couple of times - the report by the McKell Institute was actually not commissioned by the Labor Party. That was a report that was shared with us by McKell to circulate amongst members. I wanted to be clear on that.

The member for Elwick spoke about the Hospitality Tasmania surveys and the feedback that came through from those surveys around the fact that some businesses may need to close entirely, and we accept that those concerns have been raised by those businesses. As I said in my second reading contribution, they are very real concerns and they should be listened to and considered seriously. But we are confident that there's been no evidence in other jurisdictions of that kind of impact from an Easter Sunday public holiday or from other penalty rate changes that have happened in the past as well.

The member for Elwick spoke, and some other members have referenced this information as well, in relation to some of the calculations that were provided to us by Hospitality Tasmania and individual businesses. I know we only received that information yesterday and so I'm assuming that many members won't have had an opportunity to really unpack those figures. I wanted to caution members that those figures, when I sat down and did some analysis of them yesterday, did actually raise some questions for me about how they've reached those calculations, including some of the hourly rates that have been identified that they're paying their staff currently. I think in that instance, those figures to me didn't look like a particularly compelling case in terms of calculating the actual impact of this, because there were instances there where hourly rates that were raised by significantly more than the difference between a Sunday penalty rate and a public holiday penalty rate, which is not what this bill would do.

The member for Murchison raised the issue around the impact on regional and rural areas, and we acknowledge that the McKell report didn't break down the analysis to that level, so again, I accept that these are very real concerns for people. We know that from 2017, where there were reductions to penalty rates, there was no evidence of any regionalised effect of this, so no difference between states, no positive effect across the entire country. We do have some limited evidence of similar changes in the past that have not had that different impact in regions and rural areas. We accept that we do not have perfect regionalised data. There was another report by the McKell Institute in 2015, which was titled *Who loses when penalty rates are cut?*, which shows that the reduction in penalty rates - the opposite of what we're doing here - had

the most damaging effect on regional businesses, which was largely owing to a reduction in demand. It would be fair to accept that there could even be a similar impact here.

The question around Easter Tuesday, I know this has come up in several of the briefings as well and we've provided some background information on that. It is a State Service holiday. It's not a public holiday that's enjoyed by the majority of workers. It's a State Service holiday that is, I guess, a legacy of when it used to be a bank holiday. It originated as a bank holiday under the *Bank Holidays Act 1919*. It was then protected under the *Statutory Holidays Act 2000* only for State Service employees. It's not a public holiday that's enjoyed by the majority of workers, and certainly not by many of the workers who will be impacted by this bill.

There's an argument to say that that having that extra holiday for public sector workers means that the Easter long weekend does become a weekend where people are more likely to travel, particularly to some of those rural and regional areas where they might have a shack, or just going away for the weekend. Sometimes it's a bit of a weekend that's recognised as the last opportunity for people to do that sort of thing before the long winter months, so that extra public sector holiday on Easter Tuesday, I would argue, contributes to the economy in a positive way.

To the member for Montgomery, all I want to say is that your mum would be so proud of you after tonight's special mission. I did enjoy that.

Mr Hiscutt - I channel her a lot.

Ms LOVELL - I enjoy seeing her alliteration legacy live on through the new member for Montgomery.

To the member for Prosser, I really wanted to acknowledge your contribution and thank you for that. I note that you said you were amazed that Easter Sunday is not a public holiday, and I think most people feel the same way, and certainly in lots of the conversations I've had people haven't even realised that it's not a public holiday. I do think it's a little unfair to say that people are saying that everything will go on and businesses won't be affected, because I don't think anyone has said that, and in fact, we have been very careful not to say that. We know that there are very real concerns being raised by businesses. We know there will be real impacts and we've acknowledged that and that they should be considered carefully, but they should be considered as part of this whole picture. Although, I did feel by the end of your contribution like you still could come our way a little bit there, member for Prosser. There's still time.

The Leader spoke on behalf of the government, and I really want to thank the Leader for her efforts and for her office as well in facilitating the briefings for us, including this morning, helping to shuffle things around so that we had a little bit more time than had been allocated, because we only had quite a short amount of time allocated for our briefing this morning. I want to put on record my thanks to you for that and your office, because you were very accommodating and I appreciate that, as I'm sure all members do. The Leader said that this is not a debate about whether workers deserve fair pay; it absolutely is a debate about that. That's not to say it's not also a debate about the impact on business, and as I've said, we've acknowledged that there are real concerns that have been raised, but it absolutely is a debate about both of those things.

The question of consultation was raised by the Leader as well. We did consult on this bill and I outlined that in our contribution. I also would point out that those organisations also conducted their own consultation and presented that to us in briefings. I think members have heard the arguments from both sides of this debate really clearly, and a lot of members have been really thoughtful in how they've conveyed that in their contributions this evening to demonstrate that they have listened and they have considered both sides of this debate. We have had the McKell report circulated. We have had briefings from both sides of this debate. There were lots of questions asked during those briefings. We've had further information provided, but people have made their decision on the weight of all of that evidence. I feel confident that the decision that has been made here is a really well informed decision.

I believe that was all of the questions that we had. I do want to just wrap up by saying that I acknowledge the lateness of the hour that we're here this evening, and I want to thank members for their approach throughout today in changes to Order of Business, and in giving really considered, well thought out contributions to this debate. I know how much it will mean to those thousands of workers who don't get a choice about whether or not they work on Easter Sunday to know that we've heard them and we've heard the case that they've put forward. We've listened to the other side of the debate, but we've made the decision that we recognise the difference this will make to those thousands of Tasmanians who keep our state running over Easter. I think these debates really help to focus our attention on how we treat people in our community who do us all a service at those times of the year where we need them to, and where the rest of us get to enjoy time with our family. With that, I commend the bill to the Council.

Mr PRESIDENT (Mr Farrell) - The question is that the bill be read the second time.

The Council divided -

AYES 10

Ms Armitage
Mr Edmunds
Ms Forrest
Mr Gaffney (Teller)
Ms Glade-Wright
Mr Hiscutt
Ms Lovell
Ms O'Connor
Ms Thomas
Ms Webb

NOES 4

Mr Duigan
Ms Palmer
Ms Rattray (Teller)
Mr Vincent

Bill read the second time.

[11.03 p.m.]

Ms LOVELL (Rumney) - Mr President, I move -

That the Council do resolve itself into a Committee to further consider the bill.

Mr PRESIDENT - Before I put that, by the authority of the Chair, I've determined that an adviser to the honourable member for Rumney be authorised to go onto the Floor of the House to advise the member through this bill, if so required.

Motion agreed to.

STATUTORY HOLIDAYS AMENDMENT BILL 2026 (No. 14)

In Committee

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to.

Clause 3 agreed to.

Clause 4 -

Section 4 amended (Statutory holidays)

Ms RATTRAY - In regard to the actual cost of this, I'm just interested in having some understanding if there's an indicative cost of what this actually will cost. I wonder if it's possible to have something on the public record so that when this goes through, at least we've had a figure to consider.

Ms O'Connor - Can we clarify, the cost to whom?

Madam CHAIR - No, you can't ask questions.

Ms O'Connor - I don't understand the question.

Ms Webb - The member for Rumney will be able to ask that.

Madam CHAIR - The member for Rumney will seek to answer that.

Ms LOVELL - I'm a little unclear as to exactly what cost the member is asking about, but as outlined in the McKell Institute report, the report estimates that declaring Easter Sunday public holiday in Tasmania would result in between \$5.3 million and \$6.48 million of additional wages being payable to Tasmanian employees.

Ms Ratray - So that's Tasmanian business affected?

Ms LOVELL - Yes, that's right.

Clause 4 agreed to.

Clause 5 agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment.

[11.07 p.m.]

Ms LOVELL (Rumney) - Mr President, I move -

That the third reading of the bill be made an order of the day for tomorrow.

Motion agreed to.

MESSAGES FROM HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Joint Sitting - Senate Vacancy

[11.09 p.m.]

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, I have messages from the House of Assembly:

Mr President,

The House of Assembly has agreed to the following Resolution communicated to it by the Legislative Council on 18 August 2026 -

Resolved, That on Thursday, 20 August 2026 at 10.00 o'clock in the forenoon the Legislative Council meet with the House of Assembly in the House of Assembly Chamber for the purpose of sitting and voting together to choose a person to hold the place in the Senate of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia rendered vacant by the resignation of Senator Peter Whish-Wilson; and further, to adopt the rules previously circulated for the Joint Sitting.

Jacquie Petrusma
Speaker, House of Assembly
18 August 2026.

POLICE OFFENCES AMENDMENT (INCREASED PENALTIES FOR DAMAGE TO TASMANIAN WAR MEMORIALS) BILL 2026 (No. 5)

House of Assembly Agreed to Council Amendments

The House of Assembly advised that it had agreed to amendments made by the Legislative Council.

HOUSING LAND SUPPLY (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2026 (No. 15)

First Reading

Bill received from the House of Assembly and read the first time.

[11.10 p.m.]

Mr VINCENT (Prosser - Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Thank you. Mr President. I move -

That the second reading of the bill be made an order of the day for Tuesday next.

Motion agreed to.

TASMANIAN COMMUNITY FUND AMENDMENT BILL 2025 (No. 55)

First Reading

Bill received from the House of Assembly and read the first time.

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I move -

That the second reading of the bill be made in order of the day for Tuesday next.

Motion agreed to.

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Joint Sessional Committee on Gender and Equality - Terms of Reference Varied

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, the final message from the House of Assembly:

Mr President,

The House of Assembly has agreed to the following Resolution communicated to it by the Legislative Council on 18 August 2026:

Resolved, That the terms of reference for the Joint Sessional Committee on Gender and Equality, as previously agreed to by resolutions of both Houses, be varied as follows, to incorporate the consideration of bills and matters in relation to gender-based violence.

Jacquie Petrusma
Speaker, House of Assembly
18 August 2026

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ORDER OF BUSINESS - DISCHARGED

Establishment of Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Joint Standing Committee - Consideration - Discharged from Notice Paper

[11.12 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) (by leave) - Mr President, I move -

That Government Business order of the day No. 13 that the Council consider the message from the House of Assembly regarding the establishment of a Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Joint Standing Committee, be discharged from the Notice Paper.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) (by leave) - Mr President, I move -

That at its rising the Council adjourn to 11.00 a.m. on Wednesday 19 August.

Motion agreed to.

[11.12 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY - Mr President, I move -

That the Council do now adjourn.

The Council adjourned at 11.12 p.m.