



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

REPORT OF DEBATES

Wednesday 15 April 2026

REVISED EDITION

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Wednesday 15 April 2026

The President, **Mr Farrell**, took the Chair at 11.00 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People and read Prayers.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, before we proceed with our formal business today, I welcome to the Chamber this morning the year 11 and 12 legal studies students from Hobart College.

Also, Julius and Sonia Daguman are joining us in the Chamber today. We have a fairly full day's activity ahead of us with some legislation. I know that all members are keen to get on with it and will make you feel very welcome to our Chamber today and thank you for joining us.

Members - Hear, hear.

RESPONSE TO PETITION

Increased Regulation of Quad Bikes to Improve Safety and Reduce Injuries and Death

[11.02 a.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I lay upon the Table a response to petition No. 47 of 2025 of the Legislative Council, which refers to increased regulation of quad bikes to improve safety and reduce injuries and death. I acknowledge our guests in the Chamber today.

Paper tabled.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE - ANSWERS

No. 27 - Treasury Building Complex

Ms O'CONNOR question to LEADER for the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Ms RATTRAY

[11.03 a.m.]

Regarding the Tasmanian Government's plan to repurpose one of the state's most iconic and historically significant assets - the Treasury Building Complex in Hobart, the Expression of Interest phase closed on Wednesday, 17 December 2025 and I understand unsuccessful proponents have been notified.

Can the government provide an update on:

- (1) The name of the successful proponent.

- (2) The nature of the successful proposal.
- (3) Whether it involves the sale or long-term lease of the Treasury Complex.
- (4) When there will be a public announcement about the details of this arrangement and the future of this public heritage asset.
- (5) A timeline for this project.

You might have noticed it's been a busy morning, Mr President.

Mr PRESIDENT - Yes.

ANSWER

Ms RATTRAY - The answer to question on notice No. 27 from the member for Hobart, Ms O'Connor is:

- (1) The government has not yet selected a successful proponent. The process is ongoing, with submissions from the expression of interest phase having been evaluated and the project now progressing to the closed request for tender stage.
- (2) As the process has not yet concluded, no final proposal has been agreed. Proponents shortlisted for the request for tender stage will be invited to submit detailed development concepts, including both financial and non-financial elements, consistent with the government's objective for repurposing the site to support economic growth and public access.
- (3) No final decision has been made regarding the structure of any transaction. Options, including sale or long-term lease arrangements will be considered as part of the competitive tender process to ensure the best outcome for Tasmania.
- (4) The government will make further announcements at the appropriate time following the completion of the closed request for tender process and this will ensure due process is followed and that all proposals are properly assessed before any final decision is made.
- (5) The project is being delivered through a structured, multi-stage process which includes:
 - registration of interest phase completed in June 2025;
 - expression of interest phase completed in December 2025;
 - and requests for tender phase anticipated to commence on 29 April 2026.

All stages in the process will include consultation with the public and interested parties and further milestones, including final decisions and

announcements, will be determined following the evaluation of tender submissions.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

[11.05 a.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 continuation of a briefing.

Sitting suspended from 11.05 a.m. to 12.19 p.m.

UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA (PROTECTION OF LAND) BILL 2025 (No. 58)

Second Reading

Mr EDMUNDS (Pembroke) - Thank you, Mr President. I did notice the glance from the Clerk to check that I was here, and I am, but I have finished my remarks. Thank you.

Ms PALMER (Rosevears - Minister for Education) - Mr President, I will start by thanking members for their really thoughtful contributions. You can see that a great amount of work has gone into scrutiny of this piece of legislation, and I'm grateful for that. I do want to thank our team, both from the university and of course from the department, who have done a really great job in answering as many of the questions as we were able to capture through the second reading stage, and I will certainly do my best to address those in my reply.

I'd like to start by thanking the member for McIntyre. I acknowledge your contribution, and I do note your comments that the issue is not just about the sale of land above Churchill Avenue; it's about the future direction of higher education in Tasmania, the stewardship of public assets, the economic vitality of our capital city and the accessibility of education to current and future students.

The honourable member for Mersey had a number of questions. First, there was concern about holes in the business case and opposition from the community. The government has confidence in the business case of the university, including the ability to realise significant capital funding from the redevelopment of the area. The benefit of the proposal, however, extends well beyond the interests of the university and the STEM precinct. New, higher-density housing on this site is a benefit for the entire city and state. The Hobart City Council's own discussion paper on Mount Nelson and Sandy Bay shows that Hobart is in need of higher-density housing.

The honourable member for Mersey also spoke about the move to the new building, that it would be a more expensive and suboptimal option compared to upgrading the existing facilities, and the sale of the land is not its best use. Advice from Professor Erik Wapstra from the University of Tasmania (UTAS) was clear: Sandy Bay needs to change. The current layout

and the condition of existing buildings do not allow the university to deliver for its students or drive the innovation Tasmania needs. Simply upgrading the existing Life Sciences Building does not deliver a new vision for STEM in Tasmania; it just sustains the existing one, and that is not working with student numbers in decline and well below what the state needs.

There was also a question with regard to the fact that there's no guarantee that the rezoned land will be used for anything else. The state will be working actively with the university to ensure that value is realised from this land, and that the outcome is a positive one for Tasmania.

There were also comments that not everybody wants the new buildings, and I do accept that comment; however, our students - and I believe that there needs to be some weight added to the voice of our students - absolutely want fit-for-purpose, functional spaces, and the equipment that they need to develop skills for a modern workplace and economy. Specific examples of modern technical infrastructure missing in Sandy Bay include things like advanced laboratory facilities, and that's including dry and wet laboratories, or STEM-specific laboratory equipment: modern microscopes, spectrometers, gene sequencers, things like that.

Also, lacking critical infrastructure poses significant risks to the state's economic growth, innovation capacity and long-term competitiveness. The university has clearly shown that an investment in contemporary, state-of-the-art facilities does translate to increased enrolment. We saw that on the north-west coast with a 120 per cent increase in local enrolments following the redevelopment of the Cradle Coast campus. Contemporary buildings will also attract more high-calibre researchers.

I thank the honourable member for Launceston for your comments about the important role of modern, fit-for-purpose buildings in both supporting the learning objectives and the experiences of students. There was commentary in your second reading contribution about students disengaging when they are frustrated by outdated facilities, or worse, they can't get access to the equipment that they need because it doesn't exist. I think we are seeing that in the declining enrolments. Who wouldn't try to get the university with the best environment for learning? I did appreciate - oh, she's not here - her comments about dabbling in AI: always interesting. We can get that answer from AI or we can take those lessons from the STEM precinct business case. Contemporary facilities are not just nice to have; they're about strengthening capacity, they're about driving innovation and they're about supporting growth. That is what Tasmania needs.

The honourable member for Hobart had some questions around parliament being asked to act as a planning authority. The government is satisfied that the University of Tasmania has done the work, including the technical and planning advice from the Hobart City Council, to provide suitable planning outcomes for the parcels of land above Churchill Avenue. We do note that other universities have used the capital from land sales for improving their educational facilities, including the University of Canberra.

The honourable member for Hobart also asked, 'Where did this amendment come from?' The university proposed clause 7. It was developed as a compromise solution that would meet the needs of both the state and the university. It secures the campus for education and provides a funding pathway to deliver a vision for a new STEM precinct. The state government supports this vision and is committed to working with the university to deliver it.

The honourable member for Hobart also spoke about competing with sandstone universities. Modern universities are driven by the need to solve global challenges, responding to changing student needs and lifelong learning. What we heard from Prof Wapstra was that the Sandy Bay campus is heavily underutilised, with the current STEM facility spread too thinly across the campus. This is not a positive experience for students. The new STEM facilities provide both the facilities and the student experience of learning on a modern, vibrant and engaging campus.

I note the honourable member for Elwick's concerns about the planning process, but the government is satisfied that the work has been done and that the proposal to rezone this land as inner residential is both responsible and creates a path to a positive future for the university and the state. To satisfy ourselves, we have considered the All Urban Planning report into the University of Tasmania's proposal as it relates to this land. We've considered the masterplan as it relates to this land. We've also considered the Hobart City Council discussion paper on the Mount Nelson and Sandy Bay Neighbourhood Plan from 2023, and the engagement report in 2024. We satisfied ourselves that the university has been working with the Hobart City Council planners and that they had no concerns with the proposed zoning. We've made sure that our state planning office also has no concerns. All of this work told us that the rezoning of this land to inner residential is appropriate for the broader needs of Hobart and Tasmania, and not just the university.

Then there was the contribution from the honourable member for Nelson that this proposal should have a business case. This proposal is supported not only by a full business case, all 157 pages of it, but through the UTAS master plan and concept plan developed with input from staff, students, the Hobart City Council, other stakeholders and the community.

The honourable member also asked, 'Where did the amendment come from?' I do object to references that the circumstances surrounding section 7 of this bill are in some way murky. The university proposed clause 7. It was developed as a compromise solution that would meet the needs of both the state and the university. It secures the campus, as I've already said, for education and it does provide a funding pathway to deliver a vision for a new STEM precinct. The state government supports this vision and we are committed to working with the university to deliver it.

There was also commentary in the member for Nelson's contribution about claims that there was no involvement with the Hobart City Council, and I need to refute those claims. They are simply untrue. The University of Tasmania has engaged with the Hobart City Council at every stage of the development of its master plan and the consultations on the Mount Nelson and Sandy Bay Neighbourhood Plan. Hobart City Council has advised that it provided planning and technical support to the University of Tasmania and that it had no concerns with the proposed zoning of this land as inner residential.

The inner residential zoning does not mean the whole site will be developed as inner residential, but gives the university the flexibility to explore a broad suite of development options. There will be parts of the site that are easier to develop than others, and that's normal.

The ultimate design of the site will depend on the topography, infrastructure capacity, and hazards and values.

Concerns were raised with the proposed zoning potentially impacting on other strategic planning decisions, with the potential to distort the overall density of this area. The government considers this rezoning can actually support the current strategic planning work being undertaken by the City of Hobart.

Many recent commentators and experts have highlighted the need for more infill development in Hobart and have identified areas where higher-density development can go. This is particularly important in the current economic climate with cost-of-living and housing pressures. More urban sprawl only adds to the cost-of-living pressures and creates more issues for our roads and the cost of delivering the necessary infrastructure and services.

The suitability of this land for residential development has been considered in detail across many studies prepared by UTAS. The site has attributes that make it suitable for the inner residential zone. For example, the site is close to employment and a wide range of services offered by the Hobart CBD and Sandy Bay shops. It also has good access to regular public transport on Churchill Avenue and Sandy Bay Road. It's obviously well serviced by a range of educational facilities across primary, secondary and tertiary levels. The existing development on the site already demonstrates its suitability for the level of development expected in an inner residential zone. It is also consistent with the zoning of land immediately to the north of the site, reflecting the denser housing pattern in Sandy Bay and proximity to services. This is entirely consistent with the recently made Tasmanian planning policies which encourage the prioritisation of infill development and redevelopment and intensification of underutilised land over further expansion at the urban periphery. Furthermore, it is a location with ready access of services, including community, health and education facilities, public transport and employment.

The honourable member also made reference to section 7, subsection (9) - you might have actually said subsection (8), but I think you were referring to subsection (9). This section of the bill is necessary to allow the council to manage this land in the same way that it manages all other land within the municipality. I'm sure there will be future changes to the planning system, including modifications to the zones, and this section ensures that there is no impediment to the zoning of this land being updated at some point in the future.

There were also questions about the neighbourhood plan and engagement report. I welcome the member's reference to the Mount Nelson and Sandy Bay neighbourhood and engagement report, but I'm not clear why the member suggested that we did not refer to it. Indeed, sections of the engagement report were read out in the briefing to members, and I'll certainly read it back in today:

The challenge is meeting the growing demand for smaller, more accessible dwellings that are located in proximity to services, transport and social networks.

This is what is being delivered by the university's proposal and what is being supported by this bill.

Ms Webb - I meant the overwhelming bits that were against what you're proposing. Those bits.

Ms PALMER - You also mentioned -

Mr PRESIDENT - Order.

Ms PALMER - I believe I have the call, Mr President. There was also mention of funding and there's been a lot of commentary on the Commonwealth funding and whether it will be secured. I'd like to point out that the University of Tasmania has a very strong record of securing capital investment in modern education facilities around the state.

Our university has delivered over \$1 billion in projects across Tasmania just in the last decade, and they've all required extensive negotiations with Commonwealth, state and local governments.

The honourable member also spoke about the seismic station. The seismic station is located above Churchill Avenue. It was first installed in the 1960s by the United States government and it is one of six to seven across Tasmania. It is still maintained by the United States through the University of California San Diego. The University of Tasmania does not use it for research purposes. The facility is relatively small and consists of similar infrastructure to protect the equipment from the weather and wind. Its size makes moving the facility to a more ideal location a viable option for the future, and the university has consulted with internal and external stakeholders, including the University of California San Diego.

The member also mentioned the ranking of the university. I agree with the member for Nelson that the university's ranking for plant science is fantastic, but I'm also concerned about enrolments. Enrolments in key STEM subjects are falling sharply. There is little value in a positive international reputation when we can't fill our courses. It's also a concern that, based on 2024 STEM commencement figures, it's estimated that Tasmania will be around 170 STEM graduates short each year from the level required to maintain our qualified workforce, and that's today's workforce. We know STEM demands are increasing across our economy.

The member for Nelson also suggested that there is no material to support the statement that the current facilities are not fit for purpose and that they are impacting on student enrolments. That simply is not true. This issue is covered in some detail on pages 52 and 53 of the STEM business case. This issue was also covered in some detail by Professor Wapstra and Pro Vice-Chancellor Arts and Society Nicholas Farrelly in the briefing to members.

The member for Montgomery spoke about no consultation on the zoning of the land. The government has sought advice from Hobart City Council officials on the suitability of the proposed zoning of the land. Council officials advised that they had provided technical and planning advice to the university and had no concerns with the proposed zoning of this land as inner residential.

You spoke also about the value of the land. The land was valued based on the experience of land sales in the area. The government agrees that there is further work to do to identify the preferred strategies for the development of the land. The land is, however, highly suitable for development, given its location and proximity to services. It also has good access to regular public transport.

You spoke about the initiation of section 7 and, as mentioned previously, in replying to the member for Hobart and for all the members, I think. That was in response to the university putting forward those proposed changes.

You talked about moving facilities. As I noted previously, the University of Tasmania advises that the current campus is heavily underutilised and that a precinct will consolidate all services onto the lower campus.

You also had questions about there being no planning advice. I acknowledge the member for Montgomery's reference to independent planning advice, but do not agree that there has been no planning advice. The All Urban Planning report absolutely included planning advice about the suitability of the inner residential zone for one of these parcels and in part for the other. That advice did suggest some areas to be zoned 'general residential' and, as noted previously, the government confirmed that Hobart City Council planners were engaged in this process and they provided technical and planning advice. We also confirmed that the Hobart City Council has no concerns with the change of the general residential zone to inner residential, so there has been planning advice embedded in this process. The government is satisfied that the work has been done and the planning outcome is an entirely appropriate one.

Ms Webb - Point of clarification. When the minister says the Hobart City Council has no concern, does she mean the paid staff in the planning division, or does she mean the elected members of the Hobart City Council? You have to be careful about terminology here, I think, so we're not misrepresenting.

Ms PALMER - The advice I have is that we've received advice from the Hobart City Council.

In response to the member for Murchison, thank you very much for your contribution. You had some questions. Is the inner residential a holding zone? I think that was in relation to clause 7, subsection (9). That is not what is intended. The government considers that this land is appropriately zoned as inner residential. However, it is appropriate that once the land has been rezoned, the land is treated like any other parcels of land in the planning system. This subsection ensures that this act does not prevent the council rezoning the land in the future through the normal processes outlined in the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*.

This is important as we cannot predict the future structure of the planning scheme or decisions that could be made regarding an alternative use of the land. All land in Tasmania is subject to future rezoning through an application to the Tasmanian Planning Commission from the relevant council.

You also spoke about the future use of the land for university purposes, so I do note your reference to the future use of land for educational purposes. While the member is absolutely correct, it is worth noting for the record that the planning laws enable existing uses on the land to continue even if prohibited by the rezoning, so this allows them to continue to be operating until an alternative facility is actually developed.

You also asked what conversations the government has had with the Commonwealth. Infrastructure Tasmania has met with Infrastructure Australia on 10 and 18 March 2026 on the changes to the infrastructure priority list. A more detailed briefing on their evaluation with UTAS has been requested and they are awaiting a response. IA has advised the project remains on its website as the project under evaluation list and the state will work with them on alignment to their updated approach. Our government is also looking into other federal funding avenues, and this will continue to be explored with UTAS.

Before I finish, I would like to also briefly address claims raised by the member for Nelson outside this Chamber about land above Churchill Avenue, to provide some clarity to the Council. There is no proposal under this bill to rezone, sell or lease the bushland above Churchill Avenue. This bill does two things: it turns land below Churchill Avenue into vested land and identifies only two specific parcels above Churchill Avenue for rezoning to inner residential. I'm advised that around 50 hectares that the member refers to is predominantly bushland reserve. It has been the subject of land return discussions with the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania (ALCT) since at least 2024 and earlier still, following the university's 2019 apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

None of this is new or secret. It has been publicly referenced, including in the member for Hobart's contribution. It has been acknowledged in the STEM business case and consistently understood as land intended for return, not development. The land in question is also subject to Commonwealth environmental protections. This government does not believe parliament should stand in the way of land return discussions with the Aboriginal community. That is why the bill does not seek to turn already protected bushland into vested land.

As I indicated in my second reading speech, there are only two parcels of land that are exempt which we are looking to rezone. The bushland above Churchill has been excluded deliberately and appropriately from the bill because it has been earmarked for a land handback. Vested land applies to the land below Churchill Avenue. The university has been consistent in this regard and so has the government. Nothing has changed.

Ms Webb - Is the minister correcting the record on her incorrect statement in her second reading speech, which I quote:

[This is to prevent] the university from disposing of campus land at Sandy Bay without the approval of both Houses of parliament. There are only two parcels of land exempt, which we are looking to rezone.

That's an incorrect statement from the second reading speech. Is the minister correcting it?

Mr PRESIDENT - That's a point of order?

Ms WEBB - Indeed, Mr President. I'm looking for clarification about whether the minister is correcting it.

Mr PRESIDENT - The minister may want to seek advice on that.

Ms PALMER - I will just seek some advice, Mr President.

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable minister.

Ms PALMER - No, I'm not correcting the record. I don't believe my statements were incorrect.

Before I finish up, I would again like to thank members for their contribution and I'd also like to thank the community. There's been great discussion in the community and I've certainly appreciated my engagement with those that I've spoken to directly. I would like to give the final word to one of our Tasmanian students; I note the member for Pembroke also referenced

this in his contribution, that is, of course, the voice of the Tasmanian University Student Association, Jack Oates Pryor, who is the president of that association:

Students remain supportive of the university's plans for a STEM campus at Sandy Bay. We continue to call on the university, the community, and all levels of government to back and support strong improvements to our outdated learning and research facilities.

Crucially, students have been involved in discussions of a new STEM precinct from the outset. Unlike past capital works, the university is not simply consulting after the decision, but rather co-designing these spaces with those who will use them most. This valuing of students' expertise ensures quality of experience within the precinct. The alternative to backing STEM at Sandy Bay is an incredibly poor one for Tasmania's future. Students of all ages need this precinct to be supported and developed collaboratively.

Mr President, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PRESIDENT (Mr Farrell) - The question is that the bill be read the second time.

The Council divided -

AYES 8

Ms Armitage
Mr Duigan (Teller)
Mr Edmunds
Ms Forrest
Ms Lovell
Ms Palmer
Ms Rattray
Mr Vincent

NOES 6

Mr Gaffney
Mr Harriss
Mr Hiscutt
Ms O'Connor (Teller)
Ms Thomas
Ms Webb

Bill read the second time.

UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA (PROTECTION OF LAND) BILL 2025 (No. 58)

In Committee

[12.51 p.m.]

Madam CHAIR - The member for Nelson has a revised set of amendments. They're just being circulated now so that members have a hard copy, so we're all working to the same set of amendments.

Ms WEBB - They were circulated via email a while ago.

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to.

Clause 3 - Interpretation

Ms WEBB - I move the following amendment -

Page 4, definition of *dispose*, paragraph (i), after 'not less than'.

Leave out '99 years'.

Insert instead '30 years'.

Members, now that we have the bill going forward into the Committee stage, our job here is to be asking ourselves, are there things about this bill that need to be adjusted or improved or made clearer? That is what I'm going to ask you to consider in the amendments I'm putting forward on that basis, regardless of whether you've supported the bill or not in the debate. This is a fairly straightforward one. We're looking at the interpretation of what 'dispose' means in this act and therefore in relation to vested land, what the university would need to bring to parliament to get approval for in terms of disposing of it and what is included in that - remembering that bringing it to parliament doesn't stop it from happening, it's just an extra check and balance on whatever is going to happen under this 'dispose'.

The proposal I'm making with the amendment relates to (i) in the list there of definitions of 'dispose' (i): is a lease for a term of not less than 99 years currently. I'm proposing we reduce that period to 30 years. The effect of that would be if the university wanted to lease any of the vested land under the bill for a period of 30 years or more, it would need to come through parliament for additional approval. There's a fairly straightforward rationale for that you can probably see. Ninety-nine years is a very long time. It's a multi-generational commitment and decision that's been made that hasn't come to parliament.

It's very close to the effect of selling the land essentially, because if you were to give somebody a 99-year lease, they could have borrowing capacity based on that and develop it and do permanent things to the land. It's a very significant potential change that hasn't then come through parliament if the lease is something close to 99 years. That's against the intent of the bill and the promise that the government made initially back in 2024 to the community about bringing this bill forward to ensure that there is a parliamentary oversight over the Sandy Bay campus land.

A 30-year cap aligns with ordinary commercial practices for major leases. It's consistent also with the sorts of arrangements that are in other jurisdictions, university legislation and the limits they put on what can be done without parliamentary or executive government approval. The shorter term means we preserve some parliamentary sovereignty over this in terms of having a look at it. It still doesn't mean that if the university wants to do at least, say, 40 years, it doesn't mean they can't do it, it just means it comes through parliament. They make a case for it and parliament considers it on behalf of the Tasmanian people, because what we're talking about is land gifted by the Tasmanian people and for the use of the university for the benefit of Tasmanian people.

Thirty years is still ample security for genuine campus-related commercial partnerships that they might enter into, whether it's student housing, research, services or other partnership arrangements with industry. A 99-year threshold is not necessary to ensure that the university

can engage in those sorts of operations on vested land if they wish to. There's an open question here and we can come to this in questions on this section if this amendment doesn't come up. There'd be an open question of this requirement of not less than 99 years; perhaps you could have a 98-year lease and then you could have another 98-year lease and we would have essentially permanently disposed of, but never having come through under the intent of this act never having come through parliament.

That's my fairly straightforward description of what this amendment is trying to do and why it's trying to do it. It's entirely reasonable to reduce this period of time from 99 years down to 30 years. It aligns commercially. It provides plenty of opportunity for the university to use that vested land in all kinds of ways without having to come to parliament with leases less than 30 years, because 30 years is still a really long lease period. It ensures that the intent of the bill is maintained by having a parliamentary look at proposals beyond 30 years. I hope members consider this amendment to be reasonable and to be aligned with the intent of the bill.

Ms O'CONNOR - We will obviously be supporting this amendment because this was the amendment that was moved in the Assembly by my colleague, the member for Clark Vica Bayley, on the basis that it represents the interests of the people who ultimately own this land, that is the Tasmanian people and unarguably before that, Palawa people. As the member for Nelson said, it doesn't preclude a 99-year lease from being entered into. It just means it comes back to parliament if it's a lease of over 30 years.

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

QUESTIONS

Macquarie Point Stadium - P90 Assessment

Ms O'CONNOR question to LEADER for the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Ms RATTRAY

Yesterday during the debate on notice of motion No. 14 you indicated that you'd seek some advice on whether a copy of the P90 assessment on the stadium could be provided to members on a confidential basis to examine in the first instance. Do you have anything in terms of an answer to provide to the Council on that question?

ANSWER

Mr President, yes, I did give that undertaking. I've not been able to source that information, but I will certainly follow it up again today. It's been a little bit hectic, as you know.

Civil Construction Industry Support

Ms LOVELL question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr VINCENT

[2.31 p.m.]

Tasmania's civil construction industry employs thousands of Tasmanians, particularly in regional areas, and is responsible for delivering important government contracts and infrastructure projects across the state. This industry is heavily reliant on diesel and bitumen, with current price increases and supply issues having a big impact on the operating costs of civil construction businesses across Tasmania. The industry is also facing increased costs for materials due to supply chain disruptions.

What specific state support is your government giving to the civil construction industry across Tasmania as it deals with diesel price increases, material cost increases and related supply chain issues?

ANSWER

Mr President, I will just seek a bit of advice.

I was just clarifying the process that's being undertaken at the moment. There's certainly a fair bit of discussion between our committee that is running on behalf of the state and meeting daily and the federal government on what rebates or different concessions can be given, especially to the transport industry and the civil construction industry.

Besides that, I've been updated twice, I think, in the last two weeks regarding discussions between the Civil Contractors Federation and Department of State Growth. They have suggested various ways forward with it and that's being worked through at the moment.

I've also been contacted by a couple of councils that are also having similar sorts of discussions but don't really move into that area too much, so they've asked me to correspond with them on how that can be done as an industry because it's the same sort of work, same contractors floating around all together there.

Although there's no specific answer for it at the moment, I do understand that, as of a conversation yesterday morning, those discussions are continuing in a sensible way.

Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize - Travel Advice

Mr EDMUNDS question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, Ms PALMER

[2.34 p.m.]

Can the government confirm that this year's Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize has been postponed due to travel advice? What contingencies are being worked on for this year's cohort?

ANSWER

Mr President, the communication went out on 10 April around machinery of government changes, which will see the Frank MacDonal Memorial Prize move over to the department of education. At the moment it does still sit with the Department of Premier and Cabinet, so I'm answering this on behalf of the Premier for you. If there are any other further questions, they will need to go back to the Premier.

I am advised the 2026 Frank MacDonal Memorial Prize recipients were scheduled to depart for Europe today, Wednesday 15 April, to begin their study tour on the Western Front across Belgium and France. Following a thorough risk assessment that factored in recent global events, the Tasmanian government has made the difficult decision to postpone the 2026 international study tour. While destination travel ratings remain stable, instability in the Middle East creates unacceptable uncertainty regarding international flight paths and transit security for a government-led group of students. Obviously, the safety of our young recipients and the staff who would be travelling with them are our priority.

This is a postponement rather than a cancellation. We remain committed to finding an alternative opportunity for this cohort of students. That would be including undertaking this trip in 2027. The Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Department for Education, Children and Young People will maintain close contact with these families over the coming year to ensure the group remains connected and find new ways for these students to share their stories within the Tasmanian community.

Road Safety - Huon Highway-Leslie Road Intersection

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

[2.38 p.m.]

My question follows up on the matter that I raised yesterday regarding the safety upgrades of the Leslie Road intersection with the Huon Highway. I thank you for the information provided yesterday.

However, in light of the factors, per your confirmation yesterday, there is no contract with the design team and that work is underway up until December. My question now goes to securing the ongoing necessary funding for the intersection upgrade beyond the design work stage of things, noting that in Table 7.5 of the 2025-26 Budget Paper No. 1, it indicates the Huon Highway corridor will receive federal funding commencing in the 2026-27 financial year.

Minister, will the Huon Highway-Leslie Road intersection project receive any of that federal funding allocation that's there in the budget papers? If so, is the project expected to be fully funded by federal money or will there be state financial contribution to it, or is any potential consultancy following the design work expected to be the state's contribution, with the subsequent actual remedial work being done expected to be federally funded through that other funding?

ANSWER

Mr President, I will just clarify a couple of points on that.

The funding is for the corridor, so it has the flexibility of putting forward and moving things up, just like for the Grove intersection, though a smaller project, we were able to move the money around with negotiating transfer of letters. We are hoping after yesterday's question on following through over the next couple of weeks, the final parts and the original work will be done. We hope to have a contractor for the design in place by the end of April. The funding is 80/20 for that corridor on a shared basis.

The discussions have already started about moving it for different projects that are nominated on there. Usually, when we do a corridor study, it highlights a lot more pressure points on a corridor, whether they be safety- or traffic-related or growth related, then they pick the ones that they feel are most serious at the time. As we've seen on a few other corridors around the state with negotiations with councils or when the accident rate changes in an area, we do flex that a fair bit and this is one of those cases where Leslie Vale has been brought forward and it's funded through that process.

Budget 2026-27 - Tourism Marketing Funding

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

[2.40 p.m.]

At the 2025 election, the Liberal government committed to investing an additional \$38 million into tourism marketing funding. However, after the election, the Treasurer, Mr Abetz, cut funding for Tourism Tasmania's marketing funding over the forward Estimates in his interim 2025-26 Budget. How much tourism marketing funding will be in the 2026-27 Budget and will there be funding across the forward Estimates?

ANSWER

Mr President, I have the answers to those questions. The 2026-27 Budget will be delivered obviously on 21 May and the government has worked in close consultation with Tourism Tasmania in developing the budget.

Tasmania's visitor economy is one of our state's biggest success stories. It contributes \$4.5 billion to our gross state product. It supports 50,800 jobs: that's one in six Tasmanian jobs and comparable to manufacturing, construction and education. The government is working together with Tourism Tasmania and the tourism sector to grow Tasmania's job-rich visitor economy to keep moving the state forward.

Answer to Question - Child and Youth Safety Standards - Tasmania Police

[2.41 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, on indulgence, I have an answer to a question that was asked by the member for

Hobart on 24 March, so I'm pleased to have something to deliver. This question was regarding the timeframe for legislative amendments to list Tasmania Police as an entity to which the Child and Youth Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme apply.

I can advise that the Child and Youth Safe Organisation Amendment Regulations 2026, which provide that the police service must comply with the Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme, were gazetted on 1 April 2026, and Tasmania Police have been under the full requirements of the standards and schemes since that time.

I'm further advised that the government expects to release legislation containing the relevant legislative amendments for public consultation in coming weeks.

Tasmania Police and the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework

Ms O'CONNOR question to LEADER for the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Ms RATTRAY

[2.24 p.m.]

I am seeking some clarification. As I understand it, the Independent Regulator, Louise Coe, has asked that the provisions that would capture Tasmania Police for the purposes of the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework should be applied retrospectively, I think to 1 August last year. I wonder if the government has given consideration to that concern of the Independent Regulator and the need to capture Tasmania Police fully under the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework.

ANSWER

I'll endeavour to provide an answer to the member for Hobart for that supplementary question.

Natural Resource Management Funding

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

[2.43 p.m.]

With regard to funding arrangements for the three Tasmanian Natural Resource Management (NRM) organisations, can the Leader please advise:

- (1) How does the Premier/government interpret core funding for the purposes of resourcing the three NRM organisations in Tasmania? Does it refer to the \$544,000 per NRM per annum as provided in current core funding deeds, or does it refer to the narrower interpretation that NRE considers core funding at \$250,000 per annum?
- (2) Is it possible to confirm that core funding will continue at current levels, \$544,000 per region per annum plus indexation, through to June 2030?

ANSWER

Mr President, each NRM organisation received \$544,000 in 2024-25 and 2025-26, which reflected an uplift in funding for two years from 2023-24. The Tasmanian government acknowledges the NRM submission as part of the 2026-27 Tasmanian community budget consultation process, and confirms that the submission will be considered as part of the development of the 2026-27 state Budget, so you're going to have some repetition here. The 2026-27 Tasmanian state Budget will be delivered on 21 May 2026.

Derwent Ferry Services - Increased Demand

**Mr EDMUNDS question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT,
Mr VINCENT**

[2.45 p.m.]

My question is on behalf of Pembroke residents who welcome and applaud free travel as a cost-of-living relief measure and, as we saw this morning, a traffic-busting solution, which I took advantage of myself. In light of ferry services now being oversubscribed, so that some commuters are left behind on some services, will the government consider adding extra ferries and/or running more frequent services to meet the increased demand?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for the question. I wish I had woken up a little earlier and taken that option myself. I would have been quite happy to stand there and wait for the ferry. Today's circumstance was certainly different, and it was a fair trip in from the outer suburbs into Hobart this morning. It was nice and peaceful though, I should say.

It has happened a few times now with the ferry service where people rush to it when there is a problem across the bridge. It is something that State Growth monitors on a regular basis. I don't see the specific numbers unless we go chasing them, but it's something they are talking about, and they can make adjustments if need be. The biggest hassle is the running time empty back and forwards, but they have that mainly first thing in the morning, and it's the opposite effect in the evening as well.

It is something that we are pleased to have happen because it's no different to the fuel situation at the moment, where we were seeing a massive increase in the use of public transport and that's a good thing. Sometimes it takes a trigger like this for people to realise that it is an advantage to use different sorts of public transport. Members of my own office have started using the ferry system and buses and found it quite enjoyable. The answer overall is that the Department of State Growth will continue to discuss that with the ferry operators to make sure that they meet the demands as best as possible.

Driver Mentoring Tasmania - Funding

**Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT,
Mr VINCENT**

[2.48 p.m.]

Driver Mentoring Tasmania was formed more than a decade ago as a peak body supporting learner driver mentoring programs. They are established to provide support to people who have no personal means to learn to drive, with neither a car, a mentor nor the funds to pay for lessons. We hear that Driver Mentoring Tasmania is concerned about its future funding. Without this function there is a clear risk of fragmentation, an increased burden on volunteers and local coordinators and the driver mentoring community, and a reduced responsiveness to local program needs.

Has the government made any decision in relation to the funding of Driver Mentoring Tasmania, and are you able to provide any assurance to the Council today that the funding for this important peak body will continue?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member very much for the question. The driver mentoring programs are something that are close to my heart. I've been working closely with RACT, MAIB and other members of the road safety advisory panel. I guess, with the mentoring hours that you have to do now - and having seen my granddaughter just go through it - I'm aware of the complexities of it and I feel we probably need more professional advice early in the piece before they go down the road, and we've looked at a couple of different systems there. One is a computerised system where, when you go and pass your licence, you can then sit down at a screen with live steering wheel feel and vibration through it, developed by one of the country's best racing car driver's partner, I believe, wife; and we are just understanding the viability of that, to be able to give some second-hand experience before you go out on the road. It's been something I have been working on over the last few months and continue to develop.

I will have to double-check on the part about the driver mentoring program. We were of the opinion that the funding had been taken care of, but I haven't got anything before me at the moment that can actually confirm that, so I will do that and come back tomorrow with an answer on that program.

Ms O'Connor - Okay. Thanks. Through you, Mr President: in significant part, it's about the funding for the peak body that has the overarching responsibility for the programs around the state.

Mr VINCENT - I do take on board the importance of the programs and the necessity, in that not everybody has access to a suitable vehicle in many cases. We've had discussions with some of the people federally as well. The federal minister, Kristy McBain, is starting to put together the safety ministers from around Australia again to have regular forums during the year. In Canberra the other week, she used the example of some people learning to drive in a small car and then when they get back out to the rural property, they're straight into a Land Cruiser or large-style vehicle and not being able to cope with that difference, and vice versa. It's something we have had a lot of discussion on and will continue to do so.

On the driver mentoring program, I will clarify the information and come back to you tomorrow.

Government Vehicle Fleet Electrification

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

[2.52 p.m.]

My question goes to the ramifications of remaining fossil fuel-dependent, and the urgent need for Tasmania to genuinely move to a zero-carbon future.

The Tasmanian government has a policy to transition its passenger and light commercial vehicle fleet to 100 per cent electric by 2030; yet by early 2025, only 1 per cent of the fleet had been converted to EVs with four years to go to meet the 2030 deadline. My questions are: what percentage of the state vehicle fleet is currently 100 per cent electric? What is the projected EV uptake required annually for the state to meet its 2030 deadline?

The second question again goes to the state's electrification of the government passenger and light commercial vehicle fleet by 2030. The stated sustainability goal of the policy is the creation of a vibrant and accessible second-hand EV market to facilitate Tasmanians being able to also transition to electric vehicles. So, the question is: what monitoring is occurring of the rate of second-hand EV fleet vehicles uptake by the public? Is the availability of former EV fleet vehicles actively promoted to the community to encourage uptake, and how many used EV and/or hybrid fleet vehicles have been placed on sale for public usage to date?

ANSWER

Mr President, it's a very appropriate time to be asking those questions and providing some answers.

The government set a target to transition its vehicle fleet to 100 per cent electric by 2030, and they set that in 2020. The target includes both battery-electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles. Progress over the period since the target announcement has been limited due to a range of factors, including: the price of vehicles compared to internal combustion equivalents; the availability of vehicles that meet operational safety and cost requirements, particularly for light vehicles like commercial vehicles and specialty need vehicles; and availability and cost of supporting charging infrastructure.

Some of these barriers remain to varying extents, while other barriers have eased. The Climate Change Office in Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania has worked collaboratively with the Department of Treasury and Finance to support the transition. A range of policies and initiatives to support the fleet transition have been or continue to be implemented, including: a new whole-of-government contract for purchasing passenger and light commercial vehicles; education resources for staff, including fact sheets and short instructional videos; assessing 110 government parking sites across the state for EV charging infrastructure suitability; providing advice to agencies about installing charging infrastructure on their sites; updating operational fleet management policies; a procurement process for a

panel of charging infrastructure suppliers; and financial support for agencies to purchase EVs and charging infrastructure.

As of 28 February 2026, there were 35 battery-electric vehicles and 36 plug-in hybrid vehicles in the government fleet, representing 2.5 per cent of the total fleet. Hybrid vehicles represented 31.1 per cent of the fleet in the same period. The target remains at 2030 and fleet vehicles typically have a three-year lease schedule for replacement. At the end of lease, all vehicles are available for purchase through public auctions. The process is managed by Pickles. The government does not actively promote the sale of any of its ex-fleet vehicles. I do myself, if I think it's a good one. Members of the public can access information on all ex-fleet vehicles for sale at any time via the Pickles website. Since November 2020 when the target was announced, 19 battery-electric vehicles, 25 plug-in hybrid and 594 hybrid ex-fleet vehicles have been disposed of through the public auction process.

Answer to Question - Homes Tasmania

[2.56 p.m.]

Mr VINCENT (Prosser - Minister for Housing and Planning) - I have an answer on indulgence. I have an answer to a question asked by the member for Rumney during yesterday's Question Time on 14 April.

Homes Tasmania has advised me there has been no reduction in delivery of maintenance services. Homes Tasmania is responsible for maintaining around 5275 social housing properties plus 1799 additional properties, including supported accommodation, non-residential assets and 549 parcels of vacant land.

An annual budget of approximately \$38.25 million is allocated to the maintenance activities. The funding supports general asset maintenance and property upgrades, including energy efficiency improvements and disability modifications to support tenants' needs and to improve service delivery and value for money.

A new maintenance model was introduced in southern Tasmania in July 2025 and Homes Tasmania has received positive feedback from its tenants, especially regarding how promptly and efficiently their maintenance issues have been addressed.

The new model has delivered measurable improvements and is now being tendered for northern Tasmania with an announcement planned for July 2026, creating opportunities for local businesses across the north and west. In the south, the panel model is supported by an internal trades team focused on high volume and lower value works. A review shows a clear cost benefit, and Home Tasmania is exploring opportunities to expand this team to further improve value for money. Maintenance works also include energy-efficiency upgrades to improve thermal comfort, enhance safety and to help reduce cost-of-living pressures on the tenants. We will continue working to improve our maintenance program, and it's been something that's been highlighted in the past that needed some work, so thank you for the question.

School Buses - Dead Running Return Trips

**Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT,
Mr VINCENT**

[2.59 p.m.]

Minister, we understand public school buses transport children to schools around the state - we thank them for that - and deliver them safely, then return to the Metro base empty without picking up passengers on the return journey. The Taroona High School bus, as we understand it, is one example which does the return trip to the city at peak time, zooming past the bus stops empty when it could be collecting passengers. Has the government considered enabling empty school buses to pick up passengers on their return journey? What would it take for this to occur and to enable more use of those buses on their return to base?

ANSWER

Mr President, I will just seek some advice.

A very good question from the member for Hobart. It is something that I personally haven't seen a lot of information on, but I do know the new CEO of Metro and other bus operators are very conscious with State Growth of dead running time, with the announcement that we had a couple of days ago regarding the fine-tuning of the Metro service in Hobart, which flows on then to the private operators as well to bring it into 2026 transport and road conditions and everything like that.

Phase 2 is - and we will deliver some more efficiencies into that to minimise that possible dead running. There is a situation between school buses and general fare buses but that can change pretty quickly once all the students are off it. That is something that state growth are looking at to minimise over-cost and make it more efficient.

One of the big hassles that we've had with bus services as a whole is over the last few decades, it just ends up as being, as I keep describing it, as running all around Hobart on some burning areas. To bring about efficiency, we have to make it a lot more deliberate. Going to schools is a very deliberate run. Coming from that way may open up other opportunities now as we try to make those runs and the use of the buses more economical and efficient.

Ms O'Connor - You'd probably like to see that, wouldn't you?

Mr VINCENT - I would certainly like to see it and it is a big part of what the new CEO of Metro is trying to do, hence the announcement a couple of days ago about improvements in the timetables and the efficiency of bus runs. This would fit with that. If there's any more information I need to add after speaking with the CEO, I will clarify that for you.

UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA (PROTECTION OF LAND) BILL 2025 (No. 58)

In Committee

Resumed from above (page 12).

[3.04 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR - Madam Chair, I won't speak for much longer, simply to say this is an important amendment because, as all members will know, a 99-year lease is as good as selling an asset. In this case that asset is public land vested in our only university. There's enough that's objectionable about this bill in its rezoning and potential loss of excellent facilities north of Churchill Avenue, so I hope that members will see that this is an important amendment. It provides parliament with an opportunity for oversight of a lease that has a provision of more than 30 years in its term. It's kind of in some ways, with this legislation, trying to make the best of what the Greens certainly believe is not a good situation. That oversight over public land and the proposed long-term leasing as good as the sale of that land is something that certainly the Greens believe is important and necessary. I hope other members will support the amendment.

Ms RATTRAY - A question to the member who has proposed the amendment: I'm trying to reconcile, if you built some sort of development that was going to be housing, how 30 years would fit with borrowing money for something like that. I'm just trying to reconcile that in my mind. Was there any other option considered? I understand what you're saying about a 99-year lease, and it does appear to be a very long time. But, I'm thinking 30 years doesn't seem to be a long time to have security for if you were going to borrow money to provide some significant infrastructure. I hope you might address your mind to that when you next get to the lectern.

Ms PALMER - The government does not support the proposed amendment to expand the definition of 'dispose' to include leases of over 30 years. The university is encouraged to enter partnerships in the establishment and operation of the STEM precinct. It has always been an aspiration that industry engage with the precinct and leases may be required to justify capital investment in that partnership.

The university already has leases on facilities at the Sandy Bay campus that are over 30 years, and an example of that is with organisations such as the CSIRO. The objective of the bill is to ensure that the land required for the delivery of the university's activities in Sandy Bay stays in public hands for future generations, and prohibiting the leases over 99 years without parliamentary approval delivers on this objective.

Ms O'CONNOR - Sorry, that's a quite disappointing answer for the Leader for the Government, because this amendment does not propose to prohibit the university entering into leases of more than 30 years. What it says is that if the university wants to engage in a lease of 30 years or more then parliament should have an oversight role. In fact, it still wouldn't preclude, for example, if the university felt so inclined, them having a potentially 200-year lease. It's not the length of the lease that's the issue here, it's the trigger for oversight. It is a very reasonable amendment because in the end we're still talking about public land held in trust by a public institution.

Ms WEBB - I thank Madam Chair and thank members for questions. I will first address the member for McIntyre's query that she put to me. As the member for Hobart has just said,

what I'm proposing prohibits nothing. If the university were to be leasing land, for example, for a housing development, as you indicated, that's a pretty serious long-term effort that is disposing of land pretty much permanently. All this would do is if they're going to do a long lease, in order to do that, it would have to come through parliament. That's all that this is requiring: that any lease over 30 years triggers that requirement in this bill for vested land, the disposal of vested land to come via parliament with a motion that is laid on the Table. It doesn't stop anything happening. It brings the oversight threshold down from 99 years - which is an incredibly long, multi-generational time - down to 30 years. And that just means there's accountability in a public way through parliament for that.

I'm very interested in the minister specifying that the CSIRO lease is already over 30 years, because if she's referring to the CSIRO facilities above Churchill Avenue, of course, that's in the rezoned land proposed under this bill, so it has nothing to do with what I'm proposing here, if that's the existing lease that she's talking about. If there are existing leases in what this bill prescribes to be vested land below Churchill Avenue, then absolutely identify them. I would presume that any existing ones are not captured by this the way that other existing arrangements aren't captured by what's in this bill, so, again, there's absolutely nothing that isn't reasonable about asking for leases over 30 years to come via the oversight mechanism of this parliament under this bill.

In most commercial or industry partnerships that were involving leasing areas of land, 30 years is an incredibly long time for any commercial venture to enter into a lease or for any particular industry partnership to enter into a lease. That's a very long time indeed. I'd be surprised if there were many that were proposed to be above that, and if there were, there's absolutely no harm in it coming through this parliament for that oversight function.

I'd ask members to see this as very reasonable, very aligned with the intent of this bill and very much making sure that parliament has the role that this bill with this title, University of Tasmania (Protection of Land) Bill, at least in some instances, lives up to that title - that we have an oversight role for this parliament.

Ms RATTRAY - I appreciate the member addressing her mind to my question. To follow on from that, how does someone have certainty when they've had a lease for 30 years and then it comes back to the parliament and we have no idea what this parliament might look like in 30 years?

Ms Webb - That's not what it says.

Ms RATTRAY - I thought I understood you to say that it would come back to the parliament for oversight.

Ms Webb - If the lease is for more than 30 years -

Ms O'Connor - A disallowable instrument.

Madam CHAIR - Order.

Ms Webb - If they're proposing to enter a lease for more than 30 years, that has to come through here before they enter that lease.

It's not at the not at the end of 30 years, it's at the start. If it's more than 30 years, that's when it comes through.

Ms RATTRAY - Okay, and so then my follow-up question is: was 30 years chosen because you had in your mind thought that was a reasonable length of time and then by the explanation you just provided as well?

Ms Webb - Well, I did say in my opening remarks, when I have my final say on the bill, because I don't want to jump up but when I do, I can repeat what I said.

Madam CHAIR - Order. I urge other members who may have questions for the member, or if you don't have any more for the member for McIntyre, that you put them - the member will be on her third call.

Ms PALMER - I think it's a little bit unfair for the member for Nelson to say they just come to parliament. It's not an easy thing to just come to parliament. There's quite a process around that, as there should be.

We don't want to be in a position where we're creating uncertainty for opportunities, so a lease of 99 years or more is widely recognised as being, in practical terms, equivalent to a permanent transfer of control and it is, therefore, appropriate that such arrangements are treated in the same way as a sale. The university already uses long-term leases in some circumstances to support partnerships and shared facilities, and the bill preserves this flexibility for leases under 99 years.

The 99-year benchmark is also consistent with established Tasmanian land law. Under the *Crown Lands Act 1976*, 99 years is the maximum lease term that can be granted. The bill adopts that same threshold as a clear and well-understood point at which parliamentary scrutiny should apply. This goes to the core intent of the bill to ensure there is no permanent or near-permanent loss of control of this publicly gifted land without transparency and the approval of parliament. Setting a lower threshold such as 40 or 50 years would create unnecessary barriers to investment and development, particularly in the context of the inner residential zoning and the delivering of housing and the STEM precinct. This bill is designed to strike a balance between protecting the public interest in this land and enabling the university to enter into long-term commercial partnerships and development arrangements, while ensuring that any arrangement that effectively gives away long-term control of the land is subject to parliamentary oversight. Again, I ask members to not support the amendment.

Ms THOMAS - Madam Chair, I'm happy to support the amendments as put forward. Listening to the minister's response there, I find it difficult to understand the logic whereby, if the intent of the bill is to ensure parliamentary oversight of permanent or near-permanent use of the land, which is what I heard the minister say is the intent of the bill, then certainly 99-plus years is equivalent to permanent or near-permanent use of the land. I feel like their statements are a bit contradictory there. I don't know if the minister has another call or not, but -

Madam CHAIR - The minister has got as many calls as she needs.

Ms THOMAS - it is somewhat contradictory, the statement of the intent of the bill versus how you described 99-plus-year terms being considered in the property market, if you like, or the use of land market. Sorry, I'm not being very articulate.

Ms O'CONNOR - Madam Chair, my laptop has just died, so I can't go into the *Nature Conservation Act* and have a look, so perhaps the minister can clarify this for me, but I thought the provision in the *Nature Conservation Act* effectively prohibited any lease of more than 99 years. If I'm wrong on that, please correct me. It's very different because this is the threshold for oversight, which is not about a restriction; in fact, it is not any restriction.

Members should be cautious about accepting that we abrogate our oversight responsibility on the basis of barriers to investment and redevelopment. It's not like we're talking about any land of any private tenure, for example. We're talking about public land that belongs to the people of Tasmania. To use the argument that allowing parliament, through a disallowable instrument, to have some oversight of any lease over 30 years may be a barrier to private investment and redevelopment is, I think, quite cynical, given the nature and the tenure of this land. I understand the minister is getting some advice on this, but I don't know that the comparison to the *Nature Conservation Act* is relevant in this case. If the minister could clarify that, that would be good.

Parliament has a responsibility in relation to UTAS - its governance, its direction and how it disposes of public assets. That's what this amendment is all about. It's not about stopping 99-year leases or 200-year leases. It's about making sure we can have a look when the university decides it's going to dispose of land via a lease of over 30 years, which is, you know, a third of our lifetimes if we're lucky. It's not a short period of time. Any investor who's serious about investment in this space will see that as a quite reasonable threshold, I would have thought. After all, which parliament, if given a good opportunity through a lease that UTAS is negotiating in good faith - if this legislation passes, which it seems it will - which parliament would say, 'We don't want to see that project there because we don't support housing on that site'? I hope that the minister can explain why we should regard investment and redevelopment barriers as a reason to abrogate our responsibility for oversight.

Ms PALMER - Madam Chair, we quickly jumped online and we can't see with the time that we've had any reference in the *Nature Conservation Act* to the 99-year lease. I did say in my comments that the 99-year benchmark is also consistent with established Tasmanian land law under the *Crown Lands Act 1976*. The 99 years is the maximum lease term that can be granted, and the bill adopts that same threshold as a clear and well-understood point at which parliamentary scrutiny could apply.

Ms O'Connor - It's a maximum lease term; that is different from this. False equivalence.

Madam CHAIR - Order.

Ms PALMER - Also the 99 years is the established threshold for treating a lease as similar to sale, and so lowering the threshold to 30 years is a significant change.

Ms LOVELL - Just a brief contribution on the amendment. The point I was going to make is similar to what the minister has just said in that I'm inclined at this stage not to support the amendment because the definition we're talking about here is disposal and a 99-plus-year lease is what is generally accepted as being the equivalent of a disposal in the same way as selling the land or a more permanent disposal.

My question for the member for Nelson - and I apologise if I've missed this in earlier contributions - is why have you landed on 30 years? Is that based on advice or consultation that you've had with anyone?

Ms Webb - I'll repeat my opening comments when I get up for my third call on that.

Ms LOVELL - Specifically, have you had any consultation with the university or anyone who might be looking to operate in this space around long-term investments around that 30-year figure?

Madam CHAIR - I just want it to be clear that if anyone has another question for the member for Nelson, they need to get up and pose them. Otherwise, I'll give the call to the member for Nelson.

Ms WEBB - Madam Chair, I thank the members for the questions. I'll just run through, because the members for McIntyre and Romney both asked about the 30-year number and, as I said when I was first putting this amendment, there are a couple of things about that. One is that it is a length of time that aligns with ordinary commercial practice for major leases and is consistent.

The other thing it's consistent with that's relevant here is other jurisdictions under their university acts when they have a constraint on universities selling gifted land, which most of them do. That's one of the reasons, just to remind people, when we had the UTAS inquiry and looked at governance matters and the *University of Tasmania Act*, one of the recommendations of the inquiry of this place was that this sort of constraint be put back into the act; it was taken out in 1992, it had been there prior to that. Part of that inquiry recommendation was that we should relegislate a similar parliamentary oversight mechanism such as this. When we looked at other jurisdictions, it's typically about 20 years, so this is actually a more generous term than other jurisdictions' university acts have that constrain or impose oversight at a 20-year lease level, typically.

Thirty years still provides ample security for genuine campus-related commercial activities. If the university is entering into commercial leases with people on that vested land area for research, services or other industry partnerships, 30 years is a very long lease to enter into. There's nothing particularly constraining about that; most leases are going to be less than 30 years. If it's more than 30 years, it's likely to be something fairly permanent and the intent of this bill is to have parliamentary oversight operate on things that are permanent changes to what we're defining as vested land under this bill.

The point has been made time and again that this isn't a constraint. There's no equivalence to looking at what other legislation says must be maximum leases because this isn't about setting a maximum lease period, this is about setting the point at which parliamentary oversight is triggered. The university will be perfectly at liberty to put forward proposals that have longer lease periods than 30 years. It just means that, if it is a longer lease period that's more than 30 years, it would come and be a motion laid on the Table of this place and the other place, and parliament would have that as a disallowable instrument. I'd also remind members that it's really hard to disallow something in this place. It hardly ever happens, right? It's actually in lots of ways a formality of parliamentary oversight, but what it does mean is, if something dramatically inappropriate was being proposed, we have the backstop of parliamentary oversight. If it was something that the majority of people in this place or the other place could

be convinced was dramatically inappropriate, there would be a block on it available via parliament. That's the only accountability to the Tasmanian community that the university has, because largely they're not accountable to the Tasmanian community at all.

Ms O'Connor - Not accountable to anyone, really.

Ms WEBB - Indeed. I'd invite members to see this as not a serious constraint on the university. Yes, they'd have to bring it as a motion or have the minister on their behalf bring it as a motion to this place. I'm sorry, but if they're offering more than a 30-year lease, they would absolutely have put time and thought into that and have it as a proposal that could readily be presented to this place via a motion and laid on the Table for us to have a look at and just have that opportunity for parliamentary oversight.

It aligns with what would be considered long commercial leases. It aligns with other states' university acts and the constraints they put on universities disposing of gifted land. It's a reasonable amount of time to impose a level of oversight rather than impose any maximum whatsoever about what can actually be done. This does not do that. I invite members to consider this as a way for this place to do its job well on behalf of the Tasmanian people in regard to the intent of this bill.

Ms PALMER - Just to reiterate, lowering the threshold to 30 years is a significant change. It is a significant change. This bill is all about trying to strike that balance between protecting the public interest in this particular piece of land while also enabling the university to enter into those long-term commercial partnerships and development arrangements. Partnerships of this sort would require quite significant capital investment, and we certainly want to be ensuring that any arrangement which effectively gives away long-term control of the land is subject to parliamentary oversight. Again, I just urge members not to support the amendment.

Ms THOMAS - The way I read this is, if the intent is really protection for the Tasmanian people, if that genuinely is the intent of the government, I can't understand why it takes issue with this because the university is no doubt going to enter into a lease for the term that, whatever the term means, it doesn't have to come back to parliament. That would be the thing you would do if you wanted to avoid parliamentary oversight, is the way I read it. If the government is genuine about protecting Tasmanians' interests here, what's wrong or what's the risk, what's the burden to the university of making it 30 years? Why does the government have a problem with that? I just cannot understand the government's logic here about, if it genuinely is about protecting Tasmanians' interests and genuinely about protecting land that is gifted for educational purposes, why not to bring it back to the parliament. What's the risk? What does the government have to lose here or what do the Tasmanian people have to lose? It's in their interests.

Ms PALMER - I thank the member for her comments. Again, can I just reiterate that the 99-year benchmark is consistent with the established Tasmanian land law. Under the *Crown Lands Act 1976*, 99 years is the maximum lease term that can be granted. Just because we had the - you called up the *Nature Conservation Act*. It also states in there that no Crown land shall be leased for a period exceeding 99 years. It is a little bit about consistency as well. They're two Tasmanian land acts that also have this same set up with the 99 years. As I said earlier, if we do lower that threshold by 40 or 50 years, it does create unnecessary barriers to investment and development, and we want to be setting our university up for opportunities.

Ms THOMAS - This is simply not a comparable example that has been given. This is not Crown land; it's not subject to any of the processes that are to be followed in terms of the sale of Crown land, if the government would follow those processes. I'm not convinced by the minister's response. This bill itself, it's not a typical circumstance; we are legislating for an extraordinary circumstance here, and the more protections that we can put in place here, the better, in my point of view anyway. I hope honourable members will support this amendment.

Madam CHAIR (Ms Forrest) - The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The Committee divided -

AYES 7

Ms Forrest
Mr Gaffney
Mr Harriss (Teller)
Mr Hiscutt
Ms O'Connor
Ms Thomas
Ms Webb

NOES 7

Ms Armitage
Mr Duigan
Mr Edmunds
Ms Lovell (Teller)
Ms Palmer
Ms Rattray
Mr Vincent

Amendment negatived.

Clause 3 agreed to.

Clause 4 -

Parliamentary approval required to dispose of certain University land

Ms WEBB - I will move this set of amendments because they go together, so I will move them all and then put the argument to them all, if that's alright with you.

Madam CHAIR - They're all linked.

Ms WEBB - Yes, they are, so I will go through them all. I move -

First amendment

Page 5, subclause (2), paragraph (a), after subparagraph (i).

Insert the following subparagraph.

(X) must provide to the Minister, with the request under subparagraph (i), a report in accordance with subsection (xx);
and

Second amendment

Same page, same subclause, paragraph (b), after 'is to table the'.

Leave out 'motion'.

Insert instead 'motion, and the report under paragraph (a)(X) provided to the Minister with the motion,'.

Third amendment

Page 6, after subclause (2).

Insert the following subsection.

- (xx) A report to be provided by the University under subsection (2)(a)(X), in respect of the proposed disposal of vested land under this section, is to include -
 - (a) the reasons why the University intends to dispose of the land; and
 - (b) if known, the purpose for which the land is intended to be used after the University has disposed of the land; and
 - (c) if the intended use of the land after its disposal is not known at the time the report is prepared, a statement to that effect; and
 - (d) the characteristics and qualities of the land including, but not limited to -
 - (i) the geological, biodiversity and topographical characteristics of the land; and
 - (ii) a list of all existing structures on the land; and
 - (iii) details of any consultation undertaken by the University in respect of the proposed disposal of the land including, but not limited to, consultation with statutory authorities and planning authorities.

I realise that's a long inclusion. Here's the intention of that: clause 4 of the bill, as it currently stands, is about what happens when the university wants to dispose of a piece of land that is vested land under the act. It describes the process that the university has to go through, in conjunction with the minister, to bring it to parliament for consideration as a motion laid on the Table. The way it is currently drafted in the bill, the motion that relates to the disposal of that vested land requires very little detail to be provided to the parliament when parliament might consider that motion that's laid on the Table.

For example, if we look at the clause as it's currently drafted, clause 4, subclause (1) just says that the university can't dispose of vested land unless it's come through the parliament. Subclause (2) is about how if the university does wish to dispose of all or any part of the vested land, the university must do these things: it has to make the request to the minister to table a

motion in respect to the disposal of the land; it has to provide the minister with a draft motion that meets the requirements of subsection (4), which we will get to in a minute; and if the minister is satisfied that the motion provided meets the requirements of subsection (4), the minister tables the motion in each House, and it's disallowable. That's described in subclause (3). Subclause (4) is about what's required to be provided as part of this motion for the parliament to consider if this process is triggered and is underway. Subclause (4) says:

A motion to approve the disposal of vested land that is to be tabled under subsection (3) -

- (a) must include -
 - (i) clear description, or plan, of the area of vested land that the University proposes to dispose of; and
 - (ii) if the disposal of the land is by lease, details of the term of the lease; and
 - (iii) details of the amount of payment or consideration, or any other benefits, that the University is to receive if the disposal is approved ...

I have no problem with (ii) and (iii), which is if there's a lease involved, we need to see the lease. If there's information about the amount that they're going to get for it, we should see that. I have no problem with that.

My problem is with subclause (4)(a)(i) here and all the information that we would be required to be provided with as a parliament to consider this sort of motion to dispose of vested land - and remember, going back to the start of clause 4, this could actually relate to the entire parcel of vested land - if the university wishes to dispose of all or any part of vested land. What we're talking about here is there could be a motion coming to this place that proposes to dispose of all of the Sandy Bay campus land below Churchill Avenue, which is what this bill says is vested land. With that in mind, if a proposal came to us as a motion to dispose of all of that land, for example, as it could, all we'd need to be given is a clear description, so it would have to say: 'the land in the relevant folio below Churchill Avenue'. That's a clear description of that land. Or 'plan of the area of the vested land', so a description or a plan of the area of vested land. All it needs to do is describe what the land is. That could be as simplistic as Sharpie pen drawings on a fuzzy aerial photo, which is what this bill has with the rezoning in Schedule 2 of this bill.

We could get something that is a fuzzy aerial picture of the whole of the Sandy Bay campus under Churchill Avenue with a Sharpie line drawn around it and meet the requirement of this clause 4, if the university was proposing to dispose of the whole of that area, the vested land described in this bill.

That's a worst-case scenario, right? I accept I've just painted for you the worst-case scenario, but the bill says what we should expect to see, and all we should expect to see is apparently the area - let me get back to the wording: 'a clear description, or plan, of the area of the vested land'. That's it.

What my amendment does is, it outlines with a little bit more detail some minimum requirements of the information that should accompany that motion if it were to come to us for any disposal of an area of vested land, whether that's a part of it or all of it, or whatever it might be in the future. What should we as a parliament expect to see information-wise? The amendment says there should be a report that accompanies it and that report should have included in it the following things which are in the amendment here: a rationale for it, so the reasons why the university is intending to dispose of it. I believe the university should have to say on what basis they need to sell or dispose of the land that's there.

Paragraph (b) is about, if known, the purpose for which it's intended to be used after the university has disposed of it. Pretty reasonable. If they don't know that, then a statement that says they don't know what it's going to be used for when they dispose of it, but that's just a clear statement one way or the other.

Paragraph (d) is important, I believe, because we've just seen this bill ask us to rezone land with absolutely none of the normal information provided through a planning process. This is a very light touch to try to make sure we're never treated like a rubber stamp in that way ever again if we did have a motion come to us to consider that related to disposing of vested land, so the report that had to accompany that motion, according to my amendment, would have to include information about the characteristics and qualities of the land that's in the proposal, including these things: the geological, biodiversity and topographical characteristics. So, again, some basic information.

A list of all existing structures on the land - again, it's just basic information, so we're really clearly understanding what we're being asked to consider.

The third thing is details of any consultation that's been undertaken by the university in respect of the proposed disposal of the land including, but not limited to, consultation with statutory authorities and planning authorities. That means maybe there's been consultation with the Hobart City Council, maybe there's been consultation with TasWater, maybe there's been consultation with other sorts of statutory or planning authorities.

That's it. It's just requiring a report that outlines those very basic things that I would think this parliament, since under this bill parliament has been given an oversight role to consider any disposal of vested land - meaning that gifted land that's defined as vested under this bill. Parliament's oversight role surely requires us to expect there to be some very basic information provided with a motion to that effect. So far in the bill as drafted, there is no requirement for that basic information - none. You could meet the requirements of this bill with a fuzzy aerial map with a Sharpie line drawn around a bit of land on it and it could be the whole campus below Churchill Avenue. This is not a dramatic ask. This is a bare minimum ask of accountability to add into this bill in anticipation of a time in the future that this parliament might be invoked to do the oversight role the bill sets up.

I would hate to think we would leave the bill as it is without at least this minimum requirement, because to me that would say we are setting up this Chamber and this parliament to be a rubber stamp down the track if we don't at least put some very minimal requirements in there for what we would expect to see in terms of information alongside a motion to dispose of vested land.

I hope members have heard that rationale for the amendment. Again, it's not dramatic. It's a very basic, responsible proposal to include. It doesn't change any intent about this bill at all. It's aligned with the fundamental intent of the bill, which was to give parliament an oversight role. Again, there would be no reason for a responsible government or in fact for the university to have any objection to this, because they should be able to explain to us why they're bringing a motion down the track under this legislation for consideration by this parliament.

If the university wasn't entirely happy to do that, we would have serious questions of the university. Surely the university would say to the government: we welcome this amendment. Any responsible governance mechanisms of the university would say: we welcome being expected to provide this very minimal amount of information if in the future we were to propose to dispose of any, in fact perhaps all, of this vested land. I strongly, strongly request members really think about supporting this amendment as an important part of our role here with this bill.

Ms O'CONNOR - This amendment, in some ways, although it adds more words and provisions, tightens up the intent of clause 4 in the bill. When you look at the matters to be provided to government and to be included in that notice to parliament through the disallowable instrument that are proposed in this amendment, you would think that this information is kind of, in some ways, the bare minimum of what the university should provide to the parliament should it wish to dispose of any of the public land which is currently vested with it.

This is not like the previous amendment where not a majority of members were persuaded that you needed to have some tightening up around lease oversight. This is simply enabling the parliament, when that disallowable instrument comes to the parliament, to have really what's quite straightforward and basic information from the university about the purpose for which the land is intended to be used, the characteristics and qualities of the land, including biodiversity and topographical characteristics, all the structures on the land - these are the basics. In some ways what it might do, should Council accept this amendment, and should the moment come when we're dealing with a disallowable instrument in this regard, it might actually save some time because there will be real clarity in the instrument that comes to the parliament for examination.

Notwithstanding the previous vote, I hope that members see that this is a very, very sensible - and I'd argue necessary - inclusion for this bill in order to protect the public interest, but also to have maximum clarity and transparency about the nature of the land that UTAS wishes to dispose of.

Ms PALMER - The government does not support the member's amendment and considers that it is over-prescriptive and unnecessary. A motion to dispose of vested land is a disallowable instrument, which means the University of Tasmania will need to provide adequate information that would satisfy members that the motion should not be disallowed. Now, the nature of the information required, would depend on the circumstances of the proposed disposal of land and members at that time would be able to request any information from the university that they need to be satisfied that the motion should not be disallowed.

I would like to raise a couple of other things. The information relevant to a disposal of land would depend on what was being proposed. This House, I feel - well, I'm concerned - this amendment is trying to pre-empt what is required to convince members to not disallow a

motion. Obviously, the university would be putting forward as much information as required to ensure that members were satisfied and didn't move for a disallowance.

Now, I do just want to clear up - I understand the example that the member for Nelson put forward about the fuzzy map, but clause 4(4)(a)(i) clearly states:

- (4) A motion to approve the disposal of vested land that is to be tabled under subsection (3) -
 - (a) must include -
 - (i) a clear description, or plan, of the area of vested land that the University proposes to dispose of ...

I think that the university would be putting their absolute best foot forward in ensuring that they put whatever information members required forward to ensure that it wasn't disallowed. So, we're not going to be supporting the amendment. We do believe that the bill covers what is required. It is in the university's best interest to provide any information that would be required at the time to convince the parliament to support it.

Ms RATTRAY - A question to the minister: can we have some indication of what the government considers a 'clear description'? The member proposing the amendment gave out just the folio number of where it was situated, and perhaps the address -

Ms Webb - Well, I wonder if a 'clear description' is what we've got in here about the rezoned land.

Madam CHAIR - Order.

Ms RATTRAY - I'm just looking for - because you've put on the record that the university would be putting their best foot forward, but I'm interested in what a 'clear description' might look like if it's not what has been proposed in the amendment, or is that exactly what we would be expecting?

Ms PALMER - Madam Chair, in response to the member for McIntyre, the expectation would be a plan that has been mapped by an appropriately qualified surveyor. When you look at clause 4, you have there that it must include 'a clear description, or plan, of the area of vested land that the University proposes to dispose of'. The expectation would be that that plan had been mapped by an appropriately qualified surveyor.

Ms RATTRAY - I appreciate that, but it does say a 'clear description' or a plan. If it's just a plan, and we've seen the fuzzy plan that's been referred to - I'm looking for some more detail on a clear description and it would be useful to have that on the record.

Ms PALMER - Madam Chair, when we talk about a clear description or a plan, the description could relate to an identifiable building, for example. It could be a description of a building. Does that answer your question? Or do you have another call?

Ms RATTRAY - I might use it.

Mr GAFFNEY - Madam Chair, I appreciate both the amendment and the response from the minister, but when I look at the amendment, if I was sitting here and that gives a pretty good blueprint about what I would expect to see for me to make an assessment on what's happening, this one over here just says a plan or a clear description of the area. 'The big brown building over there surrounded by trees', whereas this talks about the reason, the purpose, the intended use of the land - and I think, with all due respect, the university would have all that anyway. You wouldn't go into this arrangement if you didn't have that information right there.

I think the government is being very guarded on this and there's no reason for it to be. That's the university's core business. If they can't do that, then they shouldn't be looking at getting a STEM facility anywhere, if they can't provide us with that information. So, I would hope that everybody accepts and supports this amendment because to me it's just common sense.

Ms THOMAS - Madam Chair, I entirely agree with the member for Mersey and appreciate him putting it so articulately. We have to remember here that we're debating a bill on which we're being asked to make a significant planning decision to rezone land for which we were provided no criteria for making our decision on rezoning land; we were provided with no assessment other than the proponent's own consultant-commissioned assessment. We had no criteria on which to base our decision.

Rezoning land is a significant decision. It still floors me that it appears that this bill could pass based on us making a decision based on nothing being presented with no assessment, no actual criteria for our decision making and just lines on a map. It's just beyond my belief. It blows my mind. Local government would never get with maybe a rezoning decision based on the information that we have been presented with here today. It just flays me. Absolutely flays me.

The least the government can do is require the university to meet some criteria when coming back to us on these decisions. It's the least the government can do. Again, what's it afraid of here? It's just absolutely beyond belief and I really hope all members will support this. It's not asking much.

Ms PALMER - Madam Chair, the issue that we have here is about being too prescriptive of the information that the university would need to provide. It is members who hold that ultimate authority here and if they don't have the information, they're not going to support what's being put forward. This amendment is detail that's not required until there is an actual proposal and the real concern here is about being too prescriptive of the information the university would need.

Ms THOMAS - Madam Chair, if the issue is it being too prescriptive, what's the worst thing that can happen with being too prescriptive? What's the problem with being prescriptive? I don't think the government has made the case there other than saying it risks being too prescriptive. It doesn't mean members can't ask for additional information when it comes back to the parliament and we might or might not get answers as we've seen with this particular debate.

I still hope, given the flaws in the decision-making criteria here and the lack of decision-making criteria here, that this bill doesn't pass; but if it does pass, again, this is the least that we can ask for. It doesn't hurt to be prescriptive; well, the government hasn't explained

how it hurts to be prescriptive. It doesn't prohibit members from asking for additional information, it doesn't prohibit the university from providing further information beyond what is prescribed. I don't think that argument stacks up.

Sitting suspended from 4.00 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.

UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA (PROTECTION OF LAND) BILL 2025 (No. 58)

In Committee

Resumed from above.

Mr GAFFNEY - Madam Chair, I looked at the amendments again and I think that they're really fair. They're just asking for an outline of what we would expect to receive. It says, 'details of any consultation undertaken by the university', but that's 'of any consultation', it doesn't say there has to be. All it is saying is, 'Give us a bit more information and here's a really good framework for you to use to bring back to us so that we can understand what the purpose of the land is.' It even says, 'if known, the purpose for which the land is intended to be used after the University', so it's not that prescriptive, I think. It actually allows a lot of flexibility and, again, I don't know any project that I've come across in council land or anywhere else where, if the people couldn't detail those pieces of information, they wouldn't be derelict in their duty.

I think it's common sense that this is a really good blueprint for us to include, other than what's in there at the moment, which says 'a map or a plan'. That just doesn't cut the mustard with me, so I hope members can see that this just provides adequate information that we should have or have access to and I don't know why the government would not be saying, 'Yes, fine, tick it off.' So, I do hope members support this amendment.

I go back to the member for Elwick: if we didn't have this information in local government land, it wouldn't even get to first base, and here we are, a state government doing legislation on university vested land and we're asking for less than what we expect of the local government area, so I hope people will take that on board.

Ms PALMER - Madam Chair, just to reiterate what was already said prior to the break, it is, obviously, in the university's best interest to provide any information that would be required at the time to continue to have parliament support. That information is going to vary depending on what proposal is put forward, so we don't want to be so prescriptive of the information that the university would need to provide before we even have any understanding of what would be actually put forward. As I've said, members hold the ultimate authority. If they don't have the information that they believe is necessary, then they're not going to be supportive of what's being put forward, so this amendment is detail that the government believes is not required until there is an actual proposal.

Ms WEBB - Madam Chair, this is quite astonishing. Absolutely astonishing. There is no head of power in this bill that allows members in this Chamber to require any information at all from the university should a motion be brought here with a proposal to dispose of vested land. Zero.

If the minister is trying to suggest that, of course, if members requested information, of course the university would provide it, I'll remind members that we have currently a bill before us rezoning land for which we have received zero information that would anywhere near amount to the amount of information we'd get if it was going through the proper planning process through local government - an absolute paucity of information.

The argument is, 'Oh, gosh. If members who wanted information to inform their decision, of course they'd get it. It would be in the university's best interest.' Well, what if it wasn't in the university's best interest because they didn't want us to know much about what they were trying to do? What if that's the situation? If that's the situation, members here have zero head of power to require anything in the way of information. Zero. This is not over-prescriptive. This is requiring incredibly basic information to be provided.

The minister already, in her arguments against this, on the one hand says that it's over-prescriptive and on the other hand has said, 'Of course, this is all information people would be given because of course the university would want to provide that information as part of a full package of information.' It can't be both. It can't be both. And, if it is the fact that the university would be more than happy to provide every bit of information members might want, they would have no objection to what I'm proposing in this amendment. Zero.

Has the minister consulted with the university and got their view on this amendment? Has the university put forward an objection to this amendment? I'd like that clarified on the record in this place. The university representatives are here. Has the government consulted with the university on this amendment and has the university asked them to block it? That's what we need on the record here today because for every member here, there is nothing about this amendment that is remotely inappropriate. It is not over-prescriptive. It's basic. If the argument is, of course we would get all the information we want, why can't we at least put this basic list of things in here as a baseline requirement?

The list of things that are in this amendment would equally apply if the motion coming to us to dispose of vested land related to one building. We could apply this list of things easily to that. It might be very little information that would have to be provided if it was just a very discrete building or little parcel of land, but it would equally apply if it was the whole campus. The things we've outlined here in this amendment are absolute baseline. If there was a large piece of land, or if it was a small piece of land, or if it was a single building - same, same.

Even, as the member for Mersey pointed out, in some instances in the list of things in this amendment, it just says 'if it is known', or if consultation has happened, you just have to detail that consultation has happened. So minimal. What on earth would any responsible government have as a reason to object to this going into a bill that is called the University of Tasmania (Protection of Land) Bill, which this government promised going into an election that they would bring forward to the local community to protect the land of the Sandy Bay campus? They've already broken the promise with the rezoning. They've already broken the promise by carving off the other 56 hectares above Churchill Avenue. Now, they're breaking a promise, really, because they're making a mockery of the idea of protection of land if they won't allow this Chamber to put the most minimal baseline requirements in terms of information required for our oversight function. What a joke.

Who's pulling the strings here? Is it the state government or is it the university? Has the university told the state government to try to block this amendment? Irresponsible on both

fronts if that's the case. Irresponsible of the state government. Absolutely gobsmacking if the university hasn't come to them and said, 'We welcome this, please do put it in. We love the idea of being accountable. Of course we would give that information and we'd like to be required to do it because it shows that we've got good faith in this.' If the government can't tell us that that's what the university has come to them and said, I think we should all be disturbed - every single one of us.

I've raised my voice, Madam Chair; I apologise for that, because really what I'm asking here is very basic. It's asking this Chamber to have the opportunity to do its job well if, in the future, something comes here in a motion relating to the disposal of vested land as created under this bill. It's very basic. It's a minimum that we would expect. It should be welcomed by any responsible government, and certainly by any responsible university governance structures that want to exist under this bill in good faith.

Ms PALMER - Let me be clear: this is a decision of government based on not supporting unnecessary regulation, and members don't need a head of power to ask questions of the government, or indeed to ask questions of the university; and if members don't have the information, they're not going to support it.

Ms WEBB - What a crock. Of course we can ask questions. We're absolutely and utterly - and I apologise if that's unparliamentary. I will withdraw that particular -

Ms O'Connor - It's not.

Ms WEBB - Okay. Well, it is a crock then. What we've just heard is that of course members have got the power to ask questions. Yes, we do. We can all open our mouths and ask a question. What we don't have under this bill is a head of power to require information to be provided in answer to those questions. We don't have that, and this bill doesn't guarantee us any level of detail in information provided with a motion. All it requires us, as a minimum, is to get potentially a description in words or a fuzzy picture, maybe with a Sharpie pen drawn around a bit, that describes the area of the vested land proposed for disposal. That is all that's required to be provided to us.

Of course we have the power to ask questions, and we do that quite well in this place on a regular basis; but what we also need is a mechanism by which to get answers. We don't have it, and I'm not even proposing through this amendment that we're given that power to require answers. All I'm proposing is that we have in place a minimum expectation of information provided to feed into a decision we're making in this place about vested land created in in this act and its disposal, remembering it's gifted land from the Tasmanian people, and this bill is about a minimal level of oversight from this parliament in relation to disposing of that land.

It's astonishing that the government is reluctant to do it, and they still didn't answer whether they've consulted with the university on what the university's view of this amendment is. Surely they've consulted. We've just had a half-an-hour break; there are university representatives in the building and they're still not answering that question. Surely the university has come and said, please, please support this amendment, it's reasonable and of course we would want to do it. Perhaps the minister could confirm, have they consulted and what was the university's view?

Ms THOMAS - I will just take the opportunity again to raise my concerns at the government's unwillingness here to agree to this, which is a very reasonable request. A number of us in our second reading contributions expressed significant concern that this bill, titled a protection of land bill, in fact does the opposite by many respects outlined in the bill. What this amendment is trying to achieve is at least some level of protection within what is a protection of land bill, where we have had no planning process by which to make a significant rezoning decision, no proof of this bill actually achieving the new STEM facilities that it purports to, and no plan for what it will do with the land in question. We have no process, no proof, no plan and no protection; and yet at every opportunity the government is seeking to further eradicate any protection. It just does not protect Tasmanians' interests, and that's my primary concern here.

Madam CHAIR (Ms Forrest) - The question is that the amendments be agreed to.

The Committee divided -

AYES 7

Ms Forrest
Mr Gaffney
Mr Harriss
Mr Hiscutt
Ms O'Connor
Ms Thomas (Teller)
Ms Webb

NOES 7

Ms Armitage
Mr Duigan
Mr Edmunds
Ms Lovell (Teller)
Ms Palmer
Ms Rattray
Mr Vincent

Amendments negatived.

Ms O'CONNOR - Now that the honourable member for Nelson's very sensible amendment has been defeated, it would be good to provide to the council absolute clarity about what the government would expect to be in any motion that was put before both Houses in relation to a disposal of land proposal by the University of Tasmania, given that, apparently, the government doesn't support the kind of detail that was in that amendment - reasons, purpose, intended use of land, its characteristics, et cetera; what does the government think should be in that motion?

Madam CHAIR - Honourable member?

Ms PALMER - Seeking some advice, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR - Minister, I meant. Sorry.

Ms PALMER - In reply to the honourable member for Hobart's question, it does state in clause 4 subclause (4)(a)(i) that there needs to be:

... a clear description, or plan, of the area of vested land that the University proposes to dispose of;

In answer to a question to the member for McIntyre, the expectation there is that a plan has been mapped by an appropriately qualified surveyor. It then goes on to talk about the

disposal of the land with regard to the lease and the details on the term of a lease, or details around the amount of payment or consideration. If you look at (4)(b), it says that it can:

... include such other information as the University considers relevant to the disposal of the proposed area of vested land.

As I've said previously, it is obviously in the university's best interest to be providing any information that members asked for that would give support to what they were proposing. What would be asked for or what the university might put forward would be entirely dependent on what the proposal might be. In the end, it's what members need to be satisfied to the extent that they would support the proposal.

Ms O'CONNOR - I am seeking some clarity on that answer: is the minister suggesting that within that motion, other than the provisions that you described, it would be up to the University of Tasmania to decide what they provided to us in that motion, or is the minister suggesting through her answer that it would be up to parliament to ask the questions that extracted that information?

Ms PALMER - It's up to the members to determine what information they would want, and it is the responsibility of the university to be putting their best foot forward and providing the information that they know would secure a positive response from the parliament.

Ms WEBB - Well, that's clearly not true, is it, because sometimes it might be in the university's best interest, if they're trying to get a particular outcome, to obscure information from the parliament so that we don't make a finding or come to a decision that they don't agree with, that they don't want us to come to. It's a ridiculous thing to suggest. As I said when I put my amendments, we can ask for information. There's nothing, no power at all for us to be able to require it be provided, and we've proven that with this bill, in fact.

My questions are also in relation to this similar area. The minister has already said that under (4)(a)(i) a clear description or plan of the area of the vested land would be expected to be something that was mapped by an appropriately qualified surveyor. My first question in relation to that is: is the visual picture in Schedule 2 of this bill something that's been mapped by an appropriately qualified surveyor? Is that an example of what we would expect? Does this meet the criteria, this picture in Schedule 2? Members should be able to be really clear about what quality that means. It sounds really fancy, mapped by an appropriately qualified surveyor, but if it means a fuzzy aerial picture with some Sharpie pen lines on it, then clearly that is a not a very high bar in terms of the quality of information that would be required under a clear description or plan of the area of vested land, so perhaps we can just confirm that.

It's interesting too, because if the minister is able to confirm that the picture in Schedule 2 of this bill is in fact mapped by an appropriately qualified surveyor, it proves to us that that means nothing in terms of quality of information; and it's also a damning indictment on them if it isn't mapped by an appropriately qualified surveyor, because clearly they haven't felt the need to provide something to us in this bill that meets the bar that apparently is going to be expected in relation to the forthcoming future motions that might come. If that's going to be expected in relation to the motions coming to us about disposal of vested land, why wasn't that the bar and the standard that was required for this bill when it comes to rezoning parcels of land? Perhaps the minister can answer that. Either way, actually, it's a damning indictment on

the minister and this bill, and what has been put in here in terms of a pathetic baseline for information that might come.

My other question is: in terms of the information that might be accompanying a motion to dispose of vested land, has the university provided the minister with anything in writing, or anything in verbal interactions, that indicates what they believe would be an appropriate level of detail to come and accompany the motions that may come to this place? I'm asking for honesty here, particularly if there's anything in writing, but also I'm asking if there's anything that's been part of verbal discussions about what the university has said it regards as a minimum baseline of information to the minister.

Ms PALMER - I will seek some advice. There was quite a number of questions in there, but what I would like to do is draw the honourable member's attention to clause 7(2), which clearly states:

On the day which this Act receives the Royal Assent, the Planning Minister is to cause a plan to be prepared and registered in the Central Plan Register.

I will just draw the member to that and I will just seek some more advice.

Ms Webb - Not available to decision-makers.

Madam CHAIR - Order.

Ms PALMER - No, the university has not provided advice on a minimum baseline of information because there isn't a proposal to put forward at the moment. As I said before: this is a decision of government to not support unnecessary regulation. I will just seek some advice. Then, again, just to restate the principle: if members feel that information is withheld, then they're not going to support the motion. It is in the university's best interests to put whatever information is required to support any proposal that they want to put before parliament. It is not in their best interest to not do that. As I've said, members have the opportunity to ask those questions. If there is doubt, the university is not going to get support for their proposal.

Ms Webb - I've got one more call because I had my amendment I had to move.

Madam CHAIR - Order.

Ms Webb - The minister has completely disregarded my first question.

Madam CHAIR - Are you asking a question?

Ms Webb - Well, I don't want to get on my feet because it will be my last call and the minister has disregarded my first question from my last call.

Madam CHAIR - Order. It's a matter for the minister how she responds to questions. If the minister wants to add anything further, fine. I will put the question.

Ms PALMER - I did think that I had answered your -

Ms Webb - No.

Ms PALMER - If you would let me speak, honourable member. I have the call.

Madam CHAIR - Address the Chair, minister.

Ms PALMER - I did believe I had answered the honourable member, which is why I spoke about clause 7(2), but I can be more explicit. 'No' is the answer with regard to the map that the honourable member is holding up behind me, and that is why the minister must register an appropriately surveyed map once the bill is approved. That is stated in clause 7(2).

Ms WEBB - That's great. Just to clarify, if the minister can confirm: in this bill - so we have an example of something that's been mapped by appropriately qualified surveyors. Schedule 2 of this bill and the picture in it doesn't meet that standard. The bill we've been asked to pass here doesn't meet the standard that will be required, apparently, in future motions. Not that the standard is legislated; it's just verbal here from the minister at the table, but the bill we have doesn't meet the standard that will be expected because the Schedule 2 visual is not mapped by an appropriately qualified surveyor.

That's quite interesting because even, for example, in this bill we're asked to consider a map that doesn't meet the standard and, yes, after the decision has been made and this bill has been passed, something much more detailed and proper is drawn up under that clause that the minister read out. It's far too late. Then, of course, that's after the bill is passed, which is why I'm asking about the motions.

What will the standard be required if motions come to us? Because if it's this standard, clearly that's not good enough and it's not good enough to be brought up to standard at a later date after the thing has gone through parliament. Obviously, the decisions have been made at that point. This is damning on the minister and on the university that they presented us with a bill that doesn't meet the standard that apparently any future vested land disposal will have to meet in terms of being presented here. Absolutely atrocious.

Ms PALMER - In response to the honourable member for Nelson, we believe there is enough detail in Schedule 2 to agree to the extent of land to be rezoned. The detailed plan is provided to make sure that there can be no disputes in the future regarding the detailed area of the land that is rezoned and, again, I draw your reference to clause 7(2).

Madam CHAIR (Ms Forrest) - The question is that clause 4 as read stand part of the bill.

The Committee divided -

AYES 11

Ms Armitage
Mr Duigan
Mr Edmunds
Ms Forrest
Mr Harriss
Mr Hiscutt
Ms Lovell (Teller)
Ms Palmer

NOES 3

Mr Gaffney (Teller)
Ms O'Connor
Ms Webb

Ms Rattray
Ms Thomas
Mr Vincent

Clause 4 agreed to.

Clause 5 agreed to.

Clause 6 agreed to.

Clause 7 -

Rezoning of certain land

Ms WEBB - Well, I don't have an amendment for this one because I propose to vote against the clause.

Madam CHAIR - You need to put a case why people should.

Ms WEBB - Okay, that's fine. So, I can put a case as if it was an amendment?

Madam CHAIR - Part of your suggestions in the amendments that were circulated was your request that members vote against the clause. So, if you want to give people half a reason to do that, it would be a good idea.

Ms WEBB - I want to be clear; I wasn't going to step outside the bounds of what was going to be allowed. I also have questions on this clause if it does stay there.

This is about the rezoning. I probably don't need to speak to it in detail, to be honest, because many of us discussed it in our second reading contributions and so made it pretty clear that this is an entirely inappropriate way to be rezoning land when it was entirely available to the university to go through the regular planning system arrangements for the rezoning of this land. To avoid that and do it in this process, where it would have far less information put into the public domain, far less consultation and far less scrutiny in that respect, is absolutely an astonishing course of action for a public institution to take, and for a government to condone and facilitate - absolutely inappropriate and irresponsible. That aspect of it is very clear here and many members have agreed with that. Unfortunately not enough, it would appear, but I'm hopeful that there might be some reconsideration being done and we vote this clause out of the bill.

This is the bit that was added in. You'll remember that the government, in the first instance, fulfilled its promise made before the 2024 election where they promised the community that they would protect the land of the Sandy Bay campus by requiring parliamentary approval for disposal of that land. The first iteration of this bill didn't have clause 7 or any of the matters relating to it around rezoning. That happened once the university got in the ear of the Labor Party and the Labor Party started making a fuss and got in the ear of the government as well. Then the government decided it didn't want to have public fights with the Labor Party about it, caved, and broke the promise that they made to the community. So, here we are with some rezoning being done.

I don't intend to go on in detail about that because I spoke about it in detail in my second reading contribution, as others did very effectively, especially those with local government backgrounds. Anyone with a local government background, you'd think, would be rightly appalled to see our planning system abused in this way and, therefore, the people of Tasmania, and the public interest of Tasmania, being abused in this way. Shocking.

I do have questions on this bill, but in the first instance, I'm going to ask members to vote against this bill purely on the basis of its utter irresponsibility and inappropriateness -

Madam CHAIR - Clause.

Ms WEBB - The clause, yes, sorry. And the bill, Madam Chair, if the clause stays in, but, in this instance, the clause.

Ms O'CONNOR - Madam Chair, just a brief contribution. This is the offensive and dishonest clause within the legislation and, as the member for Nelson reminded us, it came about as a result of a solemn promise during the 2024 election campaign to the Tasmanian people that was quickly broken thereafter. The reason that the government felt it needed to make that promise that the parliament would have a say over any sale or disposal of land by UTAS was the very strong community opposition, particularly in the city of Nipaluna/Hobart, to the way the university had been conducting itself in relation to the proposed city move.

There was an elector poll, which came back overwhelmingly - three-quarters of the residents of Hobart in the elector poll objected to the university's plan for the city. So we are here now, with a provision in the bill that represents a wholly broken promise. It was interesting in the briefing that we had, where advisers from government said they didn't know at that time where this proposed amendment came from. Well, now it has become really clear to us: it came to government from UTAS and I believe that the government's adviser knew that at the time.

This is the perfidious clause, and I just want to remind honourable members that this is not the first time the government has asked this place to bypass the proper planning process. It happened with the proposed Stony Rise development, which parliament was basically asked to approve after local government had rejected it. It happened with the legislation, which this place quite rightly rejected, to approve the construction of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre replacement at Pontville. At the time, during that debate, we, by majority, recognised it was an inappropriate role for the parliament. And, now, we're being asked to approve the rezoning of land outside a proper planning process because, apparently, sadly, this institution that so many of us love and respect felt that it was too hard and too complicated to go through a local government rezoning process.

It is not a good enough reason. It's just not a good enough reason to ask the parliament to wave through a rezoning. We haven't had an explanation from government or the University of Tasmania - not a satisfactory explanation anyway - as to why they would ask parliament to do this. It is an abuse of process, it's an abuse of power, and members should reject it.

Unfortunately, what's happened with this piece of legislation is it's become much less about oversight of any sale or disposal of land at UTAS, and almost solely about clause 7, the rezoning provision, and that is highly regrettable. I hope members see through this cynicism and vote against this clause.

Ms Webb - At least the local community wanted Stony Rise.

Ms O'CONNOR - That is true. It had popular support.

Madam CHAIR - Just before I put the question, if the member for Nelson has questions related to this, you do need to ask them now, on this clause.

Ms WEBB - I know, but I've got two more calls, right?

Madam CHAIR - Yes. That's right. Just so we're clear.

Ms O'CONNOR - I'll do my second call and ask a question, which I think the government should be required to answer.

Madam CHAIR - Okay.

Ms O'CONNOR - Why did the government find it acceptable to allow the University of Tasmania to bypass the proper planning process and to provide the Office of Parliamentary Counsel to draft up a rezoning amendment in this bill? Why didn't government encourage UTAS to go through the normal and proper planning process?

Ms PALMER - Madam Chair, I believe my contribution will address both the member for Nelson's and the member for Hobart's contributions. The government is satisfied that the work has been done and that the proposal to rezone this land as inner residential is responsible and creates a path to a positive future for the university and for our state.

To satisfy ourselves as a government, we have considered the All Urban Planning report into the University of Tasmania's proposal as it relates to this plan. We have considered the master plan as it relates to this land. We have considered the Hobart City Council discussion paper on the Mount Nelson and Sandy Bay Neighbourhood Plan from 2023 and the engagement report in 2024. We satisfied ourselves that the university has been working with the Hobart City Council plannings and that they had no concerns with the proposed zoning. After all, they are the experts here. We have made sure that our State Planning Office has no concerns. All of this work told us that the rezoning of this land to inner residential is appropriate for the broader needs of Hobart and Tasmania, not just the needs of the university. Everything we have heard says it.

I understand some people don't want the university STEM precinct to go ahead and would prefer that the university just return to Sandy Bay. I can confidently say that is not going to happen. We're well beyond that point. The Forest building in the CBD is an incredible asset to this state. It is vibrant. It is well designed. It is fit for purpose. I mean, it takes your breath away when you go in there. I know when I first walked into the building, I was quite overwhelmed with how it actually made me feel. I see a university with a really bright future and students that have been really well served. I can't say the same about many of the facilities in Sandy Bay. We need to invest in a new Sandy Bay campus. A STEM precinct is the perfect aspiration, and zoning these parcels of land as inner residential is a responsible and constructive step towards making that happen.

Hobart needs new housing. We all agree that we need to find opportunities for more higher-density housing. This will help us to deliver on that as well.

Ms THOMAS - Madam Chair, I appreciate the minister's comments about the Forest building and the move of parts of UTAS into the city. In fact, I agree. I think the Forest building is wonderful. I support moving part of UTAS into the CBD, but that's not what this clause is about. This is a rezoning clause. A rezoning clause, and I ask the minister, what kind of precedent does this set?

What will the government say when a developer comes knocking at the door saying, 'We want to rezone land. We don't want to go through the council because we think they probably won't like it. It's on the nose with the community. It's unlikely to be approved by the planning authority. How about you just put a bill through parliament to rezone the land for us? Here's our consultant's report who we've paid to tell us that this rezoning is good. Don't worry about getting any advice for the members of parliament from the State Planning Office. Don't worry about any criteria on which to rezone the land for members of parliament to consider. Just rezone it because it will mean that we get new STEM facilities and there'll be more housing. But don't worry about providing any proof to members of parliament that either of those things will happen.' Because we don't have any of that proof. We don't have any of that proof. We don't have even a clear plan for either of those things despite this narrative that the government and UTAS keep telling us that these are going to be the outcomes of this decision. There's no plan. There's no proof of either of those things. There's been no proper planning process at all here. It's completely flawed. I really hope members will support the amendment to leave this rezoning clause out. It's not even in the title of the bill. It's called a protection of land bill; this is rezoning. This entire clause is about rezoning, without proof, without a plan, without process, and it sets a dangerous precedent, is my concern. I urge honourable members to support what the member for Nelson has put forward.

Mr GAFFNEY - I don't want to verbal the minister, but she said they had expert advice about the planning and what was happening there and then I'm looking - well, just a minute. I have expert advice from the person who has 40 years' experience in planning and was the director of the State Planning Office. About this very issue, in the paper he said:

The UTAS land is currently the subject of a bill awaiting debate in the Legislative Council which, if passed, automatically rezones this land to the Inner-Residential Zone under the Hobart Local Provisions Schedule. The rationale for this appears to be to maximise its development potential and thereby its financial value, presumably so the university can fund the development of a new STEM facility on the remnant campus. A worthy cause perhaps but this represents a flagrant abuse of process without any apparent strategic planning rationale.

What makes this even more unjustified is that the Hobart City Council is midstream on exactly the strategic work required to determine the right mix of zones for the broader surrounding area and the arbitrary exclusion of such a large area of land not only means they will need to start again but they will have to do so with the zoning predetermined for this large strategically positioned parcel.

This presumptive rezoning will have implications for the land around it as the council will need to limit the extent of other higher density residential land because the overall density for the area will be distorted by the legislation. Notwithstanding this the bill contemplates a reverse of the

rezoning through the normal strategic planning process down the track. This suggests that in fact the inner-residential rezoning may be only a holding position anyway, but for what purpose? It appears to be a commercially strategic action that implies development potential that may not be achievable while undermining the strategic planning work already under way.

Here in the Chamber, we've been told that expert planners have said this. The person who said this, Brian Risby, has a master's degree, over 40 years' experience in planning and related areas in Tasmania, 20 years in the State Service, including working in the Tasmanian Planning Commission, and most recently was the director of the State Planning Office until he retired in August 2024. That, to me, is an expert saying that there are issues with this and what's happening, and that will undermine the Hobart City Council, which means if that area is to do with inner-city residential zone, it means it has implications for the surrounding area, because there are numbers games in local government rezoning issues. I would like to understand what experts the government has used for this information.

Ms PALMER - Responding to the member for Elwick and the member for Mersey, I think it was the member for Elwick who was asking what precedent is being set here. This is the end result that's come after many years of engagement and work by the university, and this is how the university has listened to the community and how it is going to preserve the Sandy Bay campus. This is not just any development application; this is such an exciting opportunity for our state and for the future of STEM, and it comes at the end of many years of engagement and work that's been done by the university.

By passing the legislation now, we're talking about funding for the STEM precinct that could be indeed unlocked earlier. Could construction dates be brought forward, the university's required co-contribution via land sale or uplift becomes reliable rather than speculative, and financial risks associated with delays are reduced. I again remind members that for any development to occur on the rezoned land, the normal development process still applies in full through the Hobart City Council.

The member for Mersey was asking about the experts that have been used. The Strategic Planning Review and recommendations were formed by ERA Planning and Environment and All Urban Planning and included significant community engagement, conservation management planning, heritage impact assessments, economic market demand assessments, traffic impact assessments, Aboriginal heritage assessments, transport strategies, et cetera. The outcomes concluded that the best use of the land to be rezoned was residential use that accommodates a range of dwelling types, including high-density residential, and allows for a transition from the adjoining low-density zoning of the Mount Nelson Bend to the inner-residential and urban mixed-use zoning nearer to Churchill Avenue. This is about unlocking a brilliant opportunity.

Yes, for the university, but yes for our state and yes for the future of STEM in our state, and we heard that from the mouth of one of our students, the president of the student association. Jack Oates Pryor's words have been spoken a number of times in this Chamber. That is the voice of one of our young people, one of our students who is advocating for this, so I ask that there is no support for what the honourable member for Nelson is proposing with clause 7.

Mr HISCUTT - I'm just wondering if I could seek advice with regard to the rezoning, whether the government received any written advice from council, whether they had an expectation that they would or would not support a rezoning to occur through the normal course of action.

Ms PALMER - I am seeking advice, Madam Chair. No, the government has not sought written advice. There were a number of discussions with officials at senior levels of the council, with the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) and the university. The advice that was given was they provided planning and technical advice to the university, and their planners, I'm advised, had no concerns with the proposed zoning.

Mr GAFFNEY - I do appreciate the mention of the student body president. I believe it's really good for the STEM, but this is to do with clause 7, I will just put in one sentence from the expert in this:

A worthy cause perhaps but this represents a flagrant abuse of process without any apparent strategic planning rationale.

I enjoy the enthusiasm of the student president and their desire for STEM, but this is a professional person who has said this is a flagrant abuse of process without any apparent strategic planning rationale - a person who was in charge of planning in the state for many years.

Ms WEBB - This is quite astonishing, really. Isn't it? I would like to put here on the record that the only thing worse than this parliament being expected to act as a planning authority is for the government of the day to take upon itself the role of acting as a planning authority because when I hear the minister stand here and say the government is satisfied that planning experts behind closed doors have given verbal - not written but verbal - advice, that this is all good and fine, the government is then taking upon its own shoulders the role of being a planning authority. Well, that is absolutely unacceptable, irresponsible, inappropriate.

The only thing worse than this parliament being a planning authority is the government of the day in cahoots with the university behind closed doors taking upon itself, assuming responsibility for being a planning authority. Utterly an atrocious process. This is utterly unacceptable.

How dare the minister stand here, quite frankly, and say that they've been told it's all good by Hobart City Council? This is essentially verballing Hobart City Council planning officers to do it this way. There is nothing in writing, there is nothing that can be provided to us to check against. The government is standing here, the minister is standing here and saying we've been told it's fine, you should all accept that.

What rubbish that is and it's essentially verballing staff in Hobart City Council who can't be here to potentially add more nuanced comment around that, to correct the record, to answer our questions, because it's us here who are being asked to be the planning authority. It's not the minister, it's not the government, it's not DPAC, it's not UTAS. It's not even the Hobart City Council who it should be. It's us. Absolutely appalling.

I've got questions and I'm going to put two of them here now on this clause. I note that these are two parcels of land that are above Churchill Avenue and they are adjacent and sort of

in the midst of the rest of the 56 hectares that are above Churchill Avenue that aren't being rezoned and aren't under this bill being deemed vested land. We've heard comment about the fact that the other 56 hectares of unprotected land above Churchill Avenue is, and I quote, 'subject to Commonwealth environmental protections'.

What I want to know from the government really clearly is: when I look at the map in Schedule 2 that shows me with Sharpie pen lines on a fuzzy aerial shot where these rezoning parcels are, and I see right beside it the bushland areas et cetera that are apparently subject to Commonwealth environmental protections, where's the boundary for the protections in terms of those government environmental protections? Where's the overlay of this full area above Churchill Avenue that shows me whether these environmental protections from the Commonwealth level come down at all potentially into these rezoned areas?

I'd like to see if they do, in fact - whether that's been taken into consideration at all at any point along the process of progressing this rezoning. Are there, in fact, environmental protections from a Commonwealth level that go into any of these areas being rezoned? Can you clarify that for us? Perhaps, since you've claimed Commonwealth environmental protections for the rest of that unprotected land above Churchill Avenue, you could give us a map that shows which areas are subject to those protections. So, that's the first question relating to those areas.

My other question is - and it's funny, this hasn't been mentioned at all in this place as these bills come through, but it certainly got mentioned in the other place to help shepherd it through down there and settle any disquiet that crossbench members might have. It has been mentioned in past times by the university that they're prepared to have a deed signed off on a legally binding deed that says any proceeds from the sale of land in these rezoned areas or potentially other - maybe others, but certainly these rezoned areas - will go towards STEM below Churchill Avenue. That's been talked about for the last two years. There have been various mentions of it, but nothing was said in the second reading speech in this place; nothing was said as it has progressed through here. What's the status of that deed currently? Is it still under negotiation two years down the track? Why is it taking this long? Why haven't we been presented with it here in this place? I want to know, is that still happening, why hasn't it been completed and what is the hold-up that means that that deed can't be presented to us here?

Ms PALMER - Just seeking some advice, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much. With regard to the two parcels of land, and I believe the honourable member for Nelson was asking questions around the boundaries, there are no boundaries for Commonwealth protections. They are all driven by the values of the native vegetation, including, for example, how any clearing may impact on threatened species. The development of land zoned inner residential will need to comply with Commonwealth environment legislation.

With regard to the questions around the deed, the university has publicly committed to executing a deed poll which clearly requires UTAS to use the rezoned land to fund the University State Tasmanian contribution to the STEM precinct on the Sandy Bay campus -

Ms Webb - Where is it?

Ms PALMER - and we have no reason to believe that won't occur.

Madam CHAIR - The member for Montgomery?

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you. Just following on from my previous conversation, does the government have any planning advice, other than the apparent unevidenced informal conversation with council staff, that the upper portion of the southern parcel should be zoned inner residential?

Ms PALMER - I'll just seek some advice, Madam Chair.

Thank you, member, for your question. I'm advised that DPAC sought verbal advice from senior Hobart City Council officials about whether they supported the shift from general residential to inner residential. I'm advised council officials advised that they had no concerns with that shift and considered the inner residential zoning suitable for that area.

Mr HISCUTT - Madam Chair, sorry, my specific question was: does the government have planning advice other than the informal unevidenced advice from the Hobart City Council? Is there any other advice for that specific parcel of land? I know there's the All Urban report that talks about all the other areas for inner residential, but there's no advice I can find, no planning official advice, that we've been evidenced that gives any reference to that area that it should be zoned inner residential.

Ms PALMER - I think this is the direct answer to your question. The strategic planning review and recommendations were formed by ERA Planning and Environment and All Urban Planning. Of course that included that significant community engagement, conversation, management planning, heritage impact. I think I spoke about them earlier. There was the economic market demand assessment, traffic impacts, Aboriginal heritage assessments and transport strategies. I'm advised that there was no issue with regard to the proposal.

Ms THOMAS - Madam Chair, to be specific, minister, is it correct that the ERA Planning and Environment and All Urban Planning reports recommend that the upper portion of the land that the member for Montgomery is referring to be rezoned general residential, not inner residential? Therefore, is there any other assessment that demonstrates that it is appropriate that it be inner residential - formal assessment, not verbal advice from Hobart City Council planners? If the ERA Planning and Environment and All Urban consultants' reports recommend the upper portion of land be rezoned general residential, then effectively what this clause is doing is asking the parliament to go against that advice and zone it as inner residential when the planning consultants' report suggests that that portion of the land in fact is only suited to general residential.

Ms O'Connor - It's also not really inner residential. You couldn't describe that land as inner residential.

Madam CHAIR - Order.

Ms PALMER - The government acknowledges that earlier planning work considered a transition in density across the site, including the possibility of different residential zones in different parts. The government's conclusion to apply inner residential across the rezoning area reflects a policy choice to adopt a single residential zone that provides flexibility for detailed site planning rather than pre-allocating different zones at this stage. This does not mean the entire site is expected to develop at the highest intensity available under that zone. Future

development would still need to respond to topography, hazards, environmental constraints, design control and the ordinary development assessment process.

I'm seeking further advice, Madam Chair.

Adding to my answer, the government then confirmed verbally that the Hobart City Council was aware of and had no concerns with this change for an area of land from general residential to inner residential. I'm sorry, to clarify, Hobart City Council officials were the ones who put forward no concerns with the change for an area of land from general residential to inner residential.

Ms THOMAS - Madam Chair, my question was pretty clear and explicit. I asked, is it correct that the ERA Planning and Environment and All Urban reports recommend that the upper portion of land above Churchill Avenue that the member for Montgomery was talking about be rezoned general residential? That is my specific question and it's quite clear. It's a yes or no answer. I specifically said in my second call, it's not the Hobart City Council verbal advice I'm talking about - because members need to remember, this is the advice that the government is hanging its hat on here.

The ERA and All Urban reports, commissioned by the university, is the advice that the government is asking us - it's the only written planning advice that the government is asking us to rely on here and take on good faith that it has not been independently assessed, not been independently verified, but we're being asked to make a decision to rezone land based on the information in that report, and if there is information in that report that suggests part of the land should be zoned general residential, not inner residential as we're being asked to, then we need to know that. So, that is my question. Does that report suggest that part of this land should, in fact, be general residential, not inner residential?

Be honest about it and, if that is the case, it would be entirely irresponsible of this place to pass this clause based on the only advice we have, the only advice the government has because, let's face it, we can't be making decisions on verbal assurances from council officers who are unnamed and unknown.

Ms Webb - By the government.

Ms THOMAS - By the government telling us this. We have no evidence of that. It's ludicrous that members would be voting to pass this clause to rezone land without assessment criteria. I have been over all this. I won't repeat myself, but if the minister can answer explicitly my question about the recommendations in that single report that is all the evidence that government is hanging its hat on here in terms of evidence to support this clause.

Ms PALMER - Madam Chair, earlier planning work did consider whether different parts of the site might be zoned differently, including a mix of general residential and inner residential to reflect the intended transition across the site. This does not mean the entire site would be developed at the highest densities permitted by the zone. Applying a single zone avoids predetermining outcomes or introducing unnecessary complexity and allows design, density and layout to be resolved through the normal planning process. Inner residential also provides greater flexibility for medium density and missing middle housing outcomes and avoids some of the constraints that would arise under general residential settings, including tighter building height limits for three-storey development. Any future development would still

be subject to the usual planning approvals process, including assessment of height, density and site constraints, as well as public notification and review rights. The zoning also aligns with the existing inner residential zoning immediately to the north and reflects the site's proximity to the Hobart CBD and Sandy Bay activity area, so the All Urban Planning report recommended mostly inner residential with some general residential.

Ms WEBB - It's my third call. There are a few things here, so if there's a reluctance to answer them, it's going to be a shame, but hopefully there might be other members who still have calls and might be able to follow them up for me.

To follow up on some things - earlier planning work undertaken: who did it, who assessed it independently and why haven't we seen it presented to us? That's my first set of questions. I'll just make sure everyone's clear on that before I move on.

I also just had brought to my attention a piece of correspondence from the City of Hobart from 5 November 2025. It's a letter from the CEO of City of Hobart, Michael Stretton to Simon Bamford and it's in relation to a public Question Time matter. It says this:

I refer to your public questions presented to the council at the meeting of the 27 October 2025 relating to the University of Tasmania (Protection of Land) Bill. The responses provided to your question at the meeting are confirmed below.

Here's the question and the response.

This is the question:

Does the Hobart City Council support the statutory rezoning of the land parcels above Churchill Avenue as defined and drawn in the amendment of the bill?

Pretty clear.

Response:

The council has not formally considered the University of Tasmania (Protection of Land) Bill 2024 and thus does not hold an endorsed position.

This land falls within the Mount Nelson and Sandy Bay Neighbourhood Plan area. We have engaged with the community on the potential approach to this plan. The next step will be to circulate a directions paper with proposals for strategic land use planning within these suburbs and may address rezoning of the land. This has not yet been finalised or considered by elected members.

End of response.

Question 2:

If you don't support statutory rezoning, will the council ask the government to remove this aspect from the bill?

Response:

Given that there is no endorsed position on the rezoning and/or the bill, there is no intention of asking the government to alter the bill.

So, that's probably an explanation because they haven't had a chance to formally endorse it.

Madam Chair, I think that's quite damning because we keep getting told what the council supports. Actually, what it means is the behind-closed-doors discussions with particular staff within council. There is not a formal position from council on this rezoning. It has not been considered. So, I think that the minister should explain why we're not waiting to see a formal position from Hobart City Council on this.

I'd also like to point out that much as we've been able to point to a student voice here and how exciting STEM redevelopment is going to be and all of that, if the university had just progressed this through a normal rezoning process back in 2023-24, when they could have been doing it, we would be here now in early 2026, having seen it done accountably and appropriately through the planning process.

The only conclusion we can arrive at as to why the university, if there was such a rush to get this done and we're in such a rush to get the capital that's going to come from it so we can redevelop wonderful STEM facilities, why didn't they do it properly and have it done and dusted by now? There's only one conclusion, and that's because they didn't think it would get through that proper process. They didn't want to face it, and so they brought it to us instead, knowing that we wouldn't be doing the same thoroughness of job here because we can't, because we're not provided with the information and advice required to do that job properly.

Absolutely disgusting behaviour from a public institution and from a government enabling it to do it. My goodness me. Atrocious.

If we were in a rush to get this beautiful STEM idea done on behalf of the students who are crying out for it, apparently, and it's great to have a student voice saying that that's what they like, sure, but if they really wanted it, it could have been done and dusted by now.

Ms Thomas - Or at least tested the process, through you, Chair, so then we have information to base our decision on.

Ms WEBB - One hundred per cent - at least tested the process. We could have then been informed in our decision-making much more thoroughly than we are now.

My next set of questions is this. The minister, in response to my earlier question - where is the deed that the university said that they would sign, the legally binding deed that says the proceeds of these rezoned parcels of land, if they're able to be sold or developed in some sort of way realised proceeds, will be devoted to the STEM facilities below Churchill Avenue - the minister got up and reminded us that, yes, the university promised to do that. But I've asked the

minister specifically, and I'm going to ask again now. There are specific questions about this that I absolutely think should be answered. Where is it? We know the university committed to it two years ago.

I'm going to make it really clear that it's been floating about for two years, because I'm looking at a piece of correspondence here to the honourable Madeleine Ogilvie MP from Rufus Black, Vice-Chancellor of the university, and the date of this correspondence is 25 November 2024; essentially a year and a half ago now. In this correspondence, one of the things the Vice-Chancellor says to the minister, Ms Ogilvie, is this:

Accordingly, the university is prepared to enter a deed of undertaking in the form of a deed poll, a legally binding document to commit to all proceeds from the development of the rezoned land above Churchill Avenue being committed to the STEM precinct below Churchill Avenue. The university legal team has drafted a deed poll and provided it to the relevant government agencies to commence negotiations. This draft commits the university to keep the funds arising from development above Churchill Avenue quarantined, and to only use those funds for the purposes of financing the STEM precinct below Churchill Avenue.

The university would also be open to making commitments around affordable housing in the deed poll, given our long-standing commitment to ensuring any developments on university land include a range of price points to allow for key worker accommodation. Subject to discussions with Homes Tasmania and other potential partners, there may be opportunities to include social housing and supported living for elderly Tasmanians as well.

We look forward to further conversations with relevant Tasmanian government agencies on this topic. Once negotiations are concluded and University Council has endorsed the deed poll, I propose that the final deed poll -

- here we are, wait for it -

be made public in line with our institutional commitment to transparency and accountability.

Well, this institutional commitment to transparency and accountability hasn't seen fit to progress this in a way that's open and transparent and available to us here now for this decision over the past year and a half. Where's the hold-up? The university, according to this piece of correspondence in November 2024, drafted a deed poll, provided it to government agencies for negotiation, and the council, it appears, was poised and ready to sign off on it once the negotiations concluded.

I'm going to run through a set of questions in relation to this deed poll, and I'm hoping that they're going to be noted down so that there can be an answer provided. Maybe, if there isn't going to be an answer provided to any of them, it can be stated, 'We're not answering that one', nice and clearly. In relation to this deed poll:

- Did the Tasmanian government or any Tasmanian government agencies receive a draft deed poll from the University of Tasmania for the purpose of negotiating a final deed poll?
- What negotiations, if any, occurred, when did they occur, and have they finished?
- Is there a final -

I don't see anyone writing these questions down, Madam Chair. I don't see it.

- Is there a final version of this deed poll that has been negotiated and concluded?
- Has the government communicated with the University Council about this deed poll and sought to get their approval of it?
- Who in the government has signed off on this deed poll if it has been finalised and concluded?

These are all questions that we should absolutely have now on the public record. Particularly, is there a deed poll, and if not, why not? What has been the barrier to this being concluded over the past year and a half? What has been the barrier? Those are the questions about what has been the barrier to concluding this in the past year and a half, since the vice-chancellor wrote to minister Ogilvie and so glowingly spoke about an institutional commitment to transparency and accountability, making this offer for this legally binding agreement. It's not here; we have never seen it.

Those are all my questions about it. We deserve full transparency around this process, given what was clearly in place already in November 2024. Concluding my third call on this, it's going to be very telling whether or not there are answers provided here. It will be a comment on the accountability and transparency of this government, and on the university as well, because they could have been open and transparent about this further at any stage as well. They could have even contacted all of us leading into this decision on this bill and given us a proactive update on where this deed poll was, but after they used it -

Madam CHAIR - I urge you not to wander into a second reading speech on this. You've put your question, so let's stick to the purpose of the Committee stage.

Ms WEBB - Thank you, Madam Chair. It's interesting that it's disappeared since it was discussed in the other place: not even mentioned here.

Ms PALMER - I will try to do this in order of how it was asked. The ERA and All Urban Planning reports were submitted to the Hobart City Council as part of the original application for changes to the zoning of the area, and the reports are publicly available. There is no formal decision from the council, as the university withdrew its rezoning application when it became clear that the council did not support the university's plan for Sandy Bay.

The Council's preference is for the normal planning process, and that is not inconsistent with the government's advice provided on this bill. The deed has been developed as a draft, but it has not progressed, I'm advised, because of delays in the passage of this bill. The government is confident that the university will deliver on its public commitment and the government agrees

that the deed should be made public once it's finalised. We have a draft, but it hasn't been approved as the focus has been on the passage of this legislation, and we have the correspondence that confirms the university's intent, which we have been saying consistently.

Madam CHAIR (Ms Forrest) - The question is that the clause as read stand part of the bill.

The Committee divided -

AYES 8

Ms Armitage
Mr Duigan (Teller)
Mr Edmunds
Ms Forrest
Ms Lovell
Ms Palmer
Ms Rattray
Mr Vincent

NOES 6

Mr Gaffney
Mr Harriss (Teller)
Mr Hiscutt
Ms O'Connor
Ms Thomas
Ms Webb

Clause 7 agreed to.

Madam CHAIR - Is that amendment being circulated, member for Nelson?

Ms WEBB - Yes.

Madam CHAIR - In terms of process here, the new clause will need to be moved before we deal with the schedules. That's where it fits. So, we deal with clauses 8, 9 and 10, then we will deal with the new clause, then we go to the schedules after that, so that people are clear about what we're doing.

Clauses 8 to 10 agreed to.

New Clause A to follow Clause 5

A. Minister must protect certain land with caveat.

(1) In this section -

Land Council means the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania established under section 5 of the *Aboriginal Lands Act 1995*;

Recorder has the same meaning as in the *Land Titles Act 1980*;

relevant land means such part of Volume 176312, Folio 1, in the Register kept under section 33 of the *Land Titles Act 1980* that does not fall within the definition of *proposed areas* in section 7.

- (2) As soon as practicable after this Act receives the Royal Assent, the Minister is to cause a notification to be lodged with the Recorder, in a form approved by the Recorder, stating that the disposal of the relevant land may not occur while the notification is in force.
- (3) A notification lodged with the Recorder under subsection (2) -
 - (a) operates as a caveat lodged under the *Land Titles Act 1980* forbidding the University from disposing of the relevant land while the notification is in force; and
 - (b) remains in force until the Minister lodges a notification with the Recorder, in a form approved by the Recorder, stating that the notification lodged with the Recorder under subsection (2) is withdrawn.
- (4) The Minister may only lodge a notification with the Recorder under subsection (3)(b) if the Minister is satisfied that -
 - (a) the University and the Land Council have entered into a written agreement that the relevant land is to be -
 - (i) acquired by the Land Council; and
 - (ii) the subject of an application to the Minister under section 35A(1) of the *Aboriginal Lands Act 1995*; or
 - (b) the University, or the Land Council, have provided evidence to the satisfaction of the Minister of one or more of the following:
 - (i) that all reasonable efforts to reach a written agreement, referred to in paragraph (a), in respect of the relevant land has failed;
 - (ii) that the Land Council does not wish to acquire the relevant land;
 - (iii) that the Land Council does not wish for the relevant land to become Aboriginal land within the meaning of the *Aboriginal Lands Act 1995*.
- (5) Sections 133(3)(b) and 136 of the *Land Titles Act 1980* do not apply to a notification lodged with the Recorder under subsection (2).
- (6) No fee is payable under the *Land Titles Act 1980* in respect of a notification of the Minister lodged with the Recorder under this section.

Ms WEBB - I move -

That new clause (A) be now read the second time.

Madam CHAIR - And are you speaking to that?

Ms WEBB - I'll speak to it now.

Members, I know this looks like a long and confusing thing, and it's really sprung up because of what has been put to us about the unprotected land that this bill leaves above Churchill Avenue, the 56 or so hectares that aren't being rezoned, aren't being made vested land, and are being left there, and the rationale for that being put to us in this place today - which is interesting because it certainly wasn't put in the second reading speech, was it? But now we've heard it.

Let me just go through this carefully for members and we'll see where we get. The intent of this amendment is to codify the justifications and promises we've heard made since the weekend, in the media by UTAS and more recently by the minister today, for the creation of the third category of land created by this bill: that is, the non-vested and non-rezoned land between Churchill Avenue and Olinda Grove. This leaving-out of 56 hectares from the vested land category is now, apparently, according to the minister's statement in this place earlier today, to ensure the parliament does not and I quote, 'stand in the way of ongoing land return discussions with the Aboriginal community'.

Facilitating the return of this land to the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania, should the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania be happy for that to happen, would be a fantastic outcome. Let me just put that on the record right now, I'm well and truly in favour of that outcome.

However, the claims about that here need to be questioned, because there are at least two potential hurdles to achieving that very desirable outcome of land return: the first being, this parliament needs to be clear that there's nothing that's formal or binding regarding the promises of discussions about potential vague MOUs down the track relating to this handback proposal.

During the 2024 House of Assembly debate, the lower House received a letter from UTAS's Vice-Chancellor, which was read out by Minister Ogilvie in the debate. The letter included a statement that the university, and I quote:

... had commenced discussions with the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania about a land handback of the bushland above the parcels identified for rezoning in the legislation.

And this:

We are committed to working with the ALCT towards a memorandum of understanding to govern the work required to facilitate this handback.

Members, since November 2024, they've not been provided with a status update on the development of such an MOU. Instead the parliament and, presumably, the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania, have been asked to take that on trust. Unfortunately, UTAS has soured

its trust capital with many of us in the community - the UTAS community, the broader community and probably some in this place. Social licence on this sort of asking us to take things on trust has been seriously eroded.

Secondly, the other thing that's a potential hurdle to achieving the very desirable outcome of a land handback here is that there's nothing in this bill that prevents current or future leadership of UTAS changing their mind, and instead seeking to rezone these 56 hectares of non-vested land or parts of it via current local government and planning processes available to them. There's nothing to say they can't change their mind and do that. There's nothing in the bill preventing UTAS from seeking to rezone or seeking to develop that land in other ways. There's nothing which requires UTAS to bring any subsequent divestment plans to approval for parliament because, remember, it's not vested land under this bill, so they can choose to do that and go down that merry path all on their own. Basically, UTAS could seek to rezone all or some of that 56 hectares leaving the parliament and the Tasmanian Aboriginal community standing on the sidelines.

Of course, we hope that doesn't happen. Of course. Of course, it would be lovely if we could take everything on trust, but we shouldn't have to, not when it comes to legislation. We should be able to see some firm commitments put in place. That's the intent of this amendment. The amendment seeks to reassure people that the delivery of this promise is to be the priority of any future rezoning or repurposing of those 56 hectares.

New clause (A), which is what I'm putting forward here, seeks to provide, to codify the stated intent and undertakings made to the community and to this parliament by UTAS and by the government as to why the 56 hectares has been left unprotected. It's not vested land under this bill. This seeks to make it explicitly clear that any future repurposing of this unzoned land is to be for the purpose of the finalisation of land handback discussions between the two identified parties: UTAS and the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania.

It seeks to do so by requiring the minister to protect certain land via the mechanism of applying a caveat, similar to the manner in which the bill provides for caveats to be used to protect the vested land that's below Churchill Avenue. We've already got this sort of process in the bill that's part of protecting vested lands and requiring arrangements for their disposal.

There's an additional difference from the vested land caveat. Under this proposed amendment for this new clause A, the caveat is to be applied to the unvested and non-rezoned area of land as soon as possible after the act receives royal assent, and then lifted should either of the options detailed in (4)(a) or (4)(b) have occurred.

This amendment does not try to force UTAS and ALCT to come to an agreement or to try to impose a timeframe by which any such MOU has to be finalised. It doesn't do that. It's not prescriptive in that way. In fact, it provides confidence to the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania that they have this priority window in light of the fact that there should be nothing preventing UTAS from seeking rezoning under other current options. There's nothing to protect them from going off and doing that.

Should it eventuate that an agreement cannot be struck between these two identified parties, UTAS and ALCT, or a formal land handback agreement does not come to fruition but for only some of this area of land, the caveat can be lifted, leaving the land available for UTAS to pursue other options should it wish to. This is actually - it's not irreversible. It's not

prescribing timeframes or demanding that the particular outcome occur. What it's doing, is saying we've heard the rationale for why we're leaving this land unprotected, and that's to do with land handback. That's the only rationale we've been given. This requires the minister to put a caveat on that land so that that process can play out and we can arrive at an MOU about land handback, and that process can be completed, and then the caveat can be lifted and the university proceeds with that.

In summary, the minister has said the government does not want parliament to get in the way of land handbacks. This amendment is consistent with that stated intent. In fact, it helps prioritise that intent over other potential purposes that may spring up. There should be no reason why the government cannot support this amendment, nor is there any reason why UTAS would object to it, if the stated intent is true. It is also consistent with the reference '2.5 Aboriginal Reconciliation'. That's the heading on page 13 of the Deloitte STEM business case. For members' reference, I have that here in front of me. The STEM precinct detailed business case from the university has a whole section, 2.5 Aboriginal Reconciliation, on page 13, which outlines this process or the intent around handbacks.

This new clause A merely seeks to codify and be transparent and accountable to the Tasmanian people and to this parliament about what the priority intent is for the future of this particular area of the current Sandy Bay campus, so I hope that has provided some clarity to members. I know it has landed on you, and it looks long and complicated, but I hope that explanation gives you some understanding of the intent here. It's just codifying what the minister has told us is the stated intent and the minister has said she doesn't want us to get in the way of that stated intent. So, this new clause A is to help the minister out by putting that extra protection of a caveat there while the process continues to play out. I hope members join me in assisting the minister with this new clause A to all of us putting our weight and our decision behind getting that nice outcome of land handback, which I think most of us would probably support. I invite members to support new clause A in the bill.

Ms O'CONNOR - This is a very, very good amendment and I want to commend the honourable member for Nelson for putting the thought and the effort in, and no doubt her adviser and OPC, but this provides some reassurance, I think most importantly to the Palawa people of Tasmania that there's a structure, should this amendment pass within the act, that would make the return of land more likely - no certainty, of course. On that return of land, it was only a few short years ago that the University of Tasmania made a profound statement and commitment on reconciliation, and I believe that statement is genuine and I believe that UTAS's desire to return that land is genuine, but there isn't anything at the moment other than spoken words on this matter, there is nothing in writing. There is no promise of return.

What I understand there has been, to date, is the promise of a process that would lead to the development of an MOU that could lead to the return of lands. I think that's where we are. Of course this land should be returned to the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania, and this is the mechanism, and my question for the mover of this amendment is, if it could be made really clear: should this amendment pass, and I hope it does, what happens to the land then if there isn't an agreement with the land council for returns? What's the status of that land in terms of its status?

Ms Webb - That's going to be a government question to answer. It stays as it is.

Ms O'CONNOR - It stays exactly as it is, unprotected, really, by Commonwealth law, to the extent that Commonwealth law protects anything these days. I hope honourable members will support this amendment, particularly given that it is land that is subject to neither rezoning, nor to the provisions that are in the first part of the bill around parliamentary oversight on disposal of land.

In a way, from the Council's point of view and certainly from the government's point of view, and I would have thought from UTAS's point of view, this amendment is no skin off anyone's nose and it potentially could lead to a very, very positive outcome for First Nations Tasmanians, but also for the University of Tasmania, and for us more broadly as a community because the more land we return, of course, the more steps we take towards genuine reconciliation, which of course we're a long way from at the moment. I warmly commend this motion to the Council and hope it secures support.

Ms PALMER - The University of Tasmania is committed to continue to work collaboratively and respectfully with the Aboriginal community, including the Aboriginal Land Council, on how this land is to be handed back to the Aboriginal community and we must let this process proceed or otherwise we are once again just doing to the Aboriginal community, not doing with the Aboriginal community. A key principle of handback is that it does not come with any conditions, and that it is led by the land council and Aboriginal people. The land is complicated and there is work to do, and this includes, for example, ongoing commitments to maintain the community sporting ovals. This bill does not change the current status of the land above Churchill Avenue, other than the two parcels of land to be rezoned inner residential.

I understand the spirit in which the honourable member for Nelson has put this forward, and I very much appreciate the comments and the contribution from the member for Hobart, but I have to say, as a minister, I feel exceptionally uncomfortable with what is being proposed here. I don't believe it is culturally appropriate. When I spoke with the university representative here in the Chamber about this, during the half-hour break that we have, which is the only opportunity I had to try and get some feedback, the discomfort around this not being culturally appropriate was also felt. This needs to be led by the Aboriginal Land Council and its people.

If you look at (4)(a) of what's being proposed, this would require the entire land being gifted to the Aboriginal Land Council. Now, what I've been advised in the discussions that I have had with the university is that there are already discussions that are underway between the university and the Aboriginal Land Council, and what I'm advised is that there are parts of the land that the Aboriginal Land Council does not want. My understanding is the vast majority will be gifted, but there are some small sections that I'm advised the Aboriginal Land Council actually does not want. The issue that we have is that it is possible, and it is in fact likely, that the land council will want handover of most, but not all, of the land, and this process must be led by Aboriginal people.

I, as a minister, feel exceptionally uncomfortable with this, and in the small amount of time I had to discuss this with the university, there was also quite a level of discomfort with this. I feel that there has been something put in writing with regard to the correspondence that was sent to the minister, Ms Ogilvie, from vice chancellor Professor Rufus Black, that clearly stated the university's intent, and the honourable member for Nelson did read that in, so I won't read that in again, but I think that we need to be very careful in this space and I'm feeling very uncomfortable with it.

We accept that the intent is there and it is our expectation that discussions will continue in line with the assurances made by the university to the government and the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania.

In November last year, as I say, the university wrote to the minister advising that the discussions had already commenced about the handback of the bushland above the parcels identified for rezoning in the legislation, which has always been intended for protection, given its environmental values.

I do have a question for the honourable member for Nelson, which is, what consultation or what conversations has the honourable member had with the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania? I have all the information in front of me about the conversations and the consultations and the discussions that the university has had with the Aboriginal Land Council and some of the advice that's come out of that, so I would like to know: what consultation, what discussions, what advice have you had or received from the Aboriginal Land Council with regard to new Clause A?

Madam CHAIR - Before I put the question that the new clause A be agreed, if any other members have questions for the member who's moving the motion for the new clause, I urge them to put them so she has a chance to respond to them. If not, I'll move that the new clause A be read a second time.

Ms WEBB - It's interesting; we haven't had a lot of time to consider this and it's probably why the minister has misconstrued it but that's okay, we'll try to clarify a few of those misconceptions right now because the new clause A does not impose anything on the process that the minister on behalf of UTAS hasn't committed to in this place and said is already happening.

What new clause A does is to say it recognises that that commitment is there, that there's an intention for land handback, that discussions and consultations are underway between the university and ALCT and that may eventually arrive at an MOU that relates to land handback, so it recognises that that's the intent and the statement about what's already happening.

What the new clause A does is to say in the meantime, while that plays out and without putting any timeframe on it or any specific expectation or outcome on it, not impacting that process at all while it plays out, the minister would put a caveat on this section of land and what that would mean is in the meantime, the university can't do other things to dispose of that land that aren't about land handback.

It actually is protective, so it's very interesting to have the minister suggest that I'm being culturally inappropriate in suggesting this because I'm actually not putting any requirement on the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania, I'm not putting any requirement on the interactions of the university with the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania. I'm not imposing anything on that process that's playing out other than that while it does, UTAS can't sell the land out or rezone the land or do something different with the land from under the process.

What I'm inviting the minister to do, and the university could be supportive of this, is to codify the fact that that is a really sensitive, important process playing out and we wouldn't want there to be any question that UTAS would behave inappropriately in that process, or

would pull the plug on it, or would do something to undermine it by doing other things with the land. That's what this new clause A does.

It isn't culturally inappropriate because it doesn't put any requirement on ALCT or impose into that space and that process at all. The caveat can be lifted once an MOU has been arrived at or if there's a decision that, actually, as a result of the interactions there's not going to be a land handback arrived at. That's absolutely available that any or all of the land may not end up being handed back to the Aboriginal community as a result of the negotiations that's provided for. That can happen under this. As I said, it doesn't specify anything about that process or anything about what the ultimate outcome might be. It just says there's a caveat while it's happening and when it's concluded, the caveat is lifted.

When the minister asked me what consultation I've done, I clearly have had this drafted today, so I haven't consulted because it's about a process and protection in the bill that doesn't touch into the actions or the impact on, say, the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania and Tasmanian Aboriginal people. It doesn't touch into the university except to say that if they're going to do something different to what they're promising there would be a caveat there stopping them until they finished their process of consulting and discussing and negotiating the land hand back process. It's quite ironic because while the minister says that this parliament shouldn't get in the way of land handback, what I'm trying to ensure is that the university doesn't get in the way of land handback either and commits to the process and stays with it.

So no, I haven't consulted with the Aboriginal community because I'm not putting anything on them in terms of an impact or a supposed outcome or any sort of constraint at all. I'm providing them with some additional support to ensure that the process doesn't get undermined or derailed or put aside in a way before it's concluded appropriately as laid out here and all reasonable efforts have been made to reach an agreement. Potentially it provides for land council not wishing to acquire the relevant land or parts of the relevant land, the land council not wishing to have the land become Aboriginal land under the land act. All those eventualities can happen.

The criticisms that the minister is making of this new clause A are misleading. It could be because the time hasn't been available to consider it. That would be fair enough, but the thing about it is the government didn't mention anything about Aboriginal land handbacks as part of the second reading speech, not mentioned once in this place. Nothing was mentioned until the minister's summing-up and was provided as the rationale for why there's this big void over 56 hectares that's not protected under this bill and isn't rezoned under this bill. It's only emerged then and we've been told to take that on faith because of the handback situation that's supposed to be playing out. That's why at this stage I've developed this amendment to address that situation, support that situation and ensure fidelity of that situation that it has the space to play out.

Ms PALMER - I do want to reiterate a couple of comments that I made before about the spirit in which the honourable member for Nelson is putting this forward and I absolutely accept that, but I have to restate, subclause (4)(a) says that the minister may only remove the restriction on the disposal of land if the university and the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania have entered into a written agreement that the relevant land is to be acquired by the Aboriginal Land Council - not part of the land, but all of the land.

This is a predetermined outcome, and I do genuinely feel that is very culturally inappropriate. I do, as a minister, feel exceptionally uncomfortable with this proposed new clause. I specifically asked the honourable member if she had had consultation or discussions with the Aboriginal Land Council, because that would have quite possibly changed my position, but you haven't. I accept that this has unfolded this afternoon, but I truly believe the university has publicly, and as the member for Hobart said so genuinely, is committed to what it wants to do in this space. We have it in writing to the minister. It has been read into both Houses of parliament. I have no reason to believe that there is not an absolutely genuine will and desire to see this happen. I really don't, but I do not feel that it is culturally appropriate for this not to be led by Aboriginal peoples, and I simply can't support the new clause A.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Madam Chair, perhaps what we should consider doing now is adjourning debate so that during the dinner break the honourable member for Nelson can have that conversation with the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania and come back to Council.

Madam CHAIR - While there is a question before the Chair, we need to deal with that question.

Ms O'CONNOR - I seek leave to adjourn the debate.

Madam CHAIR - You can't. The question is before the Chair and the question is that new clause A be agreed to. That's the question.

Ms O'CONNOR - Alright.

Madam CHAIR (Ms Forrest) - The question is that the new clause A be read a second time.

The Committee divided -

AYES 2

Ms O'Connor
Ms Webb (Teller)

NOES 12

Ms Armitage
Mr Duigan
Mr Edmunds
Ms Forrest
Mr Gaffney
Mr Harriss
Mr Hiscutt (Teller)
Ms Lovell
Ms Palmer
Ms Rattray
Ms Thomas
Mr Vincent

Motion negatived.

Schedule 1 -

Ms WEBB - I am moving an amendment in my name.

Page 14, paragraph (a), after 'Act 1980,'.

Leave out 'that falls between Churchill Avenue and Sandy Bay Road, Sandy Bay'.

Insert instead 'other than an area of land that is a proposed area within the meaning of section 7'.

Members, this amendment is a fairly straightforward one. Now that we've rezoned under clause 7 of this bill certain parcels of land, what Schedule 1 is doing is describing what is vested land, so therefore what is protected under the title of this bill, University of Tasmania (Protection of Land) Bill, and my intent is to revert as best we can in the context of the rezoning to ensure that the rest of the land on the Sandy Bay campus is actually protected under this bill as vested land. I am going to grab a piece of paper I forgot to take with me, to remind members that originally what the government promised in 2024, before the election, to the people of Tasmania, and most specifically to the voters of Sandy Bay, was that the Sandy Bay campus land would be protected through having to, if it was to be disposed of, come through parliament for approval.

The original intent of the bill protected all the land on that particular folio that's outlined in the bill that extends from Sandy Bay Road, right down the bottom, upwards across Churchill Avenue and all the way up to Olinda Grove. What the bill does now, because of the compromises made at the university's demands of the government, the vested land under this bill is now confined to the small area about 14 hectares below Churchill Avenue down to Sandy Bay Road. There are the rezoned parcels and then the 56 or so hectares above Churchill Avenue that is unprotected by this bill and not yet rezoned, which we know is also under that intent to have land handback happen now.

What I'm proposing with this is that we include that 56 hectares or so that's outside the parcels above Churchill Avenue as vested land. Let's be really clear: because the government, the minister is definitely going to get up and pretend that this is somehow going to be a barrier to land handback, let me tell you right now, the fact of it being vested land is not a barrier to that land handback process continuing and being resolved, and coming hopefully to that excellent conclusion that the university does hand back land. Under vested land, all that would have to happen is that it comes through parliament and is there in a motion because it would be regarded as disposal of land. So, it would be something that came back through parliament potentially to disallow.

This parliament then would be able to, yes, have a say on it, but disallowance is a very high bar. It's very hard to imagine this parliament getting in the way of land handback for that. And it's also reasonable, I think, because what we've also heard from the minister is that they don't intend to hand that whole area back most likely. It's probably potentially parts of that area of 56 hectares that are going to be potentially handed back. What about the rest of it? Why doesn't that deserve protection as vested land under this bill? Again, what I'm seeking to do here is to ensure that genuinely other than the rezoned parcels described in clause 7, other than that from Sandy Bay Road at the bottom all the way up through the 14 hectares below Churchill

Avenue into the 56 remaining hectares above Churchill Avenue, all of that becomes vested land under this bill with the requirement that disposal of any of that land in whatever form specified in this bill comes through as a motion in this parliament for oversight.

It doesn't stop land handbacks, doesn't put a barrier there at all to that. What it does do is ensure that any other sorts of disposal of the 56 hectares do have the same requirements applied as vested land below Churchill Avenue, and that's reasonable. Quite frankly, if the government gets up and says the university has no intent to dispose of other land above Churchill Avenue in that 56 hectares and we should just take it on trust that it's all fine, well, if they don't have any intention, then it doesn't matter to them to make it vested land under this act. If the university has no intention to dispose of that land in any way, shape or form, great, it then is protected under this bill with the same requirements as vested land below Churchill Avenue, no foul, no harm. However, if the university did have an intention to try to dispose of that 56 hectares in some way that perhaps they aren't looking at handback in relation to, what this will do is make sure that it comes through this place under a motion just like the vested land below Churchill Avenue.

I think this is really reasonable. Let's face it, members, these three categories of land were not put to us clearly at any stage. I know it came as a surprise to a lot of members when I sent information about the fact that 56 hectares, about 57 per cent of the campus land, wasn't protected under this bill, so I think this is reasonable to give effect to the intent and the title of this bill.

I'd definitely like to say here on the record that in the minister's second reading speech, when she said this bill would prevent, and I quote:

... the University from disposing of campus land at Sandy Bay without the approval of both Houses of parliament. There are only two parcels of land exempt, which we are looking to rezone.

She was absolutely misleading this place in saying that. That was an incorrect statement in the minister's second reading speech because clearly campus land at Sandy Bay extends from Sandy Bay Road all the way up across Churchill Avenue, all the way up to Olinda Grove. That is the campus land at Sandy Bay and there are in fact three categories of land under this bill.

What I'm seeking to do is to make that statement true from the minister that other than the rezoned parcels, the rest is protected as vested land under this bill. If we don't do that, the minister will have made an incorrect, misleading statement in her second reading speech categorically, undeniably.

It doesn't matter how she tries to spin it, that is clear. It prevents the university from disposing of campus land at Sandy Bay without the approval of both Houses of parliament. 'There are only two parcels of land exempt, which we are looking to rezone.' Untrue. I'm trying to make it true though, which is this amendment to Schedule 1. I hope members support it. There's no reason not to. If the university is genuine, if our parliamentary oversight means anything in relation to this bill, there's no reason that land shouldn't also be vested.

Ms PALMER - Madam Chair, the first amendment to Schedule 1 to include all of the land above Churchill Avenue as vested land is not supported for all the reasons that have been raised in the second reading speech and response, and this completely undermines the purpose

of the bill. This bill provides a clear, defined and timely mechanism to unlock the value and enable it to be directed towards the investment Tasmania needs. With this bill we have moved with certainty securing an ongoing university presence at Sandy Bay, while enabling land not required for future needs to contribute to the next chapter of higher education in this state.

The STEM precinct detailed business plan by Deloitte makes the opportunity clear. New facilities would attract top researchers and educators. They would strengthen the university position as a centre of excellence in science, technology and innovation, and they would support stronger partnerships with industry, creating more opportunities for students to gain real-world experience while they learn. Importantly, a visible and accessible STEM hub would also strengthen outreach activities, increasing interest in STEM pathways for senior secondary high school students and encouraging them to continue their education here.

Ms O'Connor - Perhaps we could be pointed to the part of the second reading speech that deals with this area of land.

Madam CHAIR - Order.

Ms PALMER - There was also a comment from the member with regard to leaving more than half of the Sandy Bay campus unprotected, and no, that is not the case. That characterisation misunderstands both the bill and the intent of the land excluded from vesting. The bushland referred to above Churchill Avenue is not unprotected. It is deliberately excluded from rezoning because it is earmarked for land return, and already subject to environmental protections. This bill is designed to protect the Sandy Bay campus below Churchill Avenue and rezone two parcels of land to inner residential, enabling the university to realise the value of these two specific parcels and put towards a new STEM precinct.

With regard to the commentary about misleading about the extent of protection, the parliament was advised that only two parcels were proposed for rezoning and that remains correct. Land not proposed for rezoning was not presented as development land.

Mr HISCUTT - Madam Chair, I just want to understand, was it the government's intent when it made the election promise in 2024 that it was only the parcel below Churchill Avenue that would be protected?

Ms PALMER - Madam Chair, I thank the member for Montgomery for the question. The government announced its policy to protect the Sandy Bay campus.

Ms WEBB - Madam Chair, let's be really clear: the minister just got up and implied that this was discussed in the second reading speech - it wasn't. This 56 hectares was not discussed in the second reading speech. Let me be really clear on what I am asserting the minister misled parliament about in the second reading speech. I'm going to read the quote again and point to the part that's misleading, because I'm being misrepresented here as well in the minister's response to me.

In the second reading speech, the minister said that this bill will prevent the following, and here's the quote:

... the University from disposing of campus land at Sandy Bay without the approval of both Houses of parliament. There are only two parcels of land exempt, which we are looking to rezone.

That second part of the sentence there about the two parcels is true - of course, two parcels are there in the bill - but actually, it isn't. All the rest of the campus land at Sandy Bay isn't protected from being disposed of under this bill. The 56 hectares, the 57 per cent of campus land at Sandy Bay, is not prevented under this bill from being disposed of by the university. The university can dispose of that land at any stage with no parliamentary oversight, without the approval of both Houses of parliament - 57 per cent of the campus land at Sandy Bay can be disposed of without the approval of both Houses of parliament under this bill. Just to be clear, minister, that's where you lied to the parliament in your second reading speech.

Members interjecting.

CHAIR - Order. That is unparliamentary. I ask you to withdraw.

Ms WEBB - I withdraw. That is where you misled this Chamber in your second reading speech. I am being very clear here about what was misled.

Madam CHAIR - Order, if you could just sit down for a minute. I know it is the hour that it is. Everyone needs to remain calm. The member has made an accusation, the minister has responded. You're withdrawing the unparliamentary language that you used, and I ask you to focus on the matter in hand, the amendment before the House. We can resume.

Ms WEBB - Yes, I'm focusing on the amendment before the House, which relates to the 57 per cent of the campus that under the bill currently is not prevented from being disposed of without the approval of both Houses of parliament, and I'm trying to make sure with this amendment, that it does have to come to parliament as vested land like the other 14 per cent below Churchill Avenue. Well and truly, the statement I've specified here, part of the statement that was misleading in the second reading speech, the minister can pretend I'm talking about another part of that statement, but I'm not. I'm talking about the bit that's misleading.

The minister cannot get away from that, quite frankly, and I think it's a shame she didn't just come and say 'yes, it could be misconstrued, I'm going to clarify it now'. It's a shame she didn't do that now.

The other thing that I wanted to pick up on was that what I'm proposing here does nothing to affect the rezoning that we've already approved under clause 7 of this bill. Clause 7 has been passed by this place. The rezoning is happening. Nothing about what is suggested with this amendment to Schedule 1 changes the rezoning, so while defaulting to talk about the wonderful, heavenly STEM facilities that are to come is one thing, it's not relevant to what I'm talking about because the rezoning has happened. If that is to be disposed of and wonderful amounts of money realised and put towards the STEM facilities, all well and good. I really hope now that we've passed it, that it does happen.

What I'm proposing is not going stop it. What I'm proposing isn't going to limit, in any way, the rezoning that has already been done. What I'm proposing is that the other 56 hectares above Churchill Avenue will be protected as vested land, such that if it is to be disposed of it would come back through this place as a motion that's disallowable, really straightforwardly.

It doesn't affect the land handback process. That would come through, too. We would all celebrate the conclusion of that, if it does come about - wonderful. The government has made clear that the university may well not hand back that whole 56 hectares. In fact they've sort of said it's probably not going to be the whole lot. There might be parts of it. We're not pre-empting that, so this protects the land that wouldn't be handed back as well as vested land that would have to come through this place. It's very straightforward. There's literally no reason to object to it, other than if the university does not want the oversight of this parliament when it looks to dispose of this land at some point in the future. That's the only reason not to do it: there's no accountability around the university's potential disposal of this land. There's no protection offered. It's simple as that.

Mr HISCUTT - Mine is a simple question. I don't want it to be unfortunately diluted potentially, so I'll make sure they're listening.

Ms Palmer - Always.

Mr HISCUTT - I would like to ask: how does the government define the Sandy Bay campus?

Ms PALMER - I will seek some advice.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I thank the honourable member for the question, 'How does the government define the Sandy Bay campus?' It is defined as the land required by the university to deliver its service. In this process, it has clearly said the land above Churchill Avenue is surplus.

Mr Hiscutt - Was that advice received that this was surplus prior to or after the 2024 election promise to protect the UTAS campus?

Ms PALMER - We understand that advice was provided to government in November 2024, which is what has led to the university suggesting amendments to this bill.

Mr Hiscutt - So, after the election.

Ms WEBB - I just want to be very clear on the record here, Madam Chair, that the phrasing used by the minister: 'is disposing of campus land at Sandy Bay' and in the government's own first iteration of this bill, they defined 'campus land at Sandy Bay' because they identified it by folio under the LIST, they defined it as Volume 167420, Folio 1. That's a small area of land on Sandy Bay Road that they were going to be making vested land and also Volume 176312, Folio 1, which covers the rest of the Sandy Bay campus land, which goes from Sandy Bay Road, a big swathe up over Churchill Avenue, all the way up to Olinda Grove. There's a LIST map that I provided to members in my briefing paper on this that showed what the initial bill from the government, when it was going to genuinely protect the Sandy Bay campus land, intended to do. So, when the minister states that campus land at Sandy Bay can't be sold under this, it can't be disposed of under this bill without approval from both Houses of parliament, except the two rezoning parcels, it's wrong. They're only protecting 14 per cent of it, not the other 57 per cent of it, the 56 hectares. It's absolutely misleading. Regardless of whether the university claims it's surplus to requirement, it is campus land at Sandy Bay. It simply is.

Madam CHAIR (Ms Forrest) - The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The Committee divided -

AYES 6

Mr Gaffney (Teller)
Mr Harriss
Mr Hiscutt
Ms O'Connor
Ms Thomas
Ms Webb

NOES 8

Ms Armitage (Teller)
Mr Duigan
Mr Edmunds
Ms Forrest
Ms Lovell
Ms Palmer
Ms Rattray
Mr Vincent

Amendment negatived.

Schedule 1 agreed to.

Madam CHAIR - Member for Nelson, you're not moving that amendment, I assume?

Ms WEBB - No, they were only relevant if we had done the right thing on clause 7. So, apologies, Madam Chair, I won't move those amendments.

Madam CHAIR - I just wanted to give you the opportunity.

Schedule 2 -

Ms WEBB - Madam Chair, I have a question on Schedule 2 because we did clarify that this isn't a map prepared by an appropriately qualified surveyor, so I just would like to know who prepared the map and why it isn't of a better quality, so that we can at least carefully see exactly where its parameters are. And, why isn't it described in words as well as pictorially, the way some earlier iterations of the bill, I think, attempted to do? Who did prepare the map? Why is it so poor and not more detailed so we can actually see the specifics of its parameters? I don't need to repeat it again.

Ms PALMER - Madam Chair, I'm advised that the map in Schedule 2 was prepared and provided by the university.

Ms WEBB - Madam Chair, that's interesting, prepared by the university. Absolutely pulling some strings there, absolutely behind the scenes for that. Then, what did the government do to give itself confidence about exactly what's depicted here, given the poor quality of the map? It's very fuzzy. It's just an aerial view. It doesn't even depict the whole campus. Someone's got a Sharpie pen out and drawn some lines. What did the government do to give itself confidence of exactly what's being depicted? The line at the top here is literally going through some buildings, it would look like, so I would just like to understand what the government did to fully give itself confidence that it knew what was being depicted as rezoned here.

Ms PALMER - Madam Chair, the government satisfied itself comparing what was provided to what had been done previously in the master plan, and, of course, now we see in clause 7 -

- (2) On the day on which this Act receives the Royal Assent, the Planning Minister is to cause a plan to be prepared and registered in the Central Plan Register.
- (3) A plan prepared under subsection (2) -
 - (a) may only relate to the land that -
 - (i) is within the proposed areas ...

Mr HISCUTT - Madam Chair, I'm just wondering if the government could advise if the proposed area is on the inside of the big grey line or on the outside of the big grey line, as that's a considerable amount of difference. That might be \$95 million or \$105 million that the university has proposed to be able to get. Could you please confirm that?

Ms PALMER - Madam Chair, I can advise the member that it is inside.

Madam CHAIR (Ms Forrest) - The question is Schedule 2 stand part of the bill.

The Committee divided -

AYES 10

Ms Armitage
Mr Duigan
Mr Edmunds
Mr Forrest
Mr Harriss
Mr Hiscutt
Ms Lovell
Ms Palmer
Ms Rattray
Mr Vincent (Teller)

NOES 4

Mr Gaffney
Ms O'Connor
Ms Thomas (Teller)
Ms Webb

Schedule 2 agreed to.

Schedule 3 agreed to.

Title read and agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment.

[7.23 p.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears - Minister for Education) - Mr President, I move -

That the third reading of the bill be made an order of the day for tomorrow.

Motion agreed to.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

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 bells.

This is for the purpose of a dinner break.

Sitting suspended from 7.24 p.m. to 8.25 p.m.

GREYHOUND RACING LEGISLATION AMENDMENTS (PHASING OUT REFORM) BILL 2025 (No. 66)

Second Reading

[8.26 p.m.]

Mr VINCENT (Prosser - Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I move -

That the bill be read a second time.

In 2024, the Tasmanian government introduced the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024* to address community concerns and to strengthen animal welfare outcomes across all codes of racing. A key feature of this new legislation was the establishment and the appointment of the Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner, who has extensive powers to set integrity and animal welfare standards and investigatory functions. The comprehensive reforms have set up harness and thoroughbred racing for success into the future, while ensuring probity and animal welfare are at the forefront.

However, with the introduction of the Greyhound Racing Legislation Amendments (Phasing out Reform) Bill 2025, known as the bill, the government is recognising greyhound racing no longer aligns with community expectations.

The bill will phase out greyhound racing in Tasmania through a staged and considered approach, with the sport to end on 30 June 2029. The timing coincides with the end of the current Tasracing funding deed.

The bill will operate through a series of transitional and consequential amendments to the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024*, the *Dog Control Act 2000* and the *Animal Welfare Act 1993*, which I will now outline in more detail.

Parts 1 and 4 of the bill are intended to commence on 1 January 2026. Parts 2, 3 and 5 of the bill will commence in law from the greyhound racing closure date, which is 30 June 2029.

I will first provide an overview of those parts of the bill which will commence operating on 1 January 2026.

Part 1 is enabling and provides for the commencement dates for the parts of the bill. Part 4 of the bill will amend the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024* to include a new Schedule 8, which has provisions to support the phase-out of greyhound racing that will operate during the transitional period between 1 January 2026 and 30 June 2029.

The new transitional schedule will make provision for the following requirements to apply during the transition period:

- The Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner is to develop and implement a greyhound racing closure plan. This will guide the phase-out of greyhound racing in Tasmania during the transitional period, and the plan must be approved by the Minister for Racing.
- The transfer of registered greyhounds to a new owner will require the notification and consent of Tasracing.
- A registered greyhound that has reached the age of six years, or that has not raced for 12 months prior to being deemed retired, will be deemed retired and deregistered. Exceptions will be made for a greyhound that has not raced for 12 months due to injury and is certified recovered by a veterinary surgeon.
- The racing of overseas or interstate-registered greyhounds in Tasmania during the transitional period will require the written consent of Tasracing.
- Destruction of a greyhound, other than by a vet in an emergency, can only be for animal welfare reasons and will require the written consent of Tasracing.
- The breeding of racing greyhounds during the transitional period will be prohibited.
- All permits, licences, registrations and other forms of authorisations that purport to allow or authorise greyhound racing will be automatically cancelled on or after 30 June 2029.

The powers of the Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner to enter and inspect premises for the purpose of conducting an audit or investigation during the transition period have also been clarified. During the transition period, the commissioner can direct a person to allow the commissioner, or persons assisting the commissioner, to enter premises on which greyhounds are being kept, trained or raced for the purpose of conducting an audit, an inspection or other form of investigation.

The bill does not empower the commissioner to enter a residence by force without a warrant, or without the cooperation of the occupier of the premises. However, a person who, without reasonable excuse, fails to comply with the commissioner's direction to allow entry to the premises will be committing an obstruction offence and will be liable to a fine.

The transitional powers are in addition to all of the commissioner's current powers of investigation and inquiry under the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act*. This includes the ability to refer a matter to racing stewards, who have powers of entry under the Greyhound Rules of Racing, or to officers under the *Animal Welfare Act*, who have powers of entry in connection with the enforcement of that act.

I will next outline those parts of the bill which will operate to ban greyhound racing after 30 June 2029. As was previously noted, these are parts 2, 3 and 5 of the bill, which will commence in law on 1 July 2029. Part 2 of the bill contains consequential amendments to the *Animal Welfare Act 1993* which will operate to ban greyhound racing.

A new section 11C will be inserted into the *Animal Welfare Act 1993* which makes it an offence after 30 June 2029 to race greyhounds in any way, including time trials, lure or no lure, and to race other dog breeds in a way that replicates current greyhound racing, commonly defined as 'commercial dog racing'. The new *Animal Welfare Act* section will also make it an offence to keep a dog for racing or to keep, sell, breed or acquire any dog that is intended to be used in greyhound racing or commercial dog racing.

Part 3 of the bill will amend the provisions of the *Dog Control Act 2000* that currently impose additional restrictions on greyhound racing. The special requirements for muzzling and effective control of racing greyhounds in section 18 of the *Dog Control Act* will continue after 30 June 2029. However, the bill will amend the act to expand the types of programs and suitability assessments that can occur to enable the former racing greyhound to be unmuzzled in public places. Currently it can only be a program operated by Tasracing, but the bill allows for other expanded programs approved by the secretary, or their delegate, that may include programs operated, for example, by the RSPCA or a licensed dog breeder.

A new section 18B will also be inserted into the *Dog Control Act*, which prohibits the breeding of greyhounds intended for racing. However, breeding of greyhounds as pets is allowed.

I will conclude with part 5 of the bill. It contains a suite of consequential amendments to the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024* to remove references to greyhound racing. These amendments have the effect that, after the full closure of greyhound racing, the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act* will only regulate horse racing - harness and thoroughbreds - in Tasmania.

The government understands the phasing-out of greyhound racing will impact those involved in the code and the broader racing industry and is committed to ensuring a measured transition that focuses on the welfare of participants and greyhounds. A greyhound racing transition working group overseen by the Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner has been formed to assist in the operational, animal welfare, and integrity components of the transition. Additionally, a parliamentary committee will provide scrutiny and public accountability for the work being undertaken by the commissioner.

Recreational ownership of greyhounds will continue, and matters relating to the general animal welfare of greyhounds and community safety issues will continue to be addressed under the *Animal Welfare Act 1993* and the *Dog Control Act 2000*.

Before concluding, I would like to foreshadow some amendments to the bill. Since the bill passed the other place on 4 December last year, the Joint Standing Committee on Greyhound Racing Transition has undertaken a thorough examination of the bill. The committee held hearings with key stakeholders including industry and community representatives, the Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner and the government.

I'd like to thank all those who contributed to the committee's work and inquiry, as well as members of the committee for their comprehensive report, which was delivered on 19 March 2026.

In response to the committee's recommendations, the government is proposing a number of amendments. These include: aligning penalty provisions with related legislation; removing the requirement for muzzling of non-racing greyhounds born in Tasmania after the commencement of the transition period; and providing direction on the content of the greyhound racing closure plan and requiring the plan to be tabled in both Houses of parliament. In particular, the amendments will require the closure plans to address support for persons employed in the greyhound racing industry and support the welfare of greyhounds, including through shelters and rehoming programs. I will be seeking to incorporate the amendments in the bill during the Committee stage.

Through this bill, the Tasmanian government has delivered on its commitment made last year to take necessary steps to phase out greyhound racing in the state before the end of the decade. I appreciate the passion and views of all in this place, and I understand the community interest in this bill. I also appreciate the strength of this place is to have diverse points of view and interests. I trust all speakers will respect each other's views, comments and opinions, and I look forward to the debate.

[8.40 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I rise to speak in support of the greyhound racing industry in Tasmania. I do so deliberately and I hope to do it calmly - we'll wait and see - and constructively. This is not a speech about denial, and it's not a speech that suggests the industry is perfect, beyond scrutiny or incapable of improvement. Nor is it a speech that dismisses concerns about animal welfare or seeks to trivialise them. On the contrary, it is precisely because animal welfare matters and matters deeply to Tasmanians that this debate must be conducted with evidence, balance and respect for the thousands of people whose livelihoods, identities and communities are bound up in this industry.

I have some numbers. As of December 2025, the number of registered active participants was 447; number of breeders, 72; number of public trainers, 78; number of owners, 137; and number of owner-trainers, 48. Those numbers, together with those Tasmanians who have businesses that rely on and support greyhound racing, are important.

What I'm concerned about is that in recent months the Tasmanian government has materially weakened its public and policy support for the greyhound industry, not because of new evidence and not because of a failure of regulation, and not because of a collapse in public confidence, but largely as a matter of political accommodation. In my view that is not good policymaking, it's not fair to those participants and it sets a troubling precedent for any regional or community-based industry that finds itself politically inconvenient.

Mr President, I seek leave to table a document. The document is the letter that the Premier, Jeremy Rockliff, sent to Mr Ben Englund of the North West Greyhound Racing Club on 17 July 2025.

Leave granted; document tabled.

It's very clear in that document that the people of north-west Tasmania and that particular greyhound racing club felt that they had the support of the Liberal government before they went to the election, so it's important that we table that.

Today, I want to place on the record a considered case for the greyhound industry in Tasmania: its economic contribution, its social and cultural significance, its progress on animal welfare and the real risks that arise when governments retreat from evidence-based support in favour of symbolism.

Let me begin with the economic dimension. Greyhound racing in Tasmania is not an abstract pastime. It is a working industry. It sustains employment directly and indirectly across the state, with a particularly strong footprint in regional Tasmania - and I know regional Tasmania. Trainers, breeders, kennel hands, track staff, veterinarians, transport operators, feed suppliers, maintenance workers, administrators, hospitality staff - these are real jobs held by real Tasmanians.

For many participants, greyhound racing is not a sideline or a hobby. It's a small business. It's a family enterprise. It's an intergenerational vocation often operating on modest margins, vulnerable to policy shocks and deeply reliant on regulatory certainty. The economic value of the industry is not confined to wagering turnover. It includes infrastructure investment, regional spending and the multiplier effect that flows into our local communities. Tracks such as Elwick and Launceston are not just sporting venues, they are hubs of economic activity, particularly on race nights when local businesses benefit from increased foot traffic and spending. It's also worth stating plainly that greyhound racing forms part of the Tasmania's broader racing ecosystem; decisions that undermine confidence in one code have consequences for the others.

Investment does not like uncertainty. Once lost, it is rarely regained. Now, some will say yes, but economic contribution alone cannot justify an industry. That's true. Which is why we must also consider the social dimension. Greyhound racing is, at its core, a community-based activity. It's not dominated by large corporates and it's not a sport for elite privilege. It's accessible and it's sustained by people who give extraordinary amounts of unpaid time to animal care, training and mentoring.

In many parts of Tasmania, particularly in regional and outer suburban areas, the greyhound community provides structure, purpose and social connection. For older Tasmanians it offers continuity and identity. For younger participants it provides pathways into work with animals, discipline, responsibility and skill development. I'm aware of trainers who know every dog in their kennel, not as an asset but as an individual. I know families where three generations have been involved in the industry, passing down knowledge not just about racing, but about animal husbandry, ethics and care. These are not caricatures; they're not stereotypes; they're Tasmanians who deserve to be heard.

Greyhound clubs also pay an important social role. They are places where people gather, volunteer, fundraise and support one another. They contribute to mental wellbeing by fostering

belonging and routine - something we know matters greatly, particularly in rural regional communities. We should be very cautious about dismissing these social benefits simply because they do not fit neatly into a policy spreadsheet.

I now turn to the cultural dimension. Greyhound racing has a long history in Tasmania and it is woven into the sporting fabric of the state. Like many traditional industries, it has evolved and continues to evolve in response to changing social expectations; but its cultural significance should not be casually discarded. Tasmanians rightly value continuity, tradition and local identity. We understand that culture is not static but neither is it disposable. The greyhound industry, for all its challenges, represents a living tradition that has adapted over time and can continue to do so.

It is telling that when people speak about the industry, they often speak not in ideological terms, but in personal ones: this is what my family has always done; this is how I make a living; this is where I belong. Those voices deserve respect, even from those who ultimately take a different view. I have a couple of pieces of correspondence that I'd like to share with honourable members and I have deliberately chosen those from my electorate. I also acknowledge while I'm on my feet that we've had a myriad of pieces of correspondence from right across Australia and certainly from across Tasmania. These ones are for supporting the continuation of greyhound racing and they say, 'Hello, Tania,' because I know these people:

I want to know why Greyhounds are being persecuted and attacked so hard, when racehorses and pacers (saddle, spurs, bridles, bit in the mouth, a cart attached, whipped, tongue tied, someone on their backs), they are forced to run around a track, YET greyhounds are getting the rough end of the stick for something they love to do, running & chasing something. Not forced at all!! The Greyhound Industry is being attacked because it is a working man's sport. I cannot imagine the push back you'd get if you start going after the horse racing industry!

They finished by saying:

I SUPPORT GREYHOUND RACING IN TASMANIA ...

On the other side of the ledger - and this particular one I've chosen again because it belongs to someone from my electorate - they've signed that they live at St Marys on the east coast. I did receive a number of this particular email, probably 10 or so from various other places, but I thought it was important because it was signed by somebody from the electorate I represent. It says:

Dear Member of the Legislative Council,
As a Tasmanian resident, I urge you to support the Greyhound Racing Legislation Amendments (Phasing Out Reform) Bill 2025 ... Your vote in the coming days will decide whether this cruel practice ends, or continues for years.

Greyhound racing causes predictable harm to dogs. Despite years of attempted reform, serious welfare issues continue - overbreeding, injuries and deaths, long periods of extreme confinement, isolation, and poor

socialisation. These issues are inherent to racing and cannot be adequately addressed through regulation.

It goes on to say -

Like me, most Tasmanians want this change with independent polling showing that 74% of our community support the phase-out.

I also support a fair and orderly transition for people currently involved. Ending greyhound racing and ensuring appropriate transition support should go hand in hand.

If you're already inclined to support the Bill, thank you. I ask you to hold firm and do what you can to help ensure it passes. If you're undecided, please do the right thing and stand with the community and with the dogs who need protection.

That's the other side of the ledger. It's only fair that I refer to both. In regard to the 74 per cent that's referred to, I just want to make the point that the EMRS survey, in the media release of 15 August 2025 titled 'Tasmanians overwhelmingly back greyhound ban', stated that:

... it was an online survey of 508 Tasmanians conducted from the 12th to the 14th of August 2025, the result of which apparently stated 74% agreed to the ban. The information provided does not specify the survey methodology or whether the sample is truly representative of the Tasmanian population.

This is an opinion; I'm just sharing it with the House.

The RSPCA Tasmania and the Dogs Home as well as political parties hung their hats on this result.

There are some who have queried that survey.

The next one that I'm going to share with honourable members is from someone who I've made contact with. I'm not going to use their name, but perhaps once I read it out, people in the industry might well know who this person is. We live in Tasmania after all:

Dear Tania Rattray MLC,

I am writing to express my strong support for the continuation of greyhound racing in Tasmania and to outline the personal and professional impact that a ban would have on my livelihood and my family.

I have been a race caller for all three racing codes, including greyhound racing, in Tasmania since September 2020. While I am not an owner, trainer or participant directly involved in breeding greyhounds, my professional work is closely tied to the industry. Over this time, I have spent countless hours on track and have seen firsthand the welfare enhancements that have been introduced and the overall care shown towards greyhounds.

Demonstrating a commitment within the Tasmanian industry to continually improve animal welfare outcomes.

A ban on greyhound racing would have a direct and significant impact on my weekly income. Greyhound meetings form an important part of my work schedule, and the removal of these meetings would reduce both my opportunities and earnings. This is not just a broader industry concern - it would have an immediate financial impact on me personally. As someone whose specialist field is racing, particularly race calling, the loss of greyhound racing would remove a key component of my professional work.

And it goes on:

In addition, my partner [name redacted] operates a small photography business that services the racing industry. She produces graphic design, printing and framing winning photographs for winning connections who purchase a photo to acknowledge their success. This is a niche service built specifically around racing participants. A ban would lead to an end in demand for her work in the greyhound code and directly affect her business income. As a small business, this loss of regular work would be difficult to absorb.

Our professional skills are specialised within the racing industry. Greyhound racing in Tasmania supports not only participants, but also a network of contractors and other suppliers. The flow-on effects of a ban would extend well beyond trainers and owners and would impact a range of people who rely on race meetings to operate.

I respectfully ask that you consider both the welfare improvements already implemented and the broader economic and personal impacts when assessing the future of greyhound racing in Tasmania.

For many of us, this is not just an industry - it is our profession, our income, and a significant part of our working lives.

And he finishes with:

Thank you for your time and consideration.

He is a member of my community, in a regional community.

I want to address the issue that sits at the centre of this debate: animal welfare. Let me be clear, animal welfare is not a peripheral issue, it is central. Without public confidence in animal welfare standards, the industry cannot and should not survive. The question before us is not whether animal welfare matters, but whether the greyhound industry in Tasmania is capable of meeting and, indeed, exceeding contemporary welfare expectations and whether it's doing so.

The evidence tells us that the committee has made substantial progress. Tasmania operates under one of the most robust greyhound welfare regulatory frameworks in the country. Mandatory whole-of-life tracking, injury reporting, kennel inspections, retirement and rehoming programs and strong penalties for noncompliance are now well established. These

are not token measures. They're substantive reforms that have required cultural change, financial investment and administrative effort, and it has been advised that the rate of injuries has declined.

Rehoming outcomes have improved significantly, veterinary oversight has increased, transparency has improved and independent scrutiny has strengthened. None of this happened by accident. It happened because government regulators and industry participants worked together, often under intense public pressure, to lift standards.

Reading from some information that was provided, it was stated that the greyhound code has a welfare problem. Upon investigation, the question was asked: how many licensed greyhound holders have been charged with welfare offences by the RSPCA or the controlling body? Do you know what the answer is? None. One animal welfare breach, no charges. So, tell me there's a welfare issue.

Within the current welfare framework, the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act* - and I'm not going to read it word for word because everyone can find it themselves - there's an independent Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner; an Integrity and Animal Welfare Advisory Committee that has stronger compliance, auditing and welfare powers; clear separation between commercial and integrity functions; mandatory reporting and transparency obligations. These reforms represent the most significant welfare and integrity overhaul in the industry's history. There's veterinary oversight, there's mandatory injury reporting and there's also the Tasmanian Greyhound Recovery Rebate Scheme, which I understand has been very successful. There's injury and euthanasia data, and Tasmania's historical injury trend. We received a number of figures, and there's an updated set of figures today, but I haven't included them in my contribution. I'm sure somebody else will - I had better leave something for somebody else.

Yet despite this progress, we now see a curious occurrence: the better the industry becomes, the higher the bar seems to be raised; sometimes beyond what is applied to comparable activities involving animals. We must ask ourselves whether we are holding greyhound racing to a standard of absolute perfection that no human activity can meet, or whether we are applying a fair evidence-based test of risk, harm and mitigation. I'd also caution against the tendency to conflate historical misconduct, which should be condemned and punished, with the current reality of the industry. Reform must be recognised if it is to be incentivised.

This brings me to the role of government. Governments have a responsibility to regulate, and they also have a responsibility to lead. Leadership, however, does not mean submission to the loudest voices. This means weighing competing interests, assessing evidence and making decisions that are fair and just. What concerns me and many who support the code is that the Tasmanian government has, in recent months, appeared to retreat from its previously stated support for the racing industry - and I tabled that letter earlier - including greyhound racing, in a way that creates uncertainty and undermines confidence. Statements have been hedged, commitments have been softened and the language of partnership has been replaced by the language of distance.

This may be politically expedient in the short term, but it carries real risks. First, it sends a message to industry participants that their government may not stand by them, even when they comply with the rules and invest in reform. Second, it encourages those who are not

interested in reform but in abolition, regardless of evidence or impact. Third, it creates regulatory instability, which discourages investment and accelerates decline. Finally, it sets a precedent that industries can be traded away as part of parliamentary negotiations rather than assessed on their merits.

I'd like to say something about the independents and Greens, whose position is often invoked in this debate, and they're absolutely entitled to their long-held position of opposing greyhound racing. That position is consistent with their broader views on animal use, and I respect the right of any party or representative of this parliament to argue their case, just like I am here. What I do not accept is that a minority position should determine the fate of a regulated, lawful industry without a full and honest accounting of the consequences. Diverse democracy requires compromise, but it also requires balance. It requires us to protect minority industries as well as minority viewpoints.

Now, let me turn to the human cost of policy retreat. When governments weaken support for an industry, the impact is not abstract. It's personal. In this instance, it is trainers deciding whether to exit the industry, it's breeders scaling back and/or walking away, it's young people not being able to choose to enter a field where there is no future. It is regional communities losing activity, identity and income. These decisions, once made, are not easily reversed, and we've seen this before in Tasmania - I don't really want to raise the war, but I will - in forestry, in manufacturing and in agriculture.

The lesson is always the same: unmanaged decline hurts people, and it hurts our communities. I also want to pop in this particular spot what the industry does for some of our communities and again some piece of the myriad of information that we received. This was from somebody involved in the industry, and it goes on to say:

The Premier also stated that the greyhound code does not have a social licence and over the last three years the greyhound code has put back into the community and supported with donations to Ronald McDonald House, the homeless in Launceston, nursing and aged care homes in Launceston through community lunches, sporting groups in Hobart and Launceston with events and a number of smaller donations.

They've estimated that approximately \$300,000 has been put back into the community, if you put that into a financial component. So to say that they don't give back to the community or they don't have a social licence, well, there's something that proves that they do give back.

I'd now like to raise some points in relation to compensation and the potential impacts on the state finances moving forward, and the New Zealand compensation information that's available at this point in time which I have a little bit of.

Now, I think some of it has moved since I had my first lot of information, but originally, from the interim committee report of May 2025, No. 96 of that report: the total cost of the transition over three years is estimated to be up to \$60 million, including rehoming, maintaining traceability, the establishment and operation of the transition agency, the implementation of its functions and ensuring participants are supported through the transition. There may also be costs incurred - they refer to it as the RIB, which is the Racing Industry Board in New Zealand - as they reduce staff numbers and drug testing volume. That's what they originally thought might be required in New Zealand. We've heard only in the past few

days that now it looks like it will be \$25 million a year in compensation for the next five years, so up to \$125 million. That's a lot of money.

I received an email, and I suppose most other people did, from a New Zealand person who had relocated to Queensland with their 80 dogs and their whole family. That was also funded in the transition arrangements from New Zealand, I understand. Transition support and funding is something that New Zealand is grappling with as we speak, and New Zealand has been regularly referred to as some sort of comparison for Tasmania. I have no idea how many dogs were part of the New Zealand greyhound racing industry, but I expect if one person alone had 80 - I understand there are three major trainer-owners in New Zealand, and as I said, one of them has relocated to Queensland.

That will take some working out if we're going to have a look at the New Zealand model, and it would have been perhaps an opportunity to do that, but with the time constraints that the joint standing committee had, and wanting to bring a report back to the parliament and, again, I acknowledge that everyone needed to know what was happening in the future, albeit I would have preferred to have taken some more time, but I put that on the record yesterday.

I also want to address the broader issue of consistency. Tasmania permits and regulates many activities involving animals: farming, fishing, equestrian sports, hunting, and wildlife management. All involve some level of risk to animals. All are regulated and all are subject to evolving standards. If we single out greyhound racing for exceptional treatment, we must be prepared to explain why. We must be prepared to defend that distinction on principle grounds, not just emotive ones.

Selective and spontaneous policies from government undermine public confidence. As legislators in the House of review, and I don't need to tell anybody here what their role is, but I believe our role is to determine whether the policy to support this legislation has been thoroughly consulted and any unintended consequences have been identified and explored before legislation is presented to the parliament. We heard yesterday from an organisation. To be honest, until a couple of weeks ago I'd never heard of lure racing: didn't have a clue. It's somewhat self-regulated. They have an overarching body, but it's somewhat self-regulated. The unintended consequences may potentially be sorted out by regulation at a later time.

Already we have an unintended consequence, and the rubber hasn't even hit the road yet. So, where to from here? My view, of course, is firstly the government should unequivocally reaffirm its support for the greyhound industry as a lawful, regulated activity in Tasmania, subject to ongoing improvement in welfare standards. Secondly, it should commit to stability in funding and governance arrangements so the participants can plan with confidence; thirdly, it should continue to invest in independent oversight, data transparency and that magic continuous improvement, not as a concession to critics but as a demonstration of leadership. Fourthly, it should engage respectfully with industry participants, recognise their expertise and lived experience; and, finally, it should resist the temptation to treat the industry as a bargaining chip in parliamentary negotiations.

Heading towards a conclusion, I'd like to conclude on a broader note: this debate is not just about greyhound racing, it's about how we govern in a contested policy environment. It's about whether we are capable of nuance or whether we default to absolutes. It's about whether we value evidence over ideology and people over posturing. The greyhound industry in Tasmania is not asking for immunity from scrutiny: it's asking for fairness. It's asking for

recognition of positive progress. We've seen it - positive progress. It's asking for a government that will stand by a lawful industry that employs Tasmanians, supports communities and continues to evolve. I believe that's a reasonable request.

I'd also like to acknowledge and thank all those Tasmanians who made contact - I have shared some views with members - and those who provided information to progress the ban or in support of the greyhound code and the continuation of racing in our state. Many of them have been heartfelt from both sides of the argument. It has certainly shown the deep interest from both sides of the discussion. I completely understand how people are invested in their position and acknowledge that whatever the outcome is, on whichever side of the debate you sit, that everyone shows respect for each other. Everyone. No dancing in the streets on either side because whatever happens here, we are going to disappoint a particular group. If I see any of that and if it's certainly on the side that I sit, I won't be happy. I won't be happy because it's not fair to do that.

I commend the many Tasmanians who work tirelessly to ensure the welfare of greyhounds, often in the face of criticism and uncertainty. We've seen that. We've seen that since the announcement. I mean, some of the people whom I have seen a number of times through my position on the greyhound inquiry transition committee, I have seen them just fade. They have faded from the time they first presented to the committee to when they came to this place on Tuesday morning. Now, it might be because they get up at 4.00 a.m. in the morning to feed their dogs before they traipse to Hobart to present again. It might well have been because of that, but they had faded. They had lost some spark and that disappoints me. It disappoints me that we've done that to our fellow Tasmanians. I urge the government to reflect carefully on the path it is taking. I urge this House to approach this issue with the seriousness, the balance and compassion that it deserves because, as I've said, there are going to be a lot of unhappy people regardless of what happens here, so we're going to have to really manage that process.

Where to now? That's a really good question. Where to now? It's been suggested that if the government stays on its policy and the bill doesn't pass, there'll be no regulation. It'll be a free-for-all. Well, that's rubbish. That's rubbish. I've heard that a bit today - rubbish. There is no way that Tasracing won't have an obligation under section 62 that requires Tasracing to make rules of racing, including greyhounds. If this bill doesn't pass there won't be a free-for-all. There will not. There will still be an obligation under the rules of racing. Take away the code funding if you like, but then they'll earn their own money, won't they? Because they already generate a reasonable amount of money back into the state coffers. Just the same, if people are so offended by the stake money that they receive - they've always been the poor relations. They've always received a lot less than harness and thoroughbred, significantly less for years and years and years. Take that away, but to tell me that there won't be an obligation for Tasracing to fully comply with the rules of racing under section 62, well, that is rubbish because it won't happen, can't happen, cannot possibly.

I said I was going to stay calm and I thought I did pretty well right until the end. I urge members - and I know they always do, I'm not telling you how to vote - I'm just saying have a look at what we've been presented with. Is it fair? Is it reasonable? I suggest no.

[9.21 p.m.]

Mr HISCUTT (Montgomery) - Mr President, in public life we are often confronted with decisions that test not only our policy judgment but our sense of fairness and proportion. The legislation before us today asks this parliament to take a step of considerable consequence: the

closure of an entire industry and the ending of a long-standing pastime for many Tasmanians. That is not a decision that should ever be taken lightly.

I preface the rest of this conversation by saying that until August last year, I had had no interaction with the greyhound industry to any extent. I had never been to a race. I wasn't aware of any breeders or trainers. I've had no involvement in activism against the industry, no understanding outside what a layperson hears in the media. This is to say that I came into this debate with a clean slate and no preconceived ideas.

Before making such a decision, we must ask ourselves several fundamental questions. How did we arrive at this point? What justification has been provided for such a significant change? Perhaps most importantly, does the legislation before us genuinely achieve the purpose it claims to serve? These are the questions that have guided my thinking as I have considered this bill and they are the questions I wish to address today.

Let's not sugarcoat how we got to this point. The great epic *The Odyssey*, written by Homer, tells the story of Odysseus's long journey home. One of the dangers he faced is the siren song, said to be so alluring that no-one who hears it can resist it. Odysseus, being as clever as he was, ordered the sailors to tie him to a mast so that he would be unable to go to the sirens and could resist their temptation. If only the Liberal Party had been able to resist their temptation to govern. Unfortunately, they had no-one to tie them to the mast and help them resist, and so, in a gambit for government, they gave in to that temptation, making deals with the Greens and members of the crossbench to gain power, changing a position that was taken to the election. I feel confident in saying that if the Liberals had won 18 seats, we would not be debating this bill today. I said in my inaugural speech that our role was not necessarily to block legislation that has a mandate to proceed. This legislation does not have a mandate. In fact, the opposite is true.

However, the reasons for how we arrived at this point are not ultimately relevant to the decision we must make today. Before us, we have legislation that will shut down an industry and a culture for many Tasmanians. This decision requires careful thought. It is an industry with a less-than-illustrious past. It involves the use of animals for the entertainment and money-making of humans. Of that there is no doubt. The question then becomes, how does one go about making a decision on legislation such as this?

First, I would like to commend my colleagues for supporting the motion put forward by the member for Murchison to have the relevant committee hold an inquiry into this bill. The bill that was put before us in December was untested and unproven. There had been no consultation with the industry and it was rushed. The inquiry at least gave those who should have had a voice the opportunity to have one, and to provide input into this legislation.

As I have said, the decision to bring this bill forward appeared driven by political gain. The sense of expediency was manufactured and without consultation the outcome would almost certainly have been bad for Tasmania. Before we debate a bill and decide on its outcome, we owe it to the people of Tasmania to ensure we are debating the best possible version of that legislation. The government has now declared some amendments that they plan to pursue. This shows that the bill was not right in the first instance. What a surprise. If only they had consulted and not rushed. What a wild idea.

I'm not convinced that the amendments address the issues. It provides for support for persons employed in the greyhound racing industry. What does that mean? We're just going to give them all a big hug? The government has since announced that it will be \$4.8 million. When the government is looking at spending \$65 million just to get a transport ticketing system going, then \$4.8 million will barely pay the consultants to figure out the actual number that it should be. Although the amendments make the bill better, I do not think that they make it good.

I would last like to ask the government specifically about this \$4.8 million amount. I would like to know who was consulted regarding this amount. Apparently the Racing Integrity Commissioner, who is responsible for the phase-out plan, including compensation, wasn't consulted, or so he said in a briefing this morning, and that departmental brief also didn't provide answers. So, who exactly did the Premier consult with before the announcement was made?

A letter from the Minister for Racing, the honourable Jane Howlett, received today, apparently says that the commissioner was consulted. Could the government please clear up this confusion? How was that number of \$4.8 million constructed, as it seems to have just been plucked from thin air? Perhaps it was all that was left over in the May Budget; I can only hope there was that much left over in the May Budget. According to the abovementioned letter, we have already spent \$500,000 just figuring out that initial amount that needs to be provided is \$4.5 million. I would like to have been that consultant. Could I please get a direct answer on who was consulted and how the number was decided upon? Will the industry be compensated at the value of their dogs and their infrastructure, or will it just be the dogs and the employee transition which are looked after, as that is what the amendment proposes?

The letter goes on to further say that Tasracing receives \$39 million per annum, and they will be able to fund some of this compensation from there. Well, this doesn't seem to be the story that Tasracing are telling. They have publicly stated that they would still require the full funding deed to run the other two codes. Who provided this piece of advice that they would be able to help fund the compensation? The inquiry itself, which recommended that amendment, also doesn't imply unity. In fact, most of the recommendations passed on a vote of only three to two and two dissenting reports. It hardly shows that a compelling case was put forward. However, we hopefully now have an improved bill, so now we must determine whether it is sound policy.

The next question I asked myself is: why? Why are we making this legislation? What is it trying to achieve? The argument that has been put forward is that it is about animal welfare. If that is the reason, then why now? If anything, the industry is in the best position that it has ever been in relation to animal welfare. Injuries and fatalities are some of the lowest in the nation, indeed among the lowest in the world. If animal welfare were truly the driving reason for this legislation, then there are other areas we might need to focus on first. For example, hundreds of animals die in backyard pools each year. I'm not sure of the Tasmanian figures, but it is estimated that up to 5000 pets may die in Australia annually in such circumstances. Yet I do not see the government advocating for the banning of pools.

One might argue that this is a sport rather than a recreation and they should be treated differently, but tragedies occur in sports as well. In sports such as cricket and football, there have been fatalities, human fatalities at that. Yet banning those sports does not appear to be a priority for the government.

The concept that this bill is based on animal welfare also doesn't hold up to the facts. Animal welfare has been increasing in the greyhound racing space. In answers given to the member for Elwick's question on notice, it was proven that within a full year of inspection of kennels, some 100 to 200 inspections occurred, with only one animal welfare incident.

Numbers of euthanasia are decreasing; accidents are decreasing; everything is trending down. The industry should be celebrated for its handling of animal welfare, not crucified. There are obvious exceptions where people are doing the wrong thing, and they should be reported and investigated; but when someone drives their car at 130 kilometres on the highway, we fine the individual, we don't ban cars.

I had a local resident email me with their story. They are a dedicated trainer in Burnie. Sorry, I have lots of local residents email with stories on both sides, but this particular one stated that they're a dedicated trainer in Burnie, along with their family. They treat their dogs as family. Recently they had to take a greyhound to the local vet for a routine investigation. After the check-up the vet said to them, 'When I die I want to come back as one of your greyhounds.' That's how well they were being cared for and looked after. This goes back to the crux of the matter. Why this legislation and why now? Has the industry deteriorated so significantly that after only a few years and after a raft of reforms that have not yet properly taken effect, it must now cease entirely?

The industry appointed a Racing Integrity Commissioner as a result of the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024*. As I understand it, that position exists to ensure standards are adhered to, to improve accountability and conduct, and to deal with complaints and investigations. These are noble goals. After a rigorous and well-constructed review, the Racing Integrity Commissioner was appointed in November 2024. Yet by August 2025 the government had already decided that the industry was unsustainable and needed to be banned.

If that is apparently necessary, I struggle to understand how, within roughly eight months of implementing that position, there has been sufficient time to properly assess its effectiveness. There certainly has not been time to significantly improve accountability and conduct. If there are issues with standards, then they should be dealt with. I do note that the commissioner is responsible for all racing codes, but the timelines here simply do not make sense. What it seems to be is a race to the bottom when it comes to a bad apple or two.

My motto has always been that a conversation doesn't hurt. When I was invited to a race meet in Launceston, I arranged a time to attend. Afterwards people asked me, 'How was it?' I was not quite sure how to answer because it was sort of exactly as I expected it to be: a group of dedicated individuals with their prize race dogs enjoying the activity. Both dogs and humans seemed in good spirits and the welfare of the dogs appeared well maintained.

Watching the dogs was fascinating. Their skill and athleticism should be admired and respected, but what stood out most was the camaraderie. Yes, there was competition, but people were helping each other. Those more able were helping those less able, and everyone was included. There was actually one thing that surprised me, and that was the diversity. There were young and old present, and I would even suggest that there were more women there than men, and all were able to get along.

As I spoke with people, I met a few from my electorate of Montgomery, some people I knew and I had no idea were involved in the industry. The stories they told about the anxiety

caused by this issue and the uncertainty about the future were very difficult to hear. Perhaps I just had a lucky night, or perhaps they were on their best behaviour, but I certainly didn't see anyone smugly rubbing their hands together, wondering how they might next inflict pain upon their dog.

Members know that I come from a farming background. You do not get a good product from an animal that is not well looked after. These dogs are well looked after and they have to be. They're elite performers. Perhaps some might say these individuals are not representative, and that the problem lies elsewhere, with breeders. I reached out to members of my community, a husband and wife who breed greyhounds, and visited their property. They called it a hobby, as they explained they did not make any money from it.

When I walked into their home they had two greyhounds inside: one a retired racer now living as a pet, and another, a current race dog, wearing a cast on its hind leg. Naturally, I asked how the injury had occurred, expecting, based on what we're often told, that it must have been from the race track. It was not. The dog had been running freely in a paddock, slipped and had an accident. 'You must be about to euthanise him,' I said, given what we've been told happens to injured greyhounds. No. They were rehabilitating the dog, and if he could not race again he would join the other dog on the couch.

I had my four-year-old son with me. We walked down to the kennels and the runs. The dogs were excited to see us. The runs were long with plenty of room for them to move about. Inside the shed, they could escape the heat. We spent time patting them while the owner explained that when the pups are born, she often sleeps in the kennels to help the exhausted mothers after giving birth. What I saw on that visit was devotion, dedication and care for their greyhounds. There was no deviousness, there was no deplorability, no dereliction of duty. Perhaps I was just lucky again, or perhaps the industry genuinely cares about its animals, and the unfortunate deaths of some of those dogs affect their owners just as deeply as the loss of any family pet.

Let's also talk about the economics of this: the claim is made that we are subsidising this industry at a cost of \$7.5 million, so we should ban it to recoup the loss. There are three ways that this argument doesn't stack up.

First, Tasracing has indicated that it will still require the entirety of the funding deed to operate, regardless of if greyhounds are indicated. This in itself should set any talk of financial benefit of shutting down the industry flat on its back. There will be no savings made if the greyhound racing industry closes.

Second, the greyhound racing industry will require compensation to close. The government's estimation of \$4.8 million is wildly optimistic. I fail to see how those who are advocating for this bill to be passed can trust this number when they claim every other number the government gives them will blow out by a factor of at least three.

Third, the industry actually generates money. Within its own industry, it is close to breaking even, but if you include the income generated to the government through tax revenue that the industry creates, it is a non-insignificant number. At a time of budget constraint, it's hard to think we should be shutting down a money-making industry.

What also concerns me, as a member for a rural seat, as was mentioned by the member for McIntyre, is that it has a disproportionate effect on our rural community. Greyhounds are seen as the punters' choice, the code that anyone can have a go at. You don't have to be a rich investor or a member of parliament to own a greyhound, unlike horse racing or other codes. It is potentially those less fortunate who will take the hit for those living in their inner-city ivory towers.

It is also evident in the correspondence we receive. I've received many proforma emails telling me to end the greyhound racing, that it's the morally superior choice. It's pretty easy to press a button. These people also have no stake in the game when it comes to this issue. To be fair, there are also some stories that show some reprehensible behaviour by the industry, but to be honest, most of them are talking about issues from many years ago and very few from my electorate. These issues should be reported and investigated.

On the other hand, I received dozens, if not a hundred emails with deeply personal stories from those involved in the industry and how they will be affected. Some are well written, and some are clearly from less educated backgrounds who are not sure how to articulate themselves in a parliamentary tone. I think this shows the dichotomy of who will be affected.

Where does that leave us? We now have, I believe, a better bill before us if the amendments pass, but it is still not a good bill. I do not believe I can support it. The justification for its existence lacks legitimacy. It is also rushed, has had no consultation, and goes completely against best practice. I am actually astounded that some members of this Chamber and the other place have sacrificed their integrity to good governance just because they believe in their cause.

We recently passed a bill relating to the Commission for Children and Young People last year. It was celebrated around this room that it was at version 27, or something like that. We all spoke about how good it was that the government had been back and forth with stakeholders to make it as perfect as possible. This bill is barely out of alpha. We in this Chamber should be howling down this process. If the shoe was on the other foot about another issue, I'm sure the people would be up in arms about it; hypocrisy laid bare.

I say all this with an important caveat. I do not believe the broader cause lacks legitimacy. Those who campaign against this industry are entitled to their views and I encourage them to continue advocating as they see fit, but the timing and reasoning provided by the government, as well as the rushed and terrible process, are not sufficient to justify the enormous impact this legislation would have on the people of Tasmania who are involved in this industry, especially people from regional Tasmania. Cull the bad apples, and have the Integrity Commissioner do their job in stamping out bad practices. If in another five years this important work has been going on to no avail, then relook at the issue, but it has not been given time to work. I keep hearing stories about the past. Let's instead look to the future.

Before this issue came before us, I had no experience and no understanding of the industry. I don't think I had watched a race and I didn't know anyone involved. My father tells me that the previous owner of our family home once had racing greyhounds, but this was long before I was born. I guess all this is to say that I never saw myself as the defender of the greyhound industry, and I went into this deliberation with a very open mind. Yet here we find ourselves.

I will not try to sway the opinions of others in this House, and I respect the decisions that the others come to, but I cannot support this bill.

[9.40 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I rise today to speak on the Greyhound Racing Legislation Amendments (Phasing Out Reform) Bill 2025 in what is, for me, an unusual position. I have sat with this legislation, read extensively, sought information from a wide range of perspectives, heard from industry participants and animal welfare advocates alike, and reviewed the substantial body of evidence that's been placed before us and also the joint sessional committee set up to oversee this transition. Yet, I find myself genuinely unable to form a final position on the merits of this bill. Not because the evidence is thin, but because the manner in which the decision was made has so fundamentally complicated my assessment of it that it's really hard to separate the two.

I do note, when the government first announced its intention to shut down the industry, I did not have a firm position either way. I've since vacillated between support and opposition, the more I have sought to engage in this issue. There have been thousands of emails on both sides of this debate, and I've read all of them. I haven't responded to all of them, but I have read all of them. What has led to some of this conflicting advice, data and meaning applied to much of the data. The high emotion and the disingenuous use of statistics on both sides at times have muddied the waters rather than created clarity. As such, I've still not reached a firm position.

I intend to use this speech to set out the full picture, as I understand it: the political context that brought us here, the process concerns this Council has already registered, the animal welfare advice on both sides, the economic arguments and their limitations, and the unresolved questions that remain outstanding. I do so in the hope that a complete and frank account of where things stand will be useful to all of us, to the government and to those who have a stake in this outcome.

Let me be clear at the outset about what I'm not doing. At this stage, I'm not opposing the bill. I'm not supporting it. I'm laying out what I believe every member needs to grapple with before a vote is cast. I'll listen to all contributions before we vote in the second and possibly third readings.

Mr President, the central difficulty I face, and I suspect I'm not alone in this, is that the Premier of Tasmania made an explicit pre-election commitment to the greyhound racing industry that his government would continue to support it. This was not a vague general statement of goodwill. It was a commitment made to people who run small businesses, who care for animals, who employ workers and live predominantly in regional Tasmania. It was made. It was heard. And it was acted on. Only three weeks later - not three months, not three years - three weeks later, that commitment was reversed. The government announced the phase-out of greyhound racing by June 2029.

Of course, the government is entitled to change its policy position, but reasonable people would expect that if such a reversal is to be made, the industry and sector participants would have at least been engaged, consulted and considered before such a complete change of position is confirmed. This did not occur and I absolutely appreciate the distress this has caused participants in the industry.

The change came not as a result of new evidence, not as a result of a recommendation from a regulator, not as a result of changed community circumstances, it came as part of negotiations to secure crossbench support in order to retain government.

I want to be careful here because I'm not suggesting the policy decision to phase out greyhound racing is necessarily wrong. This is a separate question. What I'm saying is that the manner in which it was reached without prior regulatory recommendation, without economic modelling as to what it would cost to phase out this industry, without advice from Treasury and in direct reversal of a commitment made a mere three weeks earlier is deeply troubling from the perspective of good governance and public trust.

When the member for Elwick asked whether any regulator had recommended the shutdown, the government confirmed no. Notice the decision to shut down greyhound racing was made in the government's own words, 'appropriately as a policy decision of government'. No regulator advice that the industry could not be regulated to acceptable welfare or integrity standards, no economic analysis or modelling was relied upon. The government says the decision reflects that greyhound racing no longer aligns with community expectations. That may be legitimate policy rationale, but it is difficult for any member of this place, in my view, to hear that stated as if it was self-evident, where no community consultation of any kind had preceded that decision, particularly with those who were most directly impacted.

I also reflect on the fact that legislation that has a direct impact on a small sector of our community must ensure that their voices are heard, regardless of whether we support or oppose their position. In this case, it is the participants of the industry and the organisations who rehome greyhounds. That broken promise and the manner in which it was done without any consultation or discussion with those directly involved is not something I take lightly, nor should anyone in this place. How we legislate matters as much as what we legislate.

We have already made the point clearly by referring the bill to the joint select committee rather than allowing it to be rushed through at the end of last year. The referral to the joint committee was appropriate. The bill proposed the closure of an industry that's been part of Tasmania's community for over a century. It affects the livelihoods of around 900 industry participants and 480 direct employees, and many more in regional supply chains. The closure of an industry demands careful and comprehensive scrutiny. I have concerns about whether the scrutiny that has been provided has been adequate.

The committee received close to 150 submissions, broadly split between those supporting and those opposing the phase-out. That alone should have signalled the depth of feeling on both sides, and our emailing boxes attest to that story. This is a particularly deeply polarising issue with no apparent middle ground.

The committee only held three public hearings totalling five and a half hours, with industry representatives with the most to lose and the biggest direct impact given two hours and 15 minutes to present their case.

The committee also reported before receiving an independent economic analysis commissioned by Tasracing from consultant Ben Sellenger. Mr Sellenger is principal of Align Sport & Media, a Melbourne-based consultancy with more than two decades of experience in economic and social impact analysis of sport. He is not an unknown figure in the Tasmanian racing context. The industry's documents disclose that he had previously undertaken a separate

review of the Tasmanian racing industry at the direct request of the Racing Integrity Commissioner, Sean Carroll, and he did confirm that in the briefing this morning before being subsequently engaged by Tasracing to prepare what is described as an analysis of the economics and future of the racing industry, among other work he's doing.

The second body of work, the economics and future of the racing industry, was still in preparation when the committee reported. Finding 29 of the committee stated Tasracing is conducting a feasibility study on the impacts of the greyhound racing transition. It could well be an important source of detail that could and should inform this debate. I'm unsure where that report is up to. I did ask for some feedback on that in the briefing. I also note the only reference I can find related to Mr Sellenger, except for the comments in the briefing today, is in the current commission's industry advocacy documents. It would be helpful to know where that's at and if it is reasonably likely to be available anytime soon. It is not clear, as I said, whether it has been finalised. The government's answers to questions on notice make no reference to it, but the process concern that arises is real, regardless of what the report may ultimately say.

The committee was presented with one substantial independent economic analysis, the Eslake report, commissioned by a coalition of 12 animal welfare organisations who, Mr Eslake was clear, did not influence his report. But there was no equivalent analysis commissioned by the industry that would allow the committee to test competing methodologies and conclusions side by side. That's a challenge and that's a problem because all of these things are contested. This is what makes it so hard to reach a decision because whom and what do we believe? The committee knew a Tasracing commissioned an economic analysis and that was in preparation, and it chose to report before that analysis was available. Maybe it was months away, I don't know. Whatever the merits of either analysis might have been, the result was that the economic study before the committee was asymmetric. One side of the ledger was independently assessed, and the other was not.

I hope that the Deputy Leader can inform the House as to where Mr Sellenger's report is at and whether it will be, even in draft form, available to the members before we vote. If the government is serious about the claim that a decision to phase out greyhound racing is evidence-based, it should have no difficulty in supporting the release of relevant economic analysis, including analysis that may be uncomfortable toward its position.

Since the committee reported, the government has committed to including compensation provisions in the bill with a funding package to be outlined in the budget. We did just get a letter from the Minister for Racing sometime during the afternoon, who knows what time that was. It alludes to a figure that the Premier announced a day or two ago, \$4.8 million in the budget. I did ask him when he rang me to ask if he had any questions. I said to him, 'Is that over four years? How was it determined? Where's the modelling that shows that it'll be adequate? What's the purpose of that allocation?' We can see from this letter that it's \$1.5 million over the forward Estimates each year. It's really unclear as to how that figure was arrived at. It does say in the letter in relation to how the figure was arrived at - this is in the 2025 so-called interim budget, the 2025 Budget - to provide initial provision of \$500,000 to support the greyhound racing phase-out implementation, but where did that come from? How was that determined? Where's the modelling? If we're going to make a decision that says there's an economic benefit to do this, we need to see what the economic benefit actually is. If it's likely, as the Premier said, 'Well, that's just a start, this funding. Just a start. There may need to be more', then how much more? At what point does it become not an economic benefit to the state? I hope - and I did ask the Premier that when he rang me in all good faith, and I haven't

heard - except for this letter from the minister that doesn't tell me anything we didn't already know, effectively, except that it's definitely going to be spread over four years, but no indication of how that number was arrived at.

I do want to understand more about that modelling, how it was done, if it was, what advice was sought from Treasury - one hopes that Treasury are consulted on these things, but we know that that's not a necessary way the government approaches decision-making and big matters in this state. I do need to understand what the likely cost of the state will be before I can form a firm decision on this bill.

I do acknowledge that this is a meaningful response to one of the major concerns raised by myself and others about supporting the industry. There are some people who think they shouldn't be compensated at all in the industry, but when you make a decision like the way it has been done - and we've done it for other sectors when we've changed their industry, not closed it, like the forestry industry. We didn't close it down, it changed the way it was. It bought out some of the contracts, et cetera. It was the right thing to do, so it's difficult for me to make a decision when I only have part of the story.

The Racing Integrity Commissioner has indicated it may take two or three years to determine the appropriate compensation, and he did say that was part of his job in putting together the transition plan. He did say he wasn't consulted, as the member for Montgomery mentioned, on this amount, the \$4.8 million. The minister says he was. Yet again, who's telling the truth here? Whom can I trust?

Industry estimates of asset values of racing dogs varied between \$10,000 and \$200,000. I've heard figures of brood bitches between \$10,000 and \$50,000, kennels representing hundreds of thousands of dollars in upkeep and investment. I do make it clear this is not a trivial matter. A commitment to compensation without the detail around how it has been established and the framework to how it was calculated is not actually certainty for industry participants who reasonably require some level of certainty around that, in my view. And this thing, 'trust us, we'll sort it out in the regs or in the transition plan'? Well, they did trust. The industry did trust the Premier when he gave what they thought was a rock-solid guarantee that he had their backs, so I can understand the people who don't believe or trust the government.

We all know that the state budget is in a precarious position, unless you have been living under a rock, so it is important that we understand what the impact is. When we consider findings 30 to 36 of the committee, the cost of this cannot be ignored. It needs to be understood before we can make a fully informed decision.

Finding 30 talks about: 'Consideration of compensation must be included in any transition/closure plan'.

Finding 31: 'Compensation may be required and funded at different stages of the transition'.

Finding 32: 'More than one thousand ex-racing greyhounds will need to be rehomed during and following the transition period'.

Finding 33: 'The rehoming of ex-racing greyhounds will be a substantial complex and costly endeavour both during and following the transition period'.

Finding 34: 'Local rehoming organisations have expressed a willingness and capacity to undertake the task of rehoming ex-racing greyhounds but will require extra sustained resourcing'.

Finding 35: 'Currently, non-industry rehoming organisations are not funded to rehome greyhounds exiting the industry and they have relied on community funding to do this work to date'.

Finding 36: 'Rehoming organisations will need to be adequately funded by Government to assist with the humane transition of dogs out of greyhound racing both during the transition period and at closure, until all dogs are rehomed'.

There are several points there and I commend the committee for outlining these points. That all costs money. What modelling has been done about how much will be needed, or is it just taken on trust? I don't have a lot of trust in the financial management of the state at the moment. We need to have some idea at least of the likely costs associated with these measures, not just be told, trust us, it'll be in the budget, if they need more, we'll give it to them. It will be too late then to make a truly informed decision if we have to wait for the budget, although we have some indication of what is going to be in it now. It's unusual. They can give matters in the budget when it suits. I was thinking of other questions asked today and we were told to wait for the budget on 21 May. Wait for the budget.

I now want to turn to the important matter of animal welfare because this is the primary policy rationale advanced for this legislation, and it deserves careful attention. I'm going to start with what the data actually shows, or as much as I can, rather than the contested interpretation of it. The government's own response to questions on notice provides a 10-year longitudinal record of greyhound euthanasia in Tasmania. The numbers are striking. In 2016, 635 greyhounds were euthanised across all categories. By 2025, that figure was 33, so from 635 to 33. There were some legislative provisions that changed during that period that resulted in that, but that shows you what can be done when you change the law. This is a reduction of approximately 95 per cent over a decade. Well, that's a very good outcome. Even setting aside the 2016 figure, which was elevated by a legacy audit, we're informed, the decline has been sustained and dramatic. That's very good news.

The largest reductions of categories that had most troubled animal welfare advocates, dogs euthanised as not for raising or not for rehoming: in 2016, 215 dogs were euthanised as not for racing and 199 as not for rehoming. By 2021, both those categories had reached zero. That was again, because of a change of policy, change of rules, and they've remained at or near zero since. This transformation reflects rule changes that required justification before any greyhound could be euthanised rather than rehomed: changes that worked.

On-track deaths from racing industries fell from 29 in 2016 to four in both 2024 and 2025. We don't really want or expect to see any dog or any animal die on a track. We see horses put down on a track. The one time I did go to the races, the Devonport Cup years ago at the badgering of a friend of mine, a horse broke its leg right in the front of the home straight and had to be put down in front of us. They put the screen around. It's awful. No-one wants to see that. Training injury euthanasia fell from 10 in 2016 to one in 2025. The industry's claim that injury rates have fallen by over 25 per cent in the last five years is consistent with that data.

The kennel inspection record since the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024* commenced on 1 February 2025 is also notable. Of 135 licensed trainers, 131 have had their kennels inspected. One animal welfare breach was identified, and we did ask Mr Carroll about this in the briefing, or it might have been the department - it was Mr Carroll - before the introduction of the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act*, were these inspections not done adequately or often enough? He suggested that they weren't done as often or as well as they should have been. So, clearly, they've lifted their game here, which is important. There's been one animal welfare breach. The other breaches, as I understand, related to failing to fill in forms properly and things like that.

There have been breaches of those racing rules primarily relating to record keeping, which can be dealt with through education and rectification. With all due respect to a lot of the people engaged in the industry, and I say this with the deepest respect for people, a lot of them aren't overly highly educated. Filling out lots of forms can be a challenge and if you make a mistake or an omission on it, that's a breach. We do need to work on education and rectification, those sorts of areas, whatever area it is, not just throw the book at them. When you look at those figures, this is not a picture of an industry ungovernable on animal welfare grounds.

The Dogs' Homes of Tasmania and correspondence provided to the member for Elwick confirms that of the seven greyhounds euthanised in 2024-25 that came through their facility, all were euthanised for severe dog aggression, meaning they pose an unmanageable safety risk in the community. It is not clear if this was due to their experience in the racing industry or inherent in their nature. There are a lot of dogs for the Dogs' Homes to deal with, other breeds that can or are euthanised for the same reason. The average length of stay for greyhounds in that facility was 49 days compared to 20 days for all dogs, reflecting the socialisation work required for dogs transitioning from the racing environment. We did hear more about that in our briefings.

The Dogs' Homes operates this program without government funding and relies on its foster network, a point worth acknowledging. I do acknowledge the work that they do, and I do acknowledge the committee's finding that said they should be funded to do the work.

I also want to be equally clear about the concerns that have been raised, because they are genuine and they are not dismissed by the positive trend data. I'm trying to provide both sides of this. I'm not making a judgement, I'm just putting out what information we've heard.

There was a 2013 parliamentary inquiry -

Ms O'Connor - 15.

Ms FORREST - 2015? I thought it was 2013?

Ms O'Connor - No, we started in 2015 after *Four Corners* and then reported in 2016. I'm pretty sure.

Ms FORREST - Whatever year it was - into greyhound racing in Tasmania that documented live baiting, neglect and conditions that were, by any account, unacceptable. But live baiting wasn't found to occur in Tasmania. It was triggered by an ABC program that showed live baiting, which was occurring in New South Wales, is my understanding of that.

But those findings from that committee prompted a range of reforms, some of which have contributed directly to the improvement in euthanasia data, as I've just described.

But the Greens have argued that the Animal Liberation of Tasmania report *A Few Bad Apples*, covering the period from August 2023 to July 2024, provided evidence to support that systemic problems have not been fully resolved.

Individual incidents documented in parliamentary debate, including euthanasia of Raider's Guide following cervical spinal injuries in July 2025, continue to demonstrate that greyhound racing carries inherent injury risks that no amount of track improvement will eliminate. I say no amount of track improvement - that's assuming the tracks are still curved. We did hear some evidence that a straight track would be far safer than getting dogs to run around corners.

However, I do find some of the misrepresentation of data relating to euthanasia of greyhounds in recent media and by some members inappropriate and disrespectful to industry participants, who are feeling very vulnerable at the moment.

I wish to read part of an email relating to this matter, as I think we should be careful and sensitive to be accurate with the data in such an emotive debate - for both sides of the debate. Whilst it might not have been said directly, the inference was that the dogs named in an opinion piece in the *Mercury* and in comments made in this place - that was the innuendo: that dogs were euthanised at the track or as an immediate result of racing industries.

I just want to read a little of Tash Croft's email that she sent, and I did ask permission to use her email and identify her. She wrote, in part:

I want to set the facts straight in regards to our beautiful girl Marley, also known as Why Sparky. *The Mercury* newspaper published a story about greyhounds in *The Mercury* newspaper on 10th of April with regards to our girl Why Sparky. She was one of the dogs named in the article on Friday the 10th of April as deceased. Yes, she raced on the 2nd of April this year, that was her last race start.

She then added crying and broken heart emojis, and went on:

Yes, she was four years and 25 days old.

Tash then outlined the very sad and extremely stressful period that followed between the following Friday and Saturday when she and her partner sought emergency veterinary care for their dog. She wrote about this:

Our beautiful girl Marley wasn't responding to the medication -

This is after she'd seen the vet and treatment.

... and treatment. An ultrasound was performed and they suspected a twisted intestine. Sepsis had set in. We then had to make the devastating and heartbreaking decisions to euthanise our beautiful girl Marley.

That's the true facts in regards to our beautiful girl Marley. She did not die of an on-track injury.

Natasha then posed a couple of questions, and I think it's relevant to read these out because these people are feeling pretty under threat at the moment. She says:

- (1) How did the publisher, the author of the article, find out our information before the steward's report was made available to the public Friday afternoon?

That's not good.

- (2) How did the publisher find out about our beautiful girl's race name to search 'Fast Track'?

'Fast Track' is their online reporting.

- (3) And know she was deceased? There are millions of dogs on 'Fast Track'.
- (4) They would have had to know our girl's race name or the trainer's name to search Fast Track.

We want the truth to be heard, not the misleading information surrounding the deaths of our greyhounds.

That's pretty distressing to feel like you have to respond to that. Whilst the author of that opinion piece didn't specifically say Why Sparky died at the track as a result of an injury, it was the inference. It was in the list of dogs that inferred that and it was quite distressing. I'm sure every member got that email and if you read it, it shows the very torturous and terrible time they had going to the vet, waiting outside, the dog having a seizure, being rushed in. You can only imagine, with any pet -

Ms Rattray - Something like five hours, wasn't it?

Ms FORREST - Yes, well, it was a pretty rapid decline. These are serious issues that happen not just for greyhounds, but other dogs. Humans too.

Despite what many in the community say, based on other emails I've received, Natasha dearly loved her dog and to have her death misrepresented or inferred in this way at such a time has been devastating to her and her partner. I absolutely agree, animal welfare is critically important, as is respecting our fellow humans. Let's show respect for both.

I will move on now to what I note is also a structural concern about the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024* that deserves some acknowledgement. Some of these points go back to when we debated this in 2024.

The act consolidated day-to-day animal welfare enforcement within Tasracing, a commercially driven organisation whose overarching legislative purpose is to provide the community with a viable future for racing in Tasmania.

Animal welfare advocates argued during the bill's passage that embedding a welfare and integrity function inside a commercial entity creates an inherent tension and that the Racing Integrity Commissioner's role, while important, is primarily advisory and referral-based rather than directly enforcement-based. There were legitimate concerns about that and it possibly needs looking at as well.

I would add, however, that the act also established an integral animal welfare advisory committee with RSPCA representation, introduced a new independent commissioner and expanded the inspection regime in ways that the data suggests have had an early positive impact.

The question is not whether the architecture is perfect - it's not, I don't think any regulatory framework is perfect all the time - but whether it has been given adequate time to demonstrate its effect before the phase-out decision was made.

This brings me to what I consider one of the most significant unanswered questions in the debate. The *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024* commenced on 1 February 2025. The Premier announced the phase-out on 10 August 2025, six months later. This bill passed the House of Assembly on 4 December, 10 months after the commencement of the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act*.

The reforms in this act were the most substantial overhaul of Tasmania's racing regulatory framework in two decades. They were the product of recommendations from the Monteith review and the Murrhy investigation, which had exposed serious integrity and welfare failures that the old regulatory model was unable to address.

The 2024 act was presented to parliament and supported by the government. The same government is now proposing to phase out one of the codes, greyhounds, as the framework that would deliver improved welfare and integrity outcomes has hardly had a chance to prove itself. The government's own 2024 election platform described it as delivering the largest integrity reforms in decades, and good on them. It covers all three codes. To pass that act in 2024 and have it commence in February 2025, and then announce the phase-out six months later, before a full year's data under the new framework was available, does raise a question that has not been satisfactorily answered either. Was the new regulatory framework actually given the time to prove itself or not?

I hear the points and I'll come to those about the social licence and community expectations, but the industry makes this point forcefully and I think it's a fair point: the animal welfare data cited to support the phase-out decision is overwhelmingly pre-dating the act and the implementation of the act. That's where the bad numbers are, absolutely, and unacceptable numbers, absolutely. The improvements shown in the data were achieved under previous frameworks. Yet we do not know yet what the racing integrity act would have produced over a full cycle of operation because it hasn't had a full cycle yet - a whole year - including all your breeding data and everything that goes with that.

There was a broader context to the animal welfare debate that I believe deserves acknowledgement too, and which does not diminish genuine concern for greyhounds but perhaps helps put it in proportion. The RSPCA is Tasmania's principal animal welfare enforcement agency authorised under a service level agreement with the government to investigate cruelty complaints across companion and domestic animals. According to RSPCA

Tasmania's own budget submissions to government, its inspectorate receives approximately 3000 cruelty reports per year. That's a sad indictment on us as humans. The national RSPCA statistics for 2023-24 confirm that RSPCA Tasmania investigated 2702 cruelty complaints in that year alone - a figure that exceeds the national average on a per capita basis. That's not good. We need to have a good, hard look in the mirror. The vast majority of those complaints concerned dogs of all breeds, followed by cats and sheep. I'm surprised cows aren't there, to be fair, because there's been some pretty unfortunate instances of animal welfare issues with cows as well. They reflect neglect, abandonment, insufficient food and water, injury and abuse across the general companion animal population.

In 2023-24, RSPCA received 130 dogs through its facilities, down from 162 the prior year. Of those, 12 were euthanased, all for medical or severe behavioural reasons, and 31 were rehomed. These are small numbers for a state population of our size and they reflect the work of an organisation that has been chronically underfunded. This was raised during the 2024 legislation and other times as well. Its core inspectorate funding was frozen at \$550,000 from 2018 until 2023, well below what is required to deploy inspectors safely in pairs, and well below the per capita funding provided to comparable agencies in other states. That's not good enough.

By contrast, the greyhound code generated eight animal welfare complaints to the Racing Integrity Commissioner in all of 2024-25, and three in the first eight months of 2025-26. Whilst I've mentioned one animal welfare breach was substantiated across 131 kennel inspections since February 2025, I'm not drawing this comparison to minimise what happens to greyhounds, I'm drawing it to make a different point: if we're genuinely concerned about animal welfare in Tasmania, the evidence suggests the most acute unmet need is not necessarily or only in the greyhound code, where the new regulatory framework is actively operating and producing results, but in the broader companion animal population, where an unfunded inspectorate is stretched beyond its capacity to respond to thousands of reports each year.

A decision to phase out greyhound racing on animal welfare grounds sits uncomfortably alongside the record of inadequate investment in the agency responsible for enforcing animal welfare standards across all dogs in this state. This inconsistency is not an argument for or against the bill, but it's an argument for the government to be honest about the breadth of its animal welfare obligations and to fund them accordingly.

Of critical interest to me, and I'm sure other members too, is the economic argument. The economic debate surrounding this bill has been, at times, more heat than light, and I'd like to try to set up both sides as fairly as I can while being honest about where the analytical weaknesses lie.

The pro-phase-out economic case has been the one most rigorously made by independent economist Saul Eslake. His analysis initially prepared in May 2025 and further developed in a presentation to the joint committee in September 2025 drew out figures from the industry's own commission reports. On that basis, he concludes that greyhound racing contributes approximately 0.2 per cent of Tasmania's gross state product and 0.2 per cent of total employment, figures he described as no more than 'rounding errors'.

Government funding of the greyhound code increased by 90 per cent in real terms over the past decade, while race meetings declined, starters declined, attendance fell by more than 10 per cent, and wagering, in 2024-25, was 22 per cent below its peak. From Mr Eslake's

analysis, government funding per job sustained has roughly doubled over the decade, even on the industry's own figures. Critically, Mr Eslake also draws on the Western Australian cost-benefit assessment of Stephen Walters, former chief economist of J.P. Morgan Australia, the New South Wales Treasury and the Business Council of Australia, which found greyhound racing in Western Australia reduces overall economic welfare by \$36 million in 2025-26, with a cost-benefit ratio of 0.79. That's less than one, just in case you're wondering, but I note it's still better than the stadium cost-benefit ratio - the member for Hobart wasn't listening to that, but anyway. Mr Eslake argues that there was no reason a comparable Tasmanian assessment will produce a materially different result, particularly given Tasmania's greater government dependence.

The industry's rebuttal is substantial and cannot simply be dismissed. Its most important argument concerns the historical basis of the funding arrangements. The Tasmanian government's ongoing financial support for the racing codes is not an ordinary subsidy. It is the product of a 2009 racing industry funding deed struck in order to maximise the sale price of TOTE in 2012 - the member for McIntyre and I were here at the time; I'm sure she remembers it well. Every other Australian jurisdiction had privatised its TOTE and arranged for the betting agency, not the government, to fund the racing codes on an ongoing basis. That's where it started.

Ms Rattray - I think somebody had a nose for it, if I recall.

Ms FORREST - Yeah, you did. Tasmania retained that responsibility, effectively trading away future obligations in exchange for a higher sale price at the time. Yes, I was here, and that legislation was passed. The industry argues, perhaps with some justification, that framing what is essentially a contracted government obligation as a taxpayer subsidy misrepresents the underlying financial architecture. So, you have to go back in history and look at how it all came about. That's how it happened.

The industry also argues that Mr Eslake omitted the most significant item of revenue attributable to greyhound racing: the \$8.4 million in race fields fee revenue generated in 2024-25, which they say will be entirely lost when greyhound racing ends. Adding that revenue, along with attributable sponsorship and the point of consumption tax, produces a net loss for the greyhound code of approximately \$1.6 million rather than the \$3.2 million net cost figure that's featured predominantly in this debate. I just put these out there because they're contested. It's a bit hard to know what the actual reality is and why Mr Sellenger's report would be very helpful to have.

A substantial component of the shared cost allocated to greyhound racing - depreciation, facility management, administration - will continue regardless of the outcome of this bill, whether or not the code continues to operate, because they're shared facilities in some cases.

On multipliers, Mr Eslake's critique of the IER methodology is well founded and supported by multiple authoritative sources, including the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Victorian Auditor-General and the Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance, all of which have noted that input-output multipliers tend to overstate economic impact. Even the IER itself conceded in its November 2024 report that much of local resident spending would likely substitute to other activities if racing ceased. The industry's claim of \$59.7 million in total economic contribution based on those multipliers should be viewed with appropriate scepticism.

What I can say with confidence is this: the economic picture is genuinely contested. The methodology matters greatly and the government has yet to produce its own economic modelling. I'm confident of that, the rest of it I'm not so sure about.

As an industry employing around 490 direct employees and over 900 in participants, 89 per cent of whom are from regional Tasmania, where alternative employment is not always readily available, it does deserve rigorous and independent economic assessment, more than what has been produced. I live in and represent the rural and regional electorate of Murchison, which is, for those who don't remember, far, far away from Hobart. It is far away from the Greater Hobart area, where the vast majority of emails seeking support for the ban in this industry originate. Not everyone identifies where they're from, but a lot of people do, which is really helpful. If you go back and ask them where they're from, they'll usually tell you, which is helpful.

As members are all aware, my electorate encompasses much of the north-west coast and its rural hinterland. The geographic distribution of this industry matters to me directly when the industry tells me that 89 per cent of economic activity occurs in regional Tasmania. That's not some random abstract figure; it's a reality for the people I represent. It is trainers and kennel hands in small towns, it's vets, it's feed suppliers, it's people for whom the income from greyhound racing is part of a portfolio of rural livelihoods, not a single profession easily replaced. The majority of representation I've had from my electorate are in support of the industry and oppose the bill. There are some who oppose it in my electorate, but the vast majority are on the other side, because country people have different ways of living and if you're not amongst it, you don't actually understand that.

The government's commitment to ensure no healthy greyhound is euthanised, as a result of the phase-out, is welcome and important. But what has been committed to the people, not the animals, who will be displaced, is far less clear. The compensation framework that I've spoken a little about is now, in some measure, committed to, but there is a lot of 'trust us' in developing what it actually looks like. I absolutely understand why the industry players don't trust the government.

For a trainer who has invested their savings in kennels and racing dogs, a promise of compensation to be determined over the next three years, without any real indication of what it relates to and how it will work, is not much comfort. This is an intergenerational pastime for many people. I know you've all met Ben Englund - I've been to his kennels, he lives and has his kennels quite near - well, everyone lives pretty close to each other in Wynyard, I suppose. There's multigenerational participation there. I'm not a fan of greyhound racing or any form of racing, and I'm not really a fan of dogs with big mouths and teeth either, by the way, having been bitten more than once. I felt that it was not a set-up thing. I just dropped in one day when I was going past and what he described to us in the briefings is what I observed - not the photo that I saw on the screen in a briefing, whatever day it was.

I note that the thoroughbred and harness racing codes are also affected by this decision. They are not, though. They are not being phased out. The industry argues, and this claim has not been directly refuted, that greyhound racing accounts for 54 per cent of Tasracing's racing content, underpinning sponsorship and broadcast agreements. The cross-code financial interdependency of a tri-code organisation in a small state like Tasmania is real. So, what does happen to thoroughbred and harness racing if the greyhound code is removed? We have heard

different things here - that it's going to be a cost-saving thing, but then we're going to have to use all the same amount of money to support those two codes. What is it?

Ms O'Connor - That's what Tasracing says.

Ms FORREST - Yes, I know.

Ms O'Connor - It's not up to them, really - through you, Mr President.

Ms FORREST - No, but that's the point. There's no certainty about any of this. We're making an economic argument. I know it's not just an economic argument. I'm trying to make all the different arguments and try to find a way to a decision here.

Whether the government has modelled that impact is not clear. There are questions that remain unanswered in that space.

I also want to acknowledge the community opinion dimension, because it has featured prominently in this debate and is important, and not to be glossed over or ignored at all. Polling conducted by the EMRS found 74 per cent of Tasmanians support the Premier's announcement following the phase-out decision in August 2025. An earlier 2023 EMRS poll found that 60 per cent of those surveyed opposed greyhound racing, with only 11 per cent in support. The 2022 parliamentary petition calling for an end to public funding of greyhound racing received 15,519 signatures, confirmed as the largest e-petition in the parliament's history. That is public sentiment, the numbers are there.

These figures speak of a genuine shift in community sentiment and I take this very seriously. At the same time, I note that the community polling on industry closures, particularly when framed around animal welfare concerns, does not always reflect the full range of views about how such a closure should be conducted, at what cost and on what timeline. You can easily ask people about a matter they may have no interest in and they make a decision based on gut instinct rather than having all the facts - that's our job here, to try to get the facts.

Over 900 participants and 480 employees whose livelihoods are directly at stake are also members of the community. An absence of significant prior community consultation before the announcement, or at least some sort of meaningful consultation with the industry players, means that we're responding to polling on a decision that was already made rather than using polling to inform the considered policy development process. I say that, acknowledging that before the announcement it was 60 per cent, so it was already a majority.

I want to say something about community sentiment that goes beyond the polling figures, because I think that polling alone does not fully explain why this issue has the weight it does in the public mind, nor does it fully capture the competing human dimensions I've been wrestling with. There is a genuine and reasonable instinct in the broader community that a dog racing on a circuit not straight - particularly a dog like a greyhound, and with the body of a greyhound - but running a tight oval with bank turns is an animal being asked to do something that carries inherent risk of physical harm by design. A greyhound running at speeds at up to 70 kilometres an hour, turning sharply under centrifugal force, is placing enormous stress on limbs and joints that are bred for straight-line speed. The physics of the circuit matter, and they're not incidental to this matter. Track improvements, banking, service management,

veterinary oversight can all reduce the risks at the margin, and the data shows they have, but they cannot eliminate a risk that is structural to the activity itself.

I think the community understands this intuitively, even if they did not express it in those terms. When people say greyhound racing no longer aligns with their values, at least part of what they mean is that they are uncomfortable with an activity whose injury toll, however much reduced, flows directly from what the activity is, not from how badly or how well it's managed. We have talked about the inherent danger or risk and I accept that it's not an unreasonable position at all. Whether that can be mitigated by significant change to the way the dogs race is another question. It hasn't actually been fully considered and I know the industry said they would be open to those sorts of things.

I also want to say something about the people on the other side of the community sentiment because they deserve to be seen as clear as the polling numbers see them. I've heard from participants in the industry - trainers, owners, breeders - who have been part of the greyhound racing industry for 30 to 40 years. For some of them, this is not a primary commercial enterprise, it's their rhythm of the week. It's the reason they are at the track at five in the morning. It's an intergenerational connection, grandparents and grandchildren handling their dogs, learning from each other, sharing something that most of the rest of the community has no visibility of and therefore no particular reason to value.

For some of the people I've heard from, particularly many in rural communities where isolation and lack of structured activity carry very real mental health consequences, the routine of caring for and racing their dogs is not incidental to their wellbeing. It's central to it. I don't know whether members had a chance to read an email from a Vietnam veteran but I did respond to him in full terms because think this is a very real thing. You cannot ignore the humanity in this. I note that animal welfare and the need to care for animals and ensure that we don't put them in positions where harm is inevitable, which is part of the problem here, but we also need to think about the impact on the humans in this as well. I don't think we can legislate away an industry that serves that function without people at least acknowledging what we are taking away. We need to be honest about that. I think the government should have been far more upfront about that and give them a chance to actually have some input and feel like they weren't just railed right over after they had what they considered to be a rock-solid guarantee.

The participants that I'm most concerned about are those who have demonstrated over a long period of time that they are good operators, and one of those is Ben Englund and his family. They are the trainers who don't have a welfare complaint raised against them. They are people who took the reforms the last decade seriously. They invested in better kennels and better socialisation programs, and embraced the Greyhound Adoption Program as an obligation rather than a box that had to be ticked. There are people who've done everything they can to satisfy the needs of the community, of community expectation, and put a lot of time, money and effort into doing that, only to have - as they feel - the rug pulled out from under them.

The owners who, when the dog was injured, spent more on veterinary care than the dog would ever earn in prize money - these people, and there are many of them, are being asked to carry the reputational burden of the industry's worst actors. The conduct that drove community concern over greyhound racing over the years was real, but it was not universal and the people who behaved well throughout have been as much aggrieved by the outcome as anyone. It's a bit like if we have to deal with one bad politician it makes us all bad politicians.

Ms O'Connor - In the public's mind.

Ms FORREST - Yes, that's what I'm talking about. I'm talking about the public's view here.

There is one further dimension of community sentiments I just wanted to speak about. A significant part of the community's discomfort with greyhound racing is not solely about the dogs; it's about the gambling. Greyhound racing exists within a wagering ecosystem and for many Tasmanians the concern about the industry is inseparable from the broader unease about the social cost of gambling, the harm it does families, the way it extracts money from communities that can least afford to lose it.

The normalisation of wagering is entertainment, and I've made my views pretty much known on that in other forums as well. And this is a legitimate concern, too. Saul Eslake's analysis notes that a proper benefit-cost analysis assessment of greyhound racing would need to include the adverse consequences of gambling, which he cited the Western Australian assessment found to be relatively large. The industry funds itself through wagering. The government collects point-of-consumption tax from bets placed on greyhound races, including races in other states, and has confirmed it will continue to do so after Tasmanian racing ends.

That tension from ending the local industry on community values grounds while continuing to collect revenue from the same activity conducted elsewhere is one the government hasn't satisfactorily addressed or even referred to, and we see that in the Australian Capital Territory - you can do it and you just hop across the border, or New Zealanders can bet on Australian races [inaudible]. I raise this not to conflate the gambling question with the animal welfare question because they are very distinct, but I think it's important we are clear-eyed about the full range of factors shaping the community sentiment in this issue and I share some of those concerns about the gambling.

When 74 per cent of Tasmanians say they support the phase-out, some of them are thinking primarily about the dogs, some of them are thinking about the gambling and some of them are thinking about both. The weight we give to that figure depends, at least in part, on understanding which concern is driving it, and the polling does not disaggregate that for us.

So, all of this is to say that I find this debate genuinely hard - not because I lack conviction about the importance of animal welfare, nor because I'm indifferent to community sentiment, but because the picture I see when I look at this carefully is not the simple moral choice that some in this debate would have us believe it is.

There are real animals being harmed. There are also real people whose lives were built around caring for those animals and who have demonstrated that care over many years. There is a community that has shifted its values and there is also a government who broke its promise. There's a genuine economic question. There is a gambling question that shadows over the top of everything else. None of these things cancel out the others and I don't pretend they do.

I just want to briefly comment on the global trajectory for greyhound racing. New Zealand announced the phase-out in December 2024 with an end date of July 2026. Wales has made similar moves but only had one track and it wasn't in use. I don't think it's entirely comparable with Tasmania. The 2024 New South Wales Drake inquiry delivered a highly critical report, finding systemic cruelty and corruption, though it recommended reform rather

than closure. South Australia placed its industry on a two-year probation in 2023 following an inquiry that produced 87 recommendations. Western Australia is currently considering its options following a benefit-cost assessment showing a negative economic return. This is being looked at right around the country and around many parts of the world. The international trajectory is unmistakably away from greyhound racing.

Tasmania is not making this decision in isolation, but I know that the reforms consistently recommended by inquiries in other jurisdictions, including Tasmania's own 2013 inquiry, had been reforms, not blanket prohibition. This was a significant change from that.

The Tasmanian industry has implemented many of those reforms. The question this Council must weigh is whether that reform record, combined with a new regulatory framework now in place, was given sufficient opportunity to demonstrate whether prohibition is in fact necessary.

I've set out the picture as honestly and as completely as I can. I just want to summarise where this leaves me. I have no direct interest in this industry. I have no desire to attend greyhound racing or horse racing. I'm not conflicted in any way making my decision. I'm absolutely neutral on it. I recognise that an industry that does not have broad community support is an easy position to form for many people, myself included. This is an industry that has seen community sentiment and support decline and is now significantly low.

I've also heard the heartfelt pleas from those of the rural community who participate in the industry, an intergenerational activity, and a reason to get out of bed in the morning - members of our community who care deeply for and love their dogs and include three or more generations in the care and training of those greyhounds. I hear the love and care many in our community have for their greyhounds, many rescued and requiring significant investment in their socialisation and general wellbeing.

I hear the pleas of those engaged in the rescue and rehoming programs and the concerns continuing with this industry will put on these organisations and individuals. Animal cruelty in any form for any cat, dog, cow, sheep, goat, bird or other creature is not okay. Sadly, animal cruelty is not confined to one species or breed. I absolutely acknowledge the dedication and commitment of all those who work in this area: what they see can be truly heartbreaking. Animals do not have a voice. It is up to us to ensure that cruelty to any animal is never condoned or overlooked.

I and many other health professionals, police, teachers, community service workers see an enormous amount of cruelty to fellow humans as well, who, whilst they do have a voice, are often unable to use it; instances of family violence and abuse of children, for example. This bill is not about that, but I just want to raise the point that we all have a role to play in standing up to all forms of violence and cruelty.

I accept that the animal welfare concerns underlying this bill are genuine and have substance. They did not emerge from nowhere. The 2013, or whatever year it was, parliamentary inquiry into greyhound racing in Tasmania placed on the public record evidence that has, by any account, been deeply troubling. Those findings were a reckoning, and the reforms that followed were necessary and overdue.

The decade-long improvement to welfare outcomes since the inquiry is real, and it should be acknowledged honestly. The total euthanasia has fallen from 635 in 2016 to 33 in 2025, a 95 per cent reduction.

The categories of most concern to animal welfare advocates - dogs destroyed as surplus to racing requirements, dogs euthanased because they are deemed unhomeable without any independent oversight - have reduced to near zero. These are not trivial improvements, they're marked improvements. They reflect the sustained effort by regulators, by the industry, and by advocates who refuse to accept the status quo. They demonstrate that reform, when properly design and enforced, can produce meaningful changes in animal welfare outcomes. But I do not dismiss the evidence of harm, nor the community's concern about it. I want to be careful not to allow the improvement trend to carry more weight than it should.

A 95 per cent reduction in euthanasia is a remarkable achievement, but it does not mean that the underlying risks of the industry have been eliminated. Greyhounds are bred selectively for speed and musculoskeletal capacity, and race at high velocities in tight circuits. The physics of the activity produce injury rates that no amount of track improvement or regulatory oversight will reduce to zero. But animals - farm dogs and all that - are hurt and injured doing their work on the farms, too. There are many places where you can't reduce the harm to zero.

The data from the government's own questions on notice show the on-track and training injury euthanasia: dogs that die because of what happened to them while racing or being prepared to race has fallen substantially but has not disappeared. Sadly, other dog breeds are also euthanased in tragic circumstances at times, too, and much of that cruelty is not seen in the racing industry. This has not led to a suggestion, however, that we ban all other dog ownership, so, of course, we must take an evidence-based approach.

I also note the RSPCA Tasmania's concern expressed in October 2024 in their response to the Tasracing annual report that injury rates in the greyhound code remain unacceptably high and the transparency around post-racing outcomes is insufficient. I do not dismiss the evidence of harm, nor the community's concern about it. The RSPCA Tasmania is not some fringe organisation; it's the state's principal animal welfare enforcement agency, named in legislation and a participant in the Integrity and Animal Welfare Advisory Committee established under the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act 2024*. Its concerns about the adequacy of data reporting and ongoing rate of injury deserve to be weighted seriously and not set aside because the long-term trend is positive.

What this tells me is that the animal welfare question in this debate is genuinely difficult. It is not a question of whether the industry has improved - it has substantially and demonstrably. It is a question of whether the remaining harms are acceptable, whether the new regulatory framework has been given adequate time to address them, and whether prohibition is the only instrument capable of achieving animal welfare outcomes the community expects. Reasonable people, acting in good faith, can reach different conclusions on each of these questions. This is precisely why I find myself unable to treat this as a straightforward case in either direction.

I accept that the economic case for our continued public funding of the greyhound code is on balance weak, when viewed through the lens of straightforward fiscal analysis. The productivity of government investment in this code has declined and the cost per job sustained has risen. On Mr Eslake's analysis, drawing on the industry's own data, Tasmania funds

greyhound racing more generously than other jurisdictions and gets a lower economic return for that investment.

But I cannot easily set aside the manner in which that decision to phase out greyhound racing was made: a pre-election commitment reversed within weeks for political reasons, rather than policy reasons, without regulatory recommendations, without economic modelling, without Treasury advice and without community consultation. That is not how government should make decisions that affect the lives and livelihoods and wellbeing of hundreds of Tasmanians, the welfare of thousands of animals and the financial sustainability of an industry that has operated in this state for over a century.

I cannot easily set aside the timing concerning the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act*. This Council supported substantial investment and legislative reform that was described by the government as a framework that would deliver welfare and integrity outcomes - commenced on 1 February 2025. Six months later, the decision was made to end the industry. That's not an adequate period of time to assess whether the new framework is working. Welfare data from that six-month period, including kennel inspections, suggests that a single substantiated animal welfare breach - just one - from 131 inspections, suggests it was actually working.

I still have outstanding questions about the compensation framework, and I hope the Deputy Leader can provide some responses to that.

I also found it entirely inappropriate for the Racing Integrity Commissioner today to repeat, more than once, that we do not need to consider or scrutinise the relevant data to make the decision. I just found it extraordinary that he would suggest that we just ignore the data, because the data is hard to really ascertain, it's really hard to get to the bottom of it and he said twice, sitting across the table from me, 'You don't need to worry about the data, you don't need the data to make your decision'; well, yes, I do. Yes, I do. I want to look at the economics, I want to look at the animal welfare, I want to look at the community sentiment, I want to look at the time the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act* has had to work. I look at all things when I make decisions and where it's a decision I'm being called on to make where I really have had trouble to land, I don't find that helpful or professional or reasonable at all. This is not and has never been how I make decisions in this place. Data is important. Economic impact is important. Lived experience on both sides of this debate is important. Animal welfare is important. I won't go on.

Mr President, I will listen to other contributions. This has been another decision with polarised opinions in this state. I'll make my decision with an understanding of what is at stake for animals, for the participants, for the regional communities, some of which I represent, that contribute to and support this industry, for the integrity and accountability that democracy requires, noting the obligation that flows from seeking a mandate - a mandate that makes the commitments of elected governments mean something.

And one last matter. I do not know where this vote is going to end up. I genuinely don't, but I want to state very clearly: this bill, this vote, this policy, this matter has, again, divided many Tasmanians, some to the edge of their mental health and wellbeing. It's not about individuals in this parliament. We're not the ones who've got most to lose here. Emotive and at times misleading innuendo and statements do nothing to assist me in my decision-making. My vote and my decision is made on considering all of these matters and some I simply don't have time to cover and, as I say, my decision is not and will not be based upon how important it may

be to an individual member of another place who tells me how important it is to her. It's not about her. There are many. There are many matters that really matter to me and I try absolutely to avoid emotive, coercive and at times threatening approaches that I've witnessed by some here and in the community.

Regardless of where we stand, we must allow other members to make their own decision and not be fearful of reprisal from either side. I find this an extraordinary position to be in, and I'm getting tired of having such divisive, polarising debates in this place.

And one last matter: if this bill is successful, I urge the supporters of the bill to tone down reactions and social media comment as I genuinely fear that we will see some figuratively dancing on the graves of those who will lose so much - something that matters enormously to their mental health and physical health and wellbeing.

If this bill is supported and successful, I hope that we don't see photos on the front page of *The Mercury* and all over people's social media of people dancing on the graves of the people I represent. So, I hope people can contain themselves and if it goes down, the same applies to the industry because I think the member for Montgomery said, whoever said - sorry, it might have been the member for McIntyre - that on either side, there's going to be people hurting at the end of this.

Ms Thomas - It's like the stadium.

Ms FORREST - It is. It's just another polarising, divisive situation we actually didn't need to find ourselves in this way. So, I just hope people can think about that. I hope they can think about how they're approaching other members in this place. We make our own decisions and we do it the best way we can in doing so.

Do you want me to adjourn the debate? Oh, you're going to do it.

[10.55 p.m.]

Mr EDMUNDS (Pembroke) - Thank you, Mr President, and as mentioned, I am standing here to adjourn the debate, but I would like to acknowledge the very powerful and strong contributions of all members so far and I think they've set us up for a continuing, respectful debate into tomorrow. With that, Mr President, I move -

That the debate stand adjourned.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

[10.56 p.m.]

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

That at its rising the Council adjourn until 10 a.m. on Thursday 16 April 2026.

Motion agreed to.

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, before I move that the Council do adjourn, there are a couple of briefings scheduled in the morning. One is an attempt to hear from somebody who we couldn't connect with technically today and the other one has already been identified. So, it's 9 a.m. if members are able to attend and 9.30 a.m. for a brief one.

Mr President, I move -

That the Council do now adjourn.

The Council adjourned at 10.56 p.m.