

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA
DEBATES OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

DAILY HANSARD

Wednesday 2 September 2026

Preliminary Transcript

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UNCORRECTED PROOF

Wednesday 2 September 2026

The Speaker, **Mrs Petrusma**, took the Chair at 10 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People, and read Prayers.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Member for Braddon - Mr Ellis

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Premier) - Honourable Speaker, I advise the House that minister Ellis will be absent from Question Time today. In his absence, I will take questions in relation to his portfolios.

QUESTIONS

Risdon Prison Kitchen Renovation

Mr WILLIE question to MINISTER for JUSTICE, CORRECTIONS, and REHABILITATION, Mr BARNETT

Eight weeks ago you said that the \$20-million Risdon kitchen would be fixed within three to four weeks. Has the kitchen been fixed and resumed producing meals or are Tasmanians paying to fly 3000 meals a day in from Victoria?

ANSWER

Thanks very much, Speaker, and I thank the honourable member for his question. It is an important matter and, as I did advise in recent weeks, I thank the honourable Independent member for Franklin for his interest in this matter as well in recent weeks and months.

A slip hazard was identified in the new Risdon Prison kitchen in connection to the epoxy flooring, as it did not achieve a P5 slip resistance rating. This issue was identified under the defects liability period and I'm advised that the contractor has accepted responsibility for the slip hazard and is currently rectifying the floor at their expense.

However, I reiterate that I am frustrated; I am frustrated at the delay to the kitchen becoming fully operational. I've made it clear to my department that I expect a full review of how this occurred and what will be done to prevent any similar contractor errors in the future. I have requested that independent review from the department and they've taken that on board and will progress that.

In terms of providing a safe and operational kitchen, that remains a priority of our government. As this flooring issue is being fixed by the contractor, it's my expectation that it is fixed to the proper standard to be fully and safely operational.

Mr Willie - You said three to four weeks.

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Mr BARNETT - In terms of some of those costs in the second part of your question, you made reference to the costs: I'm advised that the meal services have continued without interruption throughout the rectification works. Wherever possible local -

Ms Finlay - Where are the meals coming from?

The SPEAKER - Just ignore them, Deputy Premier.

Mr BARNETT - Wherever possible, local Tasmanian suppliers have been engaged with only one interstate provider used only where the required capacity and operational requirements could not be met locally. I've made clear previously that the Buy Local Policy here, in Tasmania, is to be implemented and likewise consistent with the Treasurer's Instructions.

I reiterate again, there's some disappointment in the process, and that's why I've asked the department for an independent review.

Supplementary Question

Mr WILLIE - The Tasmanian taxpayers have spent \$20 million on this kitchen and every day it's not open we're flying 3000 meals in from Victoria and paying for it. When will the kitchen reopen?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much, Speaker. I don't have an answer to that question in terms of the exact date of the reopening. I have indicated to the department my disappointment with the process. I've requested an independent review. My expectations are high; they will remain high.

Risdon Prison Kitchen Renovation

Mr WILLIE question to MINISTER for JUSTICE, CORRECTIONS, and REHABILITATION, Mr BARNETT

[10.05 a.m.]

I'll ask a cost question again because you didn't really answer it. Deputy Premier, it has now been two months since the \$20 million Risdon Prison kitchen stopped producing meals. Since then, Tasmanian taxpayers have been footing the bill to purchase and transport 3000 meals a day from Victoria. How much has the government spent to date on replacement meals, freight and other costs caused by the kitchen's failure?

ANSWER

Honourable Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question and ongoing interest in this matter, and it is an important matter. Keeping our community safe is a top priority. That's why we have a very important Risdon Prison and why we're investing heavily in corrections facilities - \$100 million is in the Budget to continue to support upgrades at our correctional facilities. That includes not just the kitchen, but the building of a \$46 million maximum security aspect of the prison.

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Mr WILLIE - Point of order, 45, relevance. The question is very specific about the cost of the meals. They're flying in 3000 meals a day in from Victoria. I ask the minister to address the question.

The SPEAKER - I ask the Deputy Premier to reflect on the points raised in the question.

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much, through you, Speaker. Of course, you're asking questions which are operational questions relevant to the corrections facility.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order, the honourable Deputy Premier still has a minute and 50 seconds to go. None of us know what the Deputy Premier's going to say, so I ask that he be heard, please.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much, Speaker. The point I was making there: you were asking questions about the specific operations of the prison, and I can get back to the honourable member.

Members interjecting.

Mr BARNETT - Through you, Speaker, it's very hard to make a point when there's interjections and noise. If you're interested in the answer, perhaps you could listen.

The point I was making: for operational questions, I'm more than happy to get back to the honourable member once I've made inquiries in terms of those costs, but I'd like to make it clear the Buy Local Policy does apply, wherever possible. The local providers who -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order. Honourable members to my left, the Deputy Premier still has a minute to go. You still have another five questions that you can ask on this matter. I ask that he be heard in silence, please.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, of course, we're getting meals from the mainland, but we're also getting many meals and support locally. Wherever possible, the government's Buy Local policy applies. I'd like to thank all the local providers who engage with the Department of Justice's supply and feed our prisoners. I'd also like to personally thank Custom Catering in Moonah, Launceston Catering Company, PFD Foods Services and National Pies for their continued efforts to provide supplies.

I'm advised that the flooring issue falls within the normal defects liability period for the period for any new build project. The department's managing those issues, I am advised, through the normal contractual defects process, but I'm more than happy to respond in terms of an update to the honourable member.

Supplementary Question

Mr WILLIE - Deputy Premier, I can help you here. There's been \$1.1 million in emergency catering contracts awarded. Is that the full amount or are there freight, storage and staffing costs that you haven't disclosed?

Mr BARNETT - I'm more than happy to take that on notice.

AI Data Centres - Wesley Vale

Dr WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.09 a.m.]

Last week George Town Council claimed they had no choice but to approve a new AI data centre at Bell Bay, against overwhelming community objections. In effect, councils are seemingly being forced to rubberstamp your data centre agenda. All of this because you made a secret deal with a convicted fraudster during the election campaign who now runs a company with no track record in data centre construction. Understandably, the Tamar Valley community is now in shock and feeling betrayed. When it comes to the Wesley Vale data centre, are you going to stand alongside your own community or with Firmus?

ANSWER

I thank the honourable member for your question. I reject the accusations in your question outright. What we're about is ensuring that we bring investment and opportunity to Tasmania. That's why, for example, we had \$25 million on the table to support the reopening of the Mount Lyell Mine, and what a fantastic day for Queenstown - 300 jobs, \$490 million of investment.

Mr BAYLEY - Point of order, honourable Speaker. This is a question about data centres and your approval.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order. A member is on their feet. I ask that interjections cease, please.

Mr BAYLEY - Mt Lyell and mining were not mentioned once in the question. Just get to the question, please, Premier.

Mr Abetz - Any good news you don't like.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I characterise the question in investment and economic opportunity. It is a very proud day for the people of Queenie today, and Tasmania. I well remember I was just a few weeks into the role of Deputy Premier when the mine closed, and it's taken a lot of work -

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Dr WOODRUFF - Point of order, 45, relevance, honourable Speaker. The Premier is being completely disrespectful. The question was about AI data centres and whether he's going to stand with his own community in Wesley Vale.

The SPEAKER - Honourable Premier, I draw you back to the original points raised in the question, please.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I thank the honourable Speaker for the ruling, but I might just say that question was littered with disrespect. We welcome opportunity when it comes to AI factories, data centres, because they provide employment in construction and further employment in operation. Indeed, they were a subject of national Cabinet last Wednesday, where nationally we're putting guardrails to support the community in terms of AI factories to ensure there are those guardrails. Also, given the huge opportunity these present to Tasmania but also to the companies themselves, my expectation is there must be significant community benefit provided to the community from the companies as well.

What I can say is we won't stand in the way of investment and opportunity. We have a robust planning system to support these opportunities, and local governments are there to make decisions. My suggestion to anyone who wants to stand for local government in October is if you're not prepared to make a tough decision, don't stand. I'm prepared to make tough decisions and tough calls, and I support the opportunity of working with whoever wants to -

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

Supplementary Question

Dr WOODRUFF - The Premier did not answer the question. It was about listening to the community.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order. The only one who should be speaking right now is the honourable Leader of the Greens.

Dr WOODRUFF - It was about him listening to the community. The community have genuine concerns. The disrespect is not towards an industry, it's about your disrespect to your community. Will you stand with people in Wesley Vale and listen to their concerns about the development of data centres and the fact that they are not being consulted about it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I thank the honourable member for the supplementary question. As I said in my previous answer, Tasmania has a strong, well-established planning framework for assessing new development, including data centres and AI infrastructure. Of course, these developments are regulated through Tasmania's Resource Management and Planning System, which incorporates the Tasmanian Planning Scheme. This system provides a comprehensive and consistent approach to land use decision-making across the state. That is the robustness of the planning system that I speak of and that's the planning system that I support.

Recognition of Visitors

The SPEAKER - I'd like us all please to welcome the years 4, 5, and 6 students from Riana Primary School. Welcome to parliament. You've come a long way. Thank you for coming down.

Members - Hear, hear.

Firmus Bell Bay AI Data Centre - Major Project Assessment

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

[10.15 a.m.]

Your government's 2020 major projects pathway requires that a project meets two of three criteria: one, significant impact on a region's economy, environment, or social fabric; two, strategic importance to a region; or three, significant scale and complexity. Minister Jaensch said projects that have the potential for substantial impact should be assessed by independent expert panels. The Firmus Bell Bay data centre is a \$2.7 billion 288-megawatt facility, a scale you've called staggering, yet when asked why it wasn't escalated to a major project, you said it did not tick all the boxes. Minister, which two of the three statutory criteria does Bell Bay fail?

ANSWER

There was no application at all. Thank you for the question. When you think through it, there was no application or communication from the councils to assess it. The planning scheme is very strong in this area and there are options, as I explained yesterday. However, the situation is that the council is the appropriate place for this to be dealt with and they are the appropriate people to deal with it.

There is flexibility there to do different things, but do you really want political interference in some of these decisions because, once again, we touched on the awkwardness that you start to get if you start to pull, shake, take out and throw things into the political arena. We all want the system to stay strong in local government and I see no reason at all why that can't happen.

We can all pull lines out of various acts and different parts of the legislation to twist it to how we'd like it to be assessed and everything, but at this stage it still firmly sits with George Town or Latrobe Council and that's where I believe it should be until I'm told anything different. Thank you.

Supplementary Question

Ms BURNET - Thank you, minister, for that answer, but you and your government has been quoted as saying that these projects don't meet the major projects guidelines. Do you stand by that?

Mr VINCENT - I stand by the fact that the planning scheme is still strong and it is being assessed where it should be at the moment, and that's by the council. Once again, we can pull

various lines out and say this could be looked at this way or that way, but at the moment there's been no request from councils to assess it any differently. They know their role in this and they want to keep that role. If the community is strong about this, regardless of whether it's for or against, that's where it should be assessed and that's where it is. Thank you.

Urban Transit Solutions - Outsourced Jobs

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

[10.18 a.m.]

Two weeks ago, Labor asked whether work cut from Building Tasmania would simply be outsourced to expensive consultants. The Treasurer dismissed that concern. We have now been contacted by a former State Growth employee who coordinated the school bus data project and worked directly with bus operators across Tasmania. Her contract was not renewed following your restructure and has now been handed to Urban Transit Solutions, a Melbourne-based company with no previous involvement in the project. Why did your government get rid of an experienced Tasmanian worker, only to outsource her job interstate, and how much is Urban Transit Solutions being paid?

ANSWER

Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the member for the question. It's obviously a subject that everybody is very passionate about. I will have to seek more detail on the specifics of that for you so I can give you an accurate answer on that. As to the internal workings of how some of those voluntary redundancies or how the positions are filled or how it may be with the contract that might have been in place beforehand, I'm not aware of the exact details, but as with all my commitments to this House, I will find the right information and return it to the House.

Supplementary Question

Ms BUTLER - Minister, this worker knew the Tasmanian system perfectly: the Tasmanian school bus network and also all the data. How many more Tasmanian jobs will you cut before paying interstate consultants to do exactly the same work? Is it okay that this is happening on your watch?

Mr VINCENT - What I can give you is assurance that everything that comes under my watch and what we are trying to achieve under my watch is about making sure that we build sustainability and economic sense into what we're doing.

Members interjecting.

Mr Willie - You're outsourcing jobs. It's waste- you'll end up paying heaps more.

The SPEAKER - Honourable members to my left, the honourable minister still has quite a bit of time left. I ask that he be heard in peace, otherwise I will move on to the next question.

Mr VINCENT - Of course, when there are voluntary redundancies, some of the flow of work changes and, as I stated in my first answer, I am more than happy to find out exact details.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Sorry, honourable minister, if the honourable members are not interested in hearing what the minister has to say, I'll go on to the next question. It is up to the honourable members to my left if they want to hear it or not, but your constant interjecting makes it very hard for Hansard to recall and for anyone else in this room to hear what the minister's saying.

Mr VINCENT - It's certainly not appropriate if you talk about one individual position -

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

Firearms Reform - Grandfathering Provisions

Ms JOHNSTON question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.21 a.m.]

Your Police minister yesterday declined to say who advised him to include a grandfathering provision in his proposed firearms bill. We know it wasn't the Police Commissioner, but after scanning the submissions, I could find only one calling for grandfathering provisions, and that was from One Nation. The grandfathering provisions, which was not in the version circulated for public consultation, now appears in the bill. Is minister Ellis weakening our gun laws in Tasmania to capture One Nation votes? Is it acceptable that your Police minister is taking advice from One Nation but not his police commissioner?

ANSWER

I thank the honourable member for the question. I understand the sensitivities around these matters, particularly in the state of Tasmania, and I recognise the diversity of views across the parliament. Just yesterday, Mr Di Falco said, if I can quote you, 'Our laws go too far - our proposed laws go too far'. Others in the Chamber say they don't go far enough. We want to ensure that we have a balanced position that ensures safety is the number-one priority for our community. One firearm in the hands of a criminal is one too many, and we need to ensure that our law-abiding firearm owners can go about the work that they do. This was also a subject, of course, of national cabinet. One of the criteria of the national cabinet, for example, was the banning of 3D printing for firearms, which we have done, and are ahead of the game.

We are actually one of the only states that have proposed and put forward a reclassification scheme to a higher category. That remains, honourable member, as you well know.

Mr Willie - One Nation told you to grandfather it.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I reject that. We are working across the community and listening to people, listening to our farmers, listening to our recreational hunters and the like, and listening to community safety advocates as well. I might point out that we are, in terms of where your question would be coming from, in terms of gun safety, ahead of the Labor state of South Australia, who are not participating in buybacks or reclassification. We are ahead of the Labor state of Victoria and, of course, ahead of Queensland and the Northern Territory. That's why we are listening to the community. The minister has said that he's taken 600 submissions, and we've listened to people. We listen to people when we go about our community work, whether that be at Agfest, whether that be on the street, and people have lots of opinions, and passionate opinions, on both sides of this discussion. We have put forward a number of firearm reforms to strengthen community safety, including -

Mr Mitchell - How is unlimited guns making us safe?

The SPEAKER - Honourable member for Lyons.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Most importantly, that includes changes when it comes to those break the law in terms of stolen firearms or in possession of stolen firearms, and very clearly. Then there's national responsibilities, Mr Ellis pointed out yesterday, when it comes to intelligence sharing across states and between states with the Commonwealth.

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

Supplementary Question

Ms JOHNSTON - The Premier in his response indicated that the government is taking a balanced position that goes to safety and listening to stakeholders. Clearly, from the submissions, the only changes made from the draft consultation to the bill tabled was grandfathering, and that's an idea that comes directly from One Nation. The police commissioner in her submission said that caps would enhance community safety. How's this government taking a balanced position when it's failing to listen to the Police Commissioner?

Mr Abetz - What did she say on mandatory penalties? We can ignore that.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I thank the honourable member for the question and respect the diversity of views across the parliament; the views that say we're going too far and the views that say we're not going far enough. What we are doing is strengthening penalties for stolen firearms, enhancing the firearms register, reclassifying a number of firearms - most other states are not doing that - introducing controls around borrowing and lending of firearms, and the buyback of firearms. Most other states, including Labor states, are not doing that.

Firmus AI Data Centre - Bell Bay

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

[10.26 a.m.]

Along with the scale and speed of data centre development in Tasmania, people at gobsmacked at their energy consumption. Firmus have announced plans for three new AI factories with a combined energy demand of at least 444 megawatts; that's about 25 per cent

of Tasmania's power. Tasmania has no binding obligation on companies to make them generate new energy. Firmus's energy policy says 'For every one megawatt, we're building two'; that means building at least 888 megawatts of new generation on-island. Two of three Firmus developments now have planning approval. Only one of them has an energy agreement and it is short term. Firmus's development at Bell Bay has just been approved. What is the energy arrangement for this site? Which new additional renewable energy generation projects is Firmus building, when and where?

ANSWER

Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the member for the question and, of course, the interest which exists in this space is topical. As the Premier has mentioned already, we welcome investment in Tasmania. That is a very positive thing. The new data centre AI factory build out is a very, very large-scale build out which is happening here in Tasmania, across the country and indeed across the world. There is perhaps the philosophical argument that I think the Greens would like to reduce this to around AI and its uses, but the very fact is that there are investment opportunities and jobs opportunities here, in Tasmania, right now and huge demand. Our job, as government, is to help facilitate that investment in our state for the prosperity that it brings to the people of Tasmania.

It's very important to also recognise that in Tasmania we have power and have prioritised power for our existing industries, our heavy industries. Noting conversations that are occurring at Bell Bay at the moment, there is no suggestion that it is one or the other; we can have both here, in our state. It is very clearly the expectation not only of the Tasmanian government -

Ms Finlay - Only if there's new generation.

The SPEAKER - Honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr DUIGAN - but of the national Commonwealth Government and, indeed, every state in the country, that new load brings new generation. In Tasmania, new load will need to bring new renewable generation and that is very clearly set out. We're doing work with the Commonwealth around legislation that will be progressed later in the year about how that will be realised.

Ms Finlay - After you've given them all your power contracts.

The SPEAKER - Deputy Leader of the Opposition, this is your first warning.

Mr DUIGAN - The Tasmanian government is releasing its draft expectations of data centres and AI infrastructure. We are leaning heavily into this. We will ensure that data centres bring not only their own new generation, that they are placed in areas where it benefits the network, that's important, if there is augmentation required for transmission that that will be at the cost of the data centre and, of course, that there is no negative impact to existing customers. These are the pillars upon which we would see these new investments roll out in Tasmania. As I say, my role, as Energy minister, is to make sure our energy system is in such a position as to be able to supply that and -

Dr Woodruff - Well, tell us what you've decided.

The SPEAKER - Honourable Leader of the Greens.

Mr DUIGAN - We welcome those discussions.

Supplementary Question

Mr BAYLEY - That was all very interesting, but you didn't answer the question, minister. You mentioned that there's a large scale build-out, there's a huge demand, we completely agree with that. The issue here is that another data factory has just been approved. What is the energy arrangement for the Bell Bay site? Which new additional renewable energy generations is Firmus building - that's what they say, they're building - and when and where are they going to build them?

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you Speaker and again I thank the member for the question. Obviously, as you say, it is a large quantum of energy that is required for Firmus. They are having ongoing discussions with Hydro Tasmania about how that energy will be procured -

Ms Finlay - Will the energy be online before the load comes online?

The SPEAKER - Honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr DUIGAN - and of course what the build-out of renewables to support their load will be. Those are conversations as I say that are happening as we speak. As government our job is to facilitate investment in Tasmania. My job as Energy minister is to ensure that our energy system is in good shape, that there is no energy security risk posed to the people of Tasmania through these contracts -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr DUIGAN - that Hydro might enter into. We look forward to continuing those conversations for this new industry being developed here in Tasmania. We think it's very important, but we all understand the opportunity -

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - The member's time has expired.

Housing - Cradle Coast

Ms DOW question to MINISTER for HOUSING and PLANNING, Mr VINCENT

[10.32 a.m.]

I welcome the students from Riana Primary School.

Minister, the Cradle Coast region is on the cusp of major economic investment. There is \$15 billion in proposed renewable energy projects, major mining projects, and the long-awaited arrival of the new *Spirits of Tasmania*. This renewable energy investment alone is expected to

bring up to 1900 additional workers into the region. The rental vacancy rate in Burnie is 0.7 per cent, and Circular Head has reported zero new dwellings over multiple quarters. On 8 April, minister, you attended a housing action and worker accommodation roundtable in Campbell Town, and committed to planning with the region. The Cradle Coast Authority, business, and industry, have all called and continue to call on your government to commence housing and workforce planning for the region - and you've done nothing. Minister, what is your plan to house this workforce, and will you commit today to ensuring this investment leaves a legacy of much-needed new permanent housing stock in the region?

ANSWER

Thank you for your question, a very relevant subject right around the state, because the growth that you talk about on the north-west coast is fairly evenly spread throughout Tasmania. There is a \$40 billion projection over the next 10 years of capital projects with even amounts spread in each area of the state - but I know you're talking about the north-west coast and I did attend that meeting in regards to that. As recent as yesterday we were meeting to discuss the land use strategies, which does allow for a lot of the growth that is being talked about. The Cradle Coast Authority has been one of the leads that we've been dealing with -

Mr Willie - Being talked about? You need to house 1900 workers.

The SPEAKER - Order. Honourable members to my left, if you're going to keep interjecting - the honourable minister can have the option of answering the question or not, or we can resume your seats. Honourable minister, it's your choice.

Mr VINCENT - It is very exciting that we have so much development happening under this government in this state. We acknowledge that that growth does create both opportunities and some difficulties in dealing with it but you need to deal with it correctly. The land use strategies for the north-west, the north, and the south are vital, along with the urban growth boundaries and other parts of the planning scheme to ensure that we cater for that growth. We are working through that as quickly as possible. The north-west coast hasn't been as easy as probably where the south and the north are at the moment. We've got a timeline in place for that to be addressed and we've been communicating that with councils and the Cradle Coast Authority. We'll be doing more so with discussion over the next couple of weeks.

The other thing that's happened is I have met with at least one of the wind farm operators and have had discussions about what they need, where they need it, and how they need it and we're working through some of those issues with it at the moment. All those energy related employment opportunities still sit with the minister for Energy and progressing through as they need to with those developments. We'll continue to have discussions to make sure that land and the system is available. Our biggest problem still in this state is not having enough trades to cope with the amount of houses we need.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Just ignore them.

Mr Abetz - Everybody else does.

Mr VINCENT - Thank you, Speaker. All those issues we are working through and had a lot of discussions, even last week, with a lot of major builders of homes on how we can do it more efficiently. I think I met with six different builders last week to have those discussions, seeing how the workforce can change, how many more apprentices they can get on and how the training might work. We'll continue to work on all aspects -

Ms Butler - What legacy will you leave the north-west coast?

The SPEAKER - Honourable member for Lyons, Ms Butler. This is your first warning.

Mr VINCENT - that this exciting opportunity of \$40 billion dollars' worth of work produces.

Supplementary Question

Ms DOW - There seems to be a lot of talk and not a lot of action. Minister, regional leaders are asking for a coordinated plan before this investment commences and that's in less than 18 months' time. Will you establish a regional task force to coordinate housing, workforce and infrastructure planning, including worker accommodation that can become permanent, social, affordable or key worker housing in the future?

Mr VINCENT - Thank you honourable Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to have a supplementary. I'm not sure whether another task force is what we really need when all these things are being discussed as we speak now.

Members interjecting.

Mr VINCENT - Cradle Coast is a very good authority representing the councils up there. We have the same in the north.

Ms Dow - They need resources to coordinate it.

The SPEAKER - Honourable member for Braddon, Ms Dow, this is your first warning.

Mr VINCENT - We have a lot of good people in place working through this. My opportunity is with the planning system to make subtle changes and bring in the land use strategies so all this works properly. I think there'd be a far bigger argument if we weren't -

Ms DOW - Point of order, 45, relevance. Community leaders are calling for this task force to be established because they're dissatisfied with this government's approach. Will the minister commit to that today?

Mr VINCENT - Happy to answer it. I've had no correspondence from any community leaders regarding a task force. Thank you.

Ms Finlay - Oh goodness me. Just do nothing.

The SPEAKER - Honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition, you've already got one warning.

Payroll Tax Relief for Construction Companies Employing Apprentices

Mr O'BYRNE question to TREASURER, Mr ABETZ

[10.38 a.m.]

Since 2017, your government has provided a payroll tax relief for medium and large construction companies employing apprentices. You have now axed this subsidy. I know the budget requires tough decisions, but this decision could not have come at a worse time. We're in a housing crisis requiring us to build more houses and we're about to soon start building our multi-purpose stadium. Master Builders Tasmania estimates the state needs around 40,000 construction workers by 2033. We currently have about 29,000. Construction apprentices in training in Tasmania fell 17.2 per cent over the year to December 25, the steepest decline of any state. This skilled worker shortfall combined with the ever growing costs faced by builders means the need for this subsidy is greater than when it was first introduced. Treasurer, will you reverse this decision so we can get more Tasmanians into stable employment and more Tasmanians building houses and delivering on our major projects?

ANSWER

Speaker, I must confess I thought that might be a question I was going to be asked by the Labor Opposition, but it falls to an Independent member to ask a serious policy question, and I thank the member for Franklin for it. Like the honourable member for Franklin, I am concerned about the wellbeing and ongoing pipeline of apprentices, who then become our tradies who will continue to build our state. In making decisions in relation to the Budget - he Treasury analysis suggested that the number of employees in the scheme had fluctuated in line with general employment trends and, therefore, as a return of taxpayers investment - and let's remember this is taxpayers, paid for by our fellow Tasmanians - it was not delivering that which we had anticipated in 2017. To be clear, those who are in the program will continue to have the support over the next two years. But the point that the honourable member makes, I think is very important and that is the best way to grow apprentices and new tradies is to facilitate new developments in our state. He hit on it with the stadium, with data centres, with the North West Transmission Developments and with the Mount Lyell reopening that's being announced today. All these opportunities, and dare I even mention, Speaker, something in your electorate and the member for Franklin's electorate and mine, namely the Huon Aquaculture development of some \$200 million - more opportunities for apprentices.

Therefore the question becomes: how do we support opportunities for our apprentices? The evidence seemed to suggest payroll tax relief, which then only applies, might I add, to the bigger builders with bigger payrolls - the small home builder with a small payroll doesn't get that benefit - so what we needed to do as a government, we believe, was to help facilitate those developments within our economy that will see growth and opportunity, which of necessity then lends itself to a pipeline for especially young people, but there are apprentices of middle age, et cetera, who will provide the opportunities to ensure that we get the tradies we need for the future.

Supplementary Question

Mr O'BYRNE - I thank the honourable Treasurer for the answer and the dry Treasury advice, and I actually think that proves the point - Treasury advice is such as that, but these are

people in the real economy employing people and taking on these big jobs. There is a massive shortfall and the advice, in effect, perpetuates that shortfall of tradies required to do the jobs that we're planning to build in Tasmania. I ask you to reconsider that. Will you reconsider that advice and talk with Master Builders and large construction companies to talk about resolving this issue?

Mr ABETZ - Speaker, as a government and personally, I'm always willing to reconsider positions on the basis of evidence provided to me, but as I see it, before 2017 when the subsidy was introduced, we had a pipeline of apprentices, and the best way to get a pipeline of apprentices is to get infrastructure being built. As I just sat down then, the minister for Health reminded me that in my list of developments around the state, I should have included health infrastructure as well, where the government is providing opportunities. Those larger builders will then be able to provide apprentices with the opportunities that both he and I would seek for the benefit especially of our young Tasmanians but the government has made a decision. Are we willing to reconsider? Of course, we're always willing to reconsider, but the evidence at the moment does not suggest we should.

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

Tasmanian Beef - Woolworths' Decision

Mr Di FALCO question to **MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER, Mr PEARCE**

[10.44 a.m.]

It seems like every week I'm asking you about another bad outcome for Tasmanian farmers - mop-top, diesel and fertiliser prices, bird flu, outrageous FPA finds, Simplot and now Woolworths, which you described as 'beyond disappointing'. That's just in the last 12 months. Your Tasmanian Red Meat Industry Strategic Plan vision statement says:

A thriving and resilient Tasmanian red meat industry globally recognised for its excellence in sustainability, climate resilience and superior animal health and wellbeing.

Would you agree it is hard to be globally recognised if Tasmanians can't even find our meat in their local supermarkets?

ANSWER

I thank the member for raising this important issue, and in fact I thank all colleagues in this place for the representation that I received from constituents in your electorate, particularly around the issue of red meat. As to the issue of the commercial change in Woolworths' operations of sourcing red meat, particularly beef, from the great state of Tasmania, the Premier and I have already shouted that from the hilltops -

Mr Shelton - It's all local at Vermey's meats.

Members interjecting.

Mr PEARCE - That is not on. Whilst that is a commercial decision, it will have consequences going forward. I want everybody in this place to consider that it's only in the past four or five years when Woolworths used to buy out of the sale yards. There was a time when I as an Angus producer was proud; I stuck my chest out when I had a pen of cattle knocked down to either Coles or Woolworths or a reputable local butcher. It was a badge of honour, it was pride in my stock going to a butcher to be cut up and sold back to locals in local communities. I live for the day - I call for the day - where we can get back to that. Tasmanians deserve to eat Tasmanian produce.

When Woolworths and many other big suppliers went to a centralised system of cutting up and processing those animals offshore - on the mainland - we didn't know what meat we were getting. They did that for obvious commercial reasons, to get that critical mass and to shave everything off and return back to the bottom line, but it took away something very valuable. It took away locals feeding locals.

My message today is that we need to get back to that. There are many local butchers right across the state. You know who the reputable ones are. In fact, 99.9 per cent of them are. They're a business just like Woolworths are, but they don't have the fat that these big companies have. These are mum and dad operators who are buying local beef out of sale yards or auctions, or maybe even direct supply whereby a farmer - a producer - has an arrangement with a particular butcher to produce X amount -

Mr Mitchell - What are you doing about it?

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

Mr PEARCE - Eat local.

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

Northern Tasmania - Events Pipeline

Prof RAZAY question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.48 a.m.]

I have been advocating for a northern events pipeline for some time. We have suffered the loss of Boags, Liberty Bell Bay, the Hawks, and now the Bell Bay aluminium smelter is in jeopardy. It's encouraging to see that the Northern Tasmanian Economic Summit's summary report identifies events as a strategic economic driver and specifically propose an events pipeline similar to an infrastructure pipeline. While major projects such as the proposed Launceston convention centre will take some time to be delivered, my question is: what can we do right now to immediately boost our economy, and what is the government doing in the next 12 to 24 months to build a stronger pipeline of major and regional events for northern Tasmania?

ANSWER

I thank the honourable member for the question and also the themed tie around events as well; I commend you on that. I concur with the honourable member that events are a very

important part of our hospitality and tourism industries. They bring people to the regions and bring people to Tasmania. This is evidenced by Party in the Paddock, the Foo Fighters performing earlier this year and the wonderful Festivale. I'm talking about northern Tasmania because you're the member for Bass, but there have also been events in the north-east at Bridport as well. What we're doing is delivering on our commitment to northern Tasmania with a number of economic-boosting initiatives. It was fantastic to be at the top of one of the floors of the new Fragrance Hotel meeting a number of tradies the other day and seeing that construction as well, seeing a crane above us not far away, a crane above the Princess Theatre to your subject of events as well, which is a wonderful investment. As part of this work, as \$200 000 will be provided to Business Events Tasmania to deliver more conferences to the region. You mentioned the convention centre. I understand the DA has gone in or is soon to go in with respect to the Launceston City Council. We're contributing some \$10 million investment in partnership with that as well.

Business events are very important. People, as I understand it, enjoy the experiences. They see a bit of a small snapshot of the area that they visit, but most importantly, they tend to bring their families back as well, which is fantastic, which is why we need to continue business events, which bring significant benefits to local accommodation providers, hospitality venues, retailers, tourism operators and the like.

Of course, it's projected that, if we get business events right, it will inject some \$6 million into economic activity for Northern Tasmania as well. That's why we're also taking, to your question around a pipeline, a far more coordinated approach to establishing the entity of Creative Tasmania where we're having tourism, hospitality, events all coordinated and working together to ensure that they're not only be coordinating the large events such as the Festivale, such as Dark Mofo, but also the smaller events that matter to regional Tasmania: the events in the Huon, events in the north east Tasmania, Circular Head, of course, on the islands, including Flinders and King.

So, I agree with you when it comes to providing a very strong events pipeline. That's my expectation. I might also mention the other investment-

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

Risdon Prison Kitchen Renovation

Mr WILLIE question to MINISTER for JUSTICE, CORRECTIONS and REHABILITATION, Mr BARNETT

[10.52 a.m.]

Newly published tenders show that your department awarded three emergency catering contracts worth more than \$1.1 million after the new \$20 million Risdon Prison kitchen failed. You previously said additional repair costs were expected to be covered under the construction contract, but more than \$1 million has now been committed to feeding prisoners while the kitchen is out of action. Who will pay those costs? Will it be the contractor responsible for delivering the kitchen or taxpayers, and if so, what are you cutting to pay for it?

ANSWER

We've been very open about this, and you've made mention of the tender, which is on the website so, in terms of openness and transparency, it's very, very clear. I've also made it clear in the past that they've acted quickly in terms of the defect policy, the defect liability policy, and that's been in place and they've acted on that. Repairs, in terms of the slip hazard, has been identified and that's in terms of the epoxy flooring and in terms of achieving a P5 slip resistance rating, it's been identified under that defect liability period and I've been advised-

Ms HADDAD - Point of order, Speaker, 45, relevance. The question was specifically about who's paying for it and if it's a taxpayer, how the minister is coming up with that \$1 million from his own budget? He's gone nowhere near it.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, of course, there was an early part of that question that related to the prison and the kitchen itself and I'm providing an update in terms of the rectification and they're acting in accordance with that defect liability period policy, so that's in place. I'm also advised by the department that they'll be acting in accordance with the contract in terms of being refunded under that contract for relevant costs related to that defect liability policy.

So, that's the advice I've received and in terms of those reimbursements of those funds, that's an expectation that I've been advised by the department will occur.

Supplementary Question

Mr WILLIE - Just for clarity, Deputy Premier, are you saying that the department will recover the costs for the food that's been flown in from Victoria? 3000 meals a day from the contractor, and if it's taxpayers who are footing the bill, what are you going to cut from your budget to pay for it?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much, Speaker, and I thank the honourable member for his question. As I've said, they'll be acting in accordance with the contract. There is a defect liability period. They're acting in accordance with that -

Mr Willie - That's for the infrastructure. We're asking about the food.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BARNETT - in terms of the rectification and the reimbursement of funds that is identified under the contract. My advice is that they will be seeking the reimbursement of those relevant funds, and that's a matter for the department. I've indicated my expectations are very high expectations, to do everything possible to ensure that we protect taxpayers. We need to deliver a sustainable budget. The Treasurer has made that clear and the Premier has made it very clear. We need to ensure that there are efficiencies and productivity. What is at the forefront of our minds in this government is ongoing support for those in the health sector, education, and community safety -

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

Bird Flu - Little Penguin Vaccination

Mr GEORGE question to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER, Mr PEARCE

[10.57 a.m.]

Mr Wes Ford of biosecurity made clear on ABC radio today that bird flu has gained a foothold across the north of the state and will inevitably spread across the rest of the island. On victorious Phillip Island what is probably the world's largest vaccination program on a wild penguin population is underway and apparently on schedule. Minister, what have you learned about that little penguin program that could be implemented in Tasmania, where our penguin colonies are smaller and perhaps more suitable for a vaccination effort? Are you considering a vaccination program for some, if not all, the little penguin colonies? If not, why not?

ANSWER

I firstly thank the Independent member for his question and his concern. In fact, it's a concern that we all share, not just for our little penguins but for all species. There have now been a number of detection of H5 bird flu right across the state, and there have been some positive detections of H5N1 in little penguins, *Eudyptula minor*. As background, there are in excess of a million pairs of little penguins in the state, and they are not considered threatened; however, they are absolutely vital for our wildlife ecosystem.

In terms of the guidelines for the vaccination process, which you speak of in your question, we as a state follow the national guidelines. The advice is very clear in relation to that species, and that is that it is not an efficient use of resources to vaccinate little penguins in bulk at this time. The program that you talk of on Phillip Island - and I think there's another one in New South Wales also - is where states and territories have moved away from the national plan.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr PEARCE - We are monitoring that very carefully. It is going to be interesting and we watch that with interest there. What are we doing here about this? The advice that I've been given is that there are immediate measures -

Dr Woodruff - Terrible. 'We're not interested, we're deeply concerned'.

The SPEAKER - Order. Honourable Leader of the Greens, this is your first warning. There are other questions that the Greens can ask on this as well. I ask that the minister be heard, please.

Mr PEARCE - There are other measures that we can employ that will immediately help them. One such measure is predation. The pressure that is on those little penguin colonies in terms of feral cats, for instance, is incredible. We've stepped that up. There was a suggestion from the independent member Mr Garland in relation to gill netting adjacent to rookery's small little penguin colonies. We took you up on that and they're working through that program now to put that into place: a good suggestion. Other measures include ensuring that wildlife species,

once infected and out the other end of that, can continue to repopulate and strengthen their reproductive biomass. All of these things put together is where we are placing our effort.

In terms of our vaccination program for endangered species - we continue with their orange-bellied parrot program. That is something that we're proud of.

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

Supplementary Question

Mr GEORGE - Minister, it sounds to me that it's a lack of resources and a lack of money available to put into the little penguin colony. The little penguin colonies on Phillip Island are considered to be very suitable for vaccinations because they follow the same track every single day. One is able to produce a vaccination twice for these penguins. So, is it really a question that you don't have the resources and you won't put the money to it?

Mr PEARCE - You've almost answered your own question. The situation in Phillip Island is completely different to the vast spread of populations that we have in Tasmania. The best scientific advice that I have is that we could do more damage than good in this. Remembering that you've raised the very question: we have to herd these things, they have to have two injections, they have to be microchipped, and they have to be monitored. At the end of all that, you now have to look at the duration of that virus and what protections that will give that species for subsequent boosters.

Dr Woodruff - Well, you're doing it to orange-bellied parrots, and they're tiny.

The SPEAKER - Order, honourable Leader of the Greens.

Bell Bay Aluminium - Federal Government Assistance

Mr WILLIE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.02 a.m.]

We all agree that securing the future of Bell Bay Aluminium is a critical priority for the state. What are the details of the package your government has submitted to the Commonwealth, including the amount requested, the form of assistance sought and the contribution your government has committed?

ANSWER

I thank the honourable member for his question and, of course, recognise the enormous interest in the future of Bell Bay, not only to the local community around George Town, but also to the entire northern region, but also, given the importance of Bell Bay Aluminium to Nyrstar, to the electricity network right across Tasmania, which is why we are backing the 550 workers at Bell Bay Aluminium and have advocated very strongly to the federal government to play a role and play their part. We have submitted a proposal in terms of writing to minister Ayres and minister Bowen. Minister Ellis and minister Duigan have corresponded. I have spoken to minister Ayres personally myself last week around a number of aspects of that letter, highlighting to minister Ayres as, indeed, from my recollection, the letter also around the

support for New South Wales to the tune of \$1.2 billion, importantly, for that community but Tasmanian community is just as important. We are a nation of states, including two territories, and we expect the federal government to play a very key role. I'm not going to detail those matters but, of course, I will at the appropriate time. We're going through negotiations at this particular time. I know minister Duigan and, indeed, Hydro are working through matters around energy pricing. We will play a significant role, as we have done and continue to do, when it comes to supporting our major industrials with the subsidised power arrangements, and for good reason. Hydro industrialisation was set up for the reason of attracting investment to Tasmania so, we will definitely play a key role, but we cannot do it alone. We must have Rio coming to the table - and I remind the honourable member of the significant billions of dollars of profit of that company - and that must be said the responsibility of that company to this community and northern Tasmania. So, Rio, the Tasmanian Government and indeed the federal government. We cannot do it alone; we must work together and that we will.

Supplementary Question

Mr WILLIE - Premier, has a formal proposal been submitted to the federal government, or is it just a letter from you? What is the contribution from the state? What people are looking for here is for you to bring the relevant parties together and work through a deal to secure the jobs and the supply chains in northern Tasmania.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We already have significant investment on the table in terms of Tasmania playing a key role. I'm not going to detail the contents of the correspondence yet and, indeed, the ask, but we will provide that for the Tasmanian community. It is significant because the approximately \$60 million figure is the indicative gap between negotiating positions. It is not a settled payment, it is not the increase in BBA's power bill, and is not a cheque we have agreed to write. This is a real commercial gap between what Hydro can responsibly offer and what Rio says BBA needs. Our direction to Hydro to offer a certain energy price does not make that gap disappear. Yes, Hydro in Tasmania needs to play a role and Rio needs to play a role.

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

AI Data Centres - Expectations

Ms BADGER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.06 a.m.]

There is a fundamental lack of trust between the community and the AI data centre industry that is deepened by a lack of transparency, no public consultation and zero binding guardrails. At Estimates, the Office of the Coordinator General (OCG) said that they are in discussions with around 10 data centre companies wanting to set up here, but Tasmanians have been kept in the dark about these resource-intensive proposals. In mid-August, the minister, Mr Ellis told this place that your AI data centre statement of expectations would be released in coming days for community consultation. It hasn't been released. Where is it? Exactly who are the data centre companies the OCG is working with? Where do they want to set up? What will their energy and water consumption be?

ANSWER

The matter you refer to, in terms of the expectations, they will be released very shortly. More broadly, the Coordinator-General is charged with not only engaging with potential AI factories and data centre investors, but also a range of investors to Tasmania across a range of industry sectors. That is the key role that they play. We welcome the opportunity, when large corporations and large businesses and large investors knock on Tasmania's door to want to employ Tasmanians and invest in Tasmania. We will welcome them.

Of course, that also comes with expectations as well. We've spoken previously about the guardrails as expectations, and that will see draft legislation nationally, as I understand it, towards the end of this year - November. They are likely to be in the federal parliament towards the beginning of next year, if my memory serves me correctly so, this is a national discussion; one that we need to involve ourselves in and embrace. Other states around the world are embracing these opportunities. Around the world they're embracing these opportunities.

Ms Badger - Then tell us about it.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Honourable members of the Greens, you've asked a question. I ask that the Premier be heard. You still have a supplementary to go, please.

Mr ROCKLIFF - What is also important to your question is that the community is able to have a say, and we are listening to the community and their concerns. Some of those concerns are well-founded and others are going straight to that conspiracy theory, which often happens in these circumstances. So, we will welcome opportunity. We have a robust planning system. We have an opportunity for community to engage. George Town Council made their decision the other day. They made a decision and they voted for that opportunity, as is their role.

Supplementary Question

Ms BADGER - The Premier says he's listening to the community concerns. The community have spoken loud and clear that they want to know, they want to understand which of these centres are coming to this state and how much of public resources they are going to be consuming. That was the crux of my question. How many and which of these companies is the OCG talking to and how much public resources will they be consuming?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, of course, this information will be available as the process -

Ms Badger - What, when the DA gets lodged? That's too late.

Mr ROCKLIFF - When the process progresses and when it comes to development applications-

Ms Badger - It's too late then, Premier. You're not listening to them.

The SPEAKER - Honourable member for Lyons, Ms Badger, I remind you that if you're not satisfied with the Premier's answer, there are other forms of this House that you can use to raise your concerns. I ask that whichever minister is on their feet they be heard because there are other forms of the House for all members that they can use to get further information.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I believe I've answered the supplementary question.

Ms Badger - No.

Bell Bay Aluminium - Negotiations and Assistance

Ms FINLAY question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.11 a.m.]

People in my community are living what's happening at Bell Bay every day. There's a pressure, as you said, not only in northern Tasmania, but right across the state. My question to you is simple: when businesses like Kempe Engineering and Hicksy's Hardware rely on what happens at Bell Bay Aluminium, they need answers and certainty. When will the negotiations with Hydro come to an end - this week? More importantly, when will you table the proposal that you put to Canberra? We want to do everything possible to secure those jobs and those supply chains, but we can't do it unless you make that proposal available to us to understand.

ANSWER

I thank the honourable member for her question and I look forward to the honourable member changing Labor's position on advocating to Canberra. I want Labor, through the Deputy Leader, to change their position and do a backflip for the good of the Bell Bay community.

Mr WILLIE - Point of order. The question wasn't about Labor; it was about a very serious matter at Bell Bay. We are advocating for the federal government. I want the Premier to take this seriously. People's livelihoods are on the line and he should answer the question.

The SPEAKER - Thank you, honourable Leader of the Opposition. Honourable Premier, I do bring you to the question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I promise you that if you change your position I won't put out a media release calling it a backflip because we will welcome that change in position, because the people of Bell Bay and northern Tasmania -

Mr Willie - They don't want your blame game anymore.

Mr Mitchell - You're a joke.

Mr Willie - They're over it.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - They expect their local members to stand up for their community, and that's what we are doing.

Mr Willie - They are over your blame game.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order, all honourable members. I ask the House to please settle. We're nearly to the end of Question Time. I appreciate that all sides of this House are very passionate about this issue and I ask the Premier to return to the points that were raised in the original question, please.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The honourable member who asked the question is famous for saying, 'Stop wasting your time, get over trying to chase the deal because it's not there'. Well, the deal has to be there for that community.

Ms FINLAY - Speaker, I take personal offence at the disrespect of the Premier misquoting me when they were the words of Susie Bower, former Liberal candidate, and I ask him to withdraw.

The SPEAKER - That is a misrepresentation. The honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition can use Standing Order 127 at the end of question time.

Ms Finlay - It may be a misrepresentation, Speaker, but I am personally offended.

The SPEAKER - Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I've offered you an opportunity to do it. It is not the time for debate right now, so you have a choice whether you do it at the end of question time or we will just move on. It is not for debate.

Ms Finlay - Speaker, I have a thick skin, but I am offended. I ask him to withdraw. I take personal offence and ask him to withdraw.

The SPEAKER - Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I've explained to this House on numerous times the differences between Standing Order 144 and Standing Order 127. This is a misrepresentation of a policy or party position or something previously said. It was not about you personally where they said that you were a name or anything. It is a misrepresentation. It is Standing Order 127.

Ms Finlay - I'm not going to cry in the parliament, but I am deeply offended. Ask him to withdraw.

The SPEAKER - It is Standing Order 127.

Supplementary Question

Ms FINLAY - Members of my community are deeply offended by the efforts of this government, your people. Premier, people are offended. They have no certainty. They do not understand your disrespect in moments like this. When will you table the proposal that you have submitted to Canberra?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I thank the honourable member for their question. I simply say that we all need to work together to find a solution.

Members interjecting.

Mr Willie - That's rich, coming from you.

Mr Mitchell - You're a joke.

Ms Finlay - Table it.

The SPEAKER - Deputy Leader of the Opposition, this is your second warning.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Occasionally I have a look at your comments on social media and what I see are people also demanding of you what is your position, what is your solution and are you going to stand up for Tasmania?

Ms Finlay - Speaker, I'm asking for a date. When will the Premier table the proposal?

The SPEAKER - Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I again remind you that there are other forms of this House you can use if you are not satisfied with an answer being provided, but coming in here and shouting and raising your voice is not an appropriate form of action. I remind the honourable member that you can ask further questions today, you can raise it on adjournment and there are other forms of this House, but I will not have members in here shouting and causing disruption -

Ms Finlay - Point of order, 45 - relevance. When will he table the document?

Member Suspended

Member for Bass - Ms Finlay

The SPEAKER - The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is now suspended until after lunch.

Ms Finlay withdrew.

The SPEAKER - The honourable member for Braddon, Mr Garland, has the call.

Mr Mitchell - You think you can just tell a blatant untruth and get away with it.

Members interjecting.

Member Suspended

Member for Lyons - Mr Mitchell

The SPEAKER - Honourable member for Lyons, Mr Mitchell, you're now suspended until after lunch too under Standing Order 149.

Mr Mitchell withdrew.

Wedgetail Eagles - Impact of Wind Turbines

Mr GARLAND question to MINISTER for ENVIRONMENT and CLIMATE CHANGE, Mr BARNETT

[11.17 a.m.]

Anyone who knows me knows how much I love our wedge-tailed eagles. There is something truly special about seeing one of these magnificent birds soaring over Tasmania. The far north-west is a stronghold for wedge-tailed eagles, but they are endangered and their survival is precarious. It takes around 12 chicks to replace the loss of just one adult eagle. With more than 100 turbines approved for Robbins Island and further wind and transmission development planned across the north-west, every additional adult death matters. Minister, are you satisfied we are doing enough to ensure wind turbines do not cumulatively push our wedge-tailed eagle closer to extinction?

ANSWER

Thanks very much, Speaker, and I thank the honourable member for his question and his ongoing interest in his part of the world, particularly with the iconic eagle species - the wedge-tailed eagle - and no doubt the white-bellied sea eagle.

I should acknowledge right up front it's a priority for our government in terms of the protection of that eagle species. There is a range of concerns in terms of the threat from disturbance, obviously roadkill, collisions with wind turbines, as you've mentioned, electrocution and impact on transmission lines. There's also poisoning and a whole range of disturbances to these eagles. There is also a robust assessment and approvals process in place to mitigate the impact of wind farms, which you've mentioned in your question, and transmission lines as well that you've touched on in your question with respect to threatened eagles and the wedge-tailed eagle in particular. That work builds on a significant amount of research and investment from industry and species experts.

I want to indicate to you in terms of an update for yourself and the House that the government has invested \$8 million since 2024 to deliver the Tasmanian Threatened Species Fund to directly support conservation activities for priority species, including the Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle conservation and management plan. I had the opportunity yesterday to talk about the orange-bellied parrot, which is a seriously and critically endangered species, and the vaccination process of 350 birds between yesterday through to February, so it is progressing and that's good news. I'm meeting with Dr Magali Wright, who's head of our species advisory council, next week.

You've asked a very good question. I'm also advised the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRET) is working with stakeholders. I'm also advised the NRET is working with stakeholders to address key knowledge gaps about the eagle population size, distribution and behaviour, and to quantify threats to their survival. A comprehensive audit of data and knowledge gaps is underway to inform the development of updated conservation and management advice for the Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle and to help regulators and other stakeholders to focus research and management efforts. Together these elements underpin an evidence-based and fit-for-purpose conservation plan for supports that will support Tasmania's eagle protection and management. I'm looking forward to learning

more and I'm more than happy to keep working with the honourable member and provide further updates as we progress on this important matter.

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

Supplementary Question

Mr GARLAND - Minister, the eagle doesn't experience these developments one project at a time. The Commonwealth has already recognised the need to model cumulative wind farm mortality. Will you commit to a population level cumulative impact assessment of existing approved and proposed developments now, before cumulative mortality reaches a point from which this magnificent species cannot recover?

Mr BARNETT - As I say, the department's working on the protection and management plans for the iconic species. There'll be more work that's needed. I'm absolutely committed to progressing every effort to do what we can. I also want to commit to the honourable member to have ongoing meetings and briefings with yourself, not just from myself but for the department experts. As I say, I'm meeting with Dr Wright next week, the Scientific Advisory Committee (Threatened Species) Chairperson. I'm really looking forward to that. I'm sure I'll learn a lot from Dr Wright and the council does excellent work, and feeds into those protection and management plans. We want to do what we can to protect and support this iconic species. I appreciate your special interest in this. I look forward to learning from you and indeed others with respect to what more we can do as a government in this space.

Time expired.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

TasWater - Charges

Ms BUTLER question to TREASURER, Mr ABETZ

[11.24 a.m.]

My question is from Cindy of Perth in relation to water and sewerage charges by TasWater. Cindy states: 'We have lived at our address for 34 years and have always had two water connections and one sewerage connection. One water connection is used for our residents and returns wastewater to the relevant area. The second connection is used for our substantial vegetable garden and does not feed into any area of waste. TasWater have advised the previous sewer services were generally based on the number of ETs assigned to our property. Under the new pricing structure, residential sewer service charges are now based on the number of water connections to a property. It is an extra \$800 per year on top of our other increased water and sewerage service charges - charges for a service we don't have. Australian consumer law is founded on a simple principle: consumers should not be required to pay for a service that has not been delivered. Minister, will you step in and review this policy?'

Recognition of Visitors

The SPEAKER - Before I give the call to the honourable member for Bass, Ms Rosol, I would like to acknowledge in the Speaker's Reserve today the honourable Michael

UNCORRECTED PROOF

McCormack MP, member for Riverina and also a former deputy prime minister. Welcome to the Tasmanian Parliament.

Members - Hear, hear.

Rushy Lagoon Silica Mine - Aboriginal Cultural Places

Ms ROSOL question to MINISTER for ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS, Mrs ARCHER

My question is on behalf of the Melaythenner Teeackana Warrana Aboriginal Corporation (MTWAC) about the silica mine proposed for Rushy Lagoon by North Scottsdale Resources. The proposed mine would cover 770 hectares of what is currently coastal sand dunes, making it the largest mining site in Tasmania. It would be 10 metres deep, with a 700 metre wharf also planned. This country has hundreds of important Aboriginal cultural heritage sites, including known Aboriginal burial places. However, due to the inadequacies of the state's Aboriginal heritage legislation, these sites are currently not protected, placing them at significant risk of being destroyed by the mine proposal. MTWAC are deeply concerned about the risks to this significant Aboriginal cultural landscape because of the potential mine. Minister, will you intervene and ask for a pause on the development application process for the silica mine until after the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1975* is replaced, helping to ensure protections of important cultural places?

Freycinet National Park - Infrastructure

Mr SHELTON question to MINISTER for PARKS and HERITAGE, Mr DUIGAN

My constituents at Coles Bay on the east coast have been aware of ongoing discussions around plans to meet future demand and improve infrastructure at Freycinet National Park. Can you please tell them what is going to happen in the region and when they can expect to see this work begin?

TasWater Pricing

Prof RAZAY question to TREASURER, Mr ABETZ

My question is from a small business operating in Rocherlea, Launceston, employing 35 people in the steel fabrication sector. The business manager wrote to me regarding changes in how TasWater calculated fixed sewage charges. She says the business traditionally paid around \$630 per month in fixed sewage charges, but in July it jumped to \$3800 - a whopping 500 per cent increase. TasWater says the increase is due to it now calculating fixed charging on pipe diameter, as opposed to the past practice of charges being set at a fixed fee based on estimated demand of the property. The Rocherlea business is now facing an additional \$40,000 per annum in basic operating costs and is asking for the Treasurer to commit to review TasWater pricing policies.

Legal Aid Services

Ms BURNET question to MINISTER for JUSTICE, CORRECTIONS and REHABILITATION, Mr BARNETT

My question is from my constituent Jason, who was unable to access services through Legal Aid, nor through the Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service, due to capacity issues. He was advised to engage a lawyer privately. Despite trying, he has found that all firms he has approached are at capacity. What will the government do to ensure there are enough legal services in Tasmania and in Hobart?

Spirit of Tasmania Sailings

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

My constituent question is from John in Braddon. John asks: was it a coincidence that *Spirit IV* arrived at 6.30 a.m. on Sunday at the same time as the high tide? Why couldn't it arrive later in the day? Will sailings of the new ships be dictated by the tides?

Environmental Standards for Producers

Mr GARLAND question to MINISTER for ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE, Mr BARNETT

My question is from Arthur from Boat Harbour Primary School. Minister, how come flow-through salmon hatcheries can discharge wastewater containing nutrients like nitrates and potentially residues from antibiotics back into Tasmania's rivers, while the dairy farmer across the road faces strict requirements around managing effluent and nutrient runoff? Minister, can you explain why these two industries appear to be treated so differently, and whether you believe the environmental standards applying to salmon hatcheries are genuinely fair and consistent with those applying to other Tasmanian primary producers?

Nepal Flash Flood

Ms OGILVIE question to

We've all seen the recent devastation that occurred in Nepal last week, and I thought the comments in the Chamber yesterday were really beautiful. Our thoughts are with everybody impacted. A number of my constituents have asked where they can find out more information. Can the minister please advise what is the best way to stay up-to-date on the situation?

Time expired.

PETITIONS

AI Data Centres

[11.29 a.m.]

Ms ROSOL (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I have the honour to be the bearer of two petitions which are similarly worded: a written petition signed by approximately 33 petitioners and an e-petition signed by approximately 10,035 petitioners. The petition requests that the House call on the Government to issue an immediate moratorium on all non-complete AI and data facilities in Tasmania until the following are established: AI-specific planning legislation and regulations that adequately address the social and environmental impacts of these developments; a public transparency register that regularly reports on energy and water consumption, and operations, of all AI and related data facilities; a mechanism for parliamentary oversight of operations and resource allocation to facilities over 50MW; a guarantee for local jobs; and protections for electricity consumers from utility price increases due to the connection demands of AI and related data facilities. The petitions conform with the relevant Standing Orders and Rules of the House.

Petitions received.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE - ANSWERS

No. 41 of 2026 - Digital Vegetation Map of Tasmania

Ms BADGER question to MINISTER for ENVIRONMENT and CLIMATE CHANGE, Mr BARNETT

See Appendix 1 on page x.

No. 42 of 2026 - Climate Change Office

Ms BURNET question to MINISTER for ENVIRONMENT and CLIMATE CHANGE, Mr BARNETT

See Appendix 2 on page x.

No. 43 of 2026 - Electric Vehicles

Ms BURNET question to MINISTER for ENVIRONMENT and CLIMATE CHANGE, Mr BARNETT

See Appendix 3 on page x.

No. 44 of 2026 - Climate Capability Framework

UNCORRECTED PROOF

**Ms BURNET question to MINISTER for ENVIRONMENT and CLIMATE CHANGE,
Mr BARNETT**

See Appendix 4 on page x.

TABLED PAPER

Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts - Report

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, I have the honour to bring up the report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts and its inquiry: Follow-Up of the Report of the Auditor-General Expressions of Interest for Tourism Investment Opportunities, No. 3 of 2020-21, PP No. 53, 2026. I move -

That the report be received and printed.

Report received and printed.

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Subordinate Legislation Annual Report 2025-26

[11.32 a.m.]

Ms BURNET (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I have the honour to bring up the report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Subordinate Legislation Annual Report 2025-26. I move -

That the report be received and printed.

Report received and printed.

PUBLIC HEALTH AMENDMENT (EMERGENCY POWERS) BILL 2026 (No. 31)

First Reading

Bill presented by Mrs Archer and read the first time.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Sitting Times

[11.33 a.m.]

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

That so much of Standing Orders be suspended as would prevent

- (1) The Question before the Chair at 6.00 pm today automatically standing adjourned;
- (2) The suspension of the Sitting at 6.00 pm until the ringing of the bells at 6.30 pm;
and
- (3) The House immediately resuming debate on that Question when the House resumes.

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I want to strongly support this and thank the government for taking on board the suggestion that we do suspend the sitting so as all members can attend a vigil on Parliament House lawns for the victims of the Nepali floods and the Nepalese community here today, so we can indeed physically stand in solidarity with them as we have metaphorically here with our words yesterday. Thank you, Leader.

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Thank you, Speaker. Likewise, the opposition supports the motion and thanks the government for facilitating it and yourself, Honourable Speaker. It is very meaningful, I think, when community groups gather on the Parliament Lawns, that we are able to do that, and obviously we can't ordinarily under our standing orders. So, having a formal suspension like this is not only a really important measure for us to be able to take as a Chamber, but also it shows that deep respect and shared grief for us to be able to stand with the local Nepalese community, knowing how many people have been affected by the flash flooding in Nepal and Tibet. So, thank you again, Speaker, and we support the motion.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Waste

[11.35 a.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, I rise on this MPI to talk about government waste. Really, what kind of government, what form of government - are there any governments in a Westminster system that can honestly say they don't have the capacity to feed their own prisoners? What a state of affairs when we are in a situation in Tasmania where we have a government that can't even feed its own prisoners. Now, we know that the new kitchen at Risdon Prison cost \$20 million. We went and had a look at this - I think Mr Shelton was with us that day when the Public Works Committee looked at the proposed project. We signed off on that project thinking that it was going to be an opportunity for our prisoners to enter into really good rehabilitation kind of training processes in this new whiz-bang kitchen. It's just so much more disappointing when you have seen what a project is meant to do, you've met with the architects, you've met with the drafting people and then, I think it was within three months of it being built, it was closed due to defects.

Now, it's our understanding that during the design and consultation period and the building period, different workers and correctional officers and people who were working on part of that \$20 million project to build this new prison - because what was there previously wasn't fit for purpose at all - but they were warned. This government was warned constantly, consistently. I even think there's a paper trail as well, where different workers were raising their concerns with the design. We've also learned that apparently before it was closed in those first

three months, they were having to turn off the fire detection sensors, the smoke alarms, because every time their new kitchen ovens were opened, they would set off the fire alarms. That's how poor this design was. We've also been informed that they were aware that there was a problem with, I think it was the drainage issues on that kitchen floor, and what they did was invest in expensive gumboots for the people who were working in that kitchen to stop them from slipping.

This is a \$20 million build and it looks like it's costing \$1 million, because there's been \$1.1 million in emergency catering funding that has been allocated to cover this and we're not clear and they still don't know who's going to meet the cost of that. I can tell you what, I bet you any money, this government will be meeting the cost of yet another failed project and this is something that people were talking about all over Tasmania because they just couldn't believe - another stuff-up - and that line - these guys can't even feed their own prisoners because they decommissioned the old prison kitchen, which already wasn't fit for purpose and can't use this. So, we are importing 3000 meals a day from Victoria and we don't have a new date for when this will be complete because, apparently, no works have even started in that kitchen, we've been advised. Apparently, the plant is still sitting in that kitchen that can't be used, so nothing has happened.

We also know that great pressure has been put on to find opportunities to source this locally and that was only after we raised that matter when this issue came to light. Why are we spending a million dollars importing meals from Victoria when we have at least seven hospitality businesses in southern Tasmania that have gone into administration? They have kitchens. There was no thought about that, was there? Let's just import this from Victoria, let's try to keep this as quiet as we can. Looks like we're going to waste another million dollars and, when are you going to be able to start using your own prison kitchen? What kind of government can't feed their own prisoners? Not only are the prisons full, not only do you have the worst recidivism in the whole country, not only is it the most expensive prison service in the whole country, but you can't even feed your own prisoners. It is huge waste of money and speaks in yards about this government's ability to manage projects.

Time expired.

[11.40 a.m.]

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Deputy Speaker, let's debunk the falsehood that was repeated a number of times by the member for Lyons, that this is a government that cannot feed its prisoners. They are being fed as we speak. The honourable member knows that and for her to seek to make that assertion just goes to show how desperate the Labor Party has become to try to get a headline. You know full well that each and every prisoner is being fed as we speak. What is more telling is that allegedly everybody around Tasmania knew about it, yet the honourable member served on the committee that looked into this project and approved it and supported it and so what we have -

Ms Butler - Oh, it's my fault.

DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ABETZ - This is the interesting point, isn't it? As soon as we put the pressure on, the honourable member says, 'Oh, so it's my fault?' Well, that is exactly what the honourable member sought to do to the Deputy Premier. The Deputy Premier, once becoming aware of the

situation, ensured that the department activated the defects clause in the contract to ensure that the contractor would rectify the defect. That the member for Lyons would know about that defect is a stretch too far for me to assert. Similarly, it is a stretch too far for her to assert that the Deputy Premier should have been aware of that defect. When the defect became known - and that's the issue - when it became known, what did the government do, and the Deputy Premier moved very expeditiously to ensure that safety in the kitchen was paramount and that the situation would be changed.

Deputy Speaker, if we're talking about waste, what did it cost the Tasmanian community with lost opportunity and actual cost to have an unnecessary early election just last year? What waste was occasioned to the Tasmanian community when we were told that there would be huge changes to TT-Line and TasPorts under Labor's so-called budget response? We haven't heard about that since. We have seen, under Labor, a waste of human capital with their high unemployment rate when they left office - tickling 8 per cent. Today, it is substantially less, 5.1 as we speak today, compared to 7.9 - a 2.8 per cent differential. We want to do even better. That's why we support the stadium, something which the Labor Party opposed for a long time and then decided to support -

Mr Winter - So did you.

Mr ABETZ - No, I've never. I've never opposed the stadium.

Mr Winter - Yes, you did.

Mr ABETZ - I had an open mind, and when I assessed it, I came across to say I was right in the middle, as I've said on a number of occasions. I was agnostic in relation - I was not against it, I was simply agnostic - unlike the honourable member and others over there who had their 'No Stadium' stickers. I never had a 'No Stadium' sticker in my office or on my car and it's great to see the Labor Party now supporting it but the waste and cost to the Tasmanian community has been huge by the delay because we could be building the stadium today. The cranes could be down there, the construction could be under way if Labor had not continued to play their game of negativity.

Members interjecting.

DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, honourable member for Lyons, please.

Mr ABETZ - The waste and cost to the Tasmanian community of that delay is to be literally hundreds of thousands of dollars and indeed now in the millions of dollars. Deputy Speaker, the Tasmanian people can be absolutely assured that we as a government will seek to ensure that waste is minimised. It is the Tasmanian people's money that we spend. It's not government money, it is taxpayers' money and as stewards of that we will seek to do everything we can to ensure they get value for money and when things go wrong, like at Risdon Prison, we'll make sure that the people - the contractor - will be responsible.

[11.45 a.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I wasn't actually going to speak, but I was inspired to by the Treasurer, because I heard again his reflection on his position on the stadium. As I just interjected and said I've had the same number of positions on the stadium as the Treasurer has actually, I only need to go back to the *Mercury* article that was printed on

18 May 2023, and the headline is 'former Liberal power broker' - now, I would dispute that, Treasurer, because I still think you are a power broker - 'Eric Abetz backs an all-purpose stadium as an economic driver', and the subheading is 'Eric Abetz - the former long-standing Tasmanian Liberal senator has had a change of heart on the Macquarie Point stadium'.

Mr Abetz - That's the headline, not what I said.

Mr WINTER - Oh okay, so it's Sue Bailey's fault, is it?

Eric Abetz, the former long-serving Liberal senator and power broker, says he was 'dubious' about the AFL stadium but now backs the development at Macquarie Point.

Seeking preselection he had a change of heart from being dubious to then backing the multi purpose stadium and so, the point I wanted to make was that he has had the same number of positions on the stadium as Labor has.

This is, though, about waste, which is a big issue and right now in the state, we have a budget crisis which has been caused by 13 years of Liberal governments and has led to the point where Tasmania has gone from having no net debt when it came to office to now building up towards tens of billions of dollars of net debt if you read the long-term forecast by Treasury. That's of real concern because every time this Tasmanian government needs to pay that, pay interest on its debt, means more services are coming out of Tasmania's budget.

It means waste because that's what has been delivered over many years. Waste, because instead of putting money into health services, education, all of the services Tasmanians rely on, we are wasting money by paying the interest on projects that haven't been delivered or have been over-budget and well and truly behind time. It's a good opportunity, when you talk about waste, to talk about something that is both very good but extremely disappointing, and that is the TT-Line finally arriving in the Mersey a couple of weeks ago, last Sunday, and what a magnificent sight.

I was very jealous of the members of Braddon who were able to be there to see *Spirit IV* coming into the Mersey. How fantastic that it has finally arrived, but it is time to reflect on the project itself. It is going to be a billion dollars overbudget, it is five years behind the original schedule and it has been caused by deliberate decisions by this government. It was a deliberate decision of this government to tear up an MOU and go out to market to pretend that they were going to build these ships here in Australia. That was false.

It was a deliberate decision of this government to say they were going to put \$100 million worth of Tasmanian local content into the ships before they didn't deliver it. It was a mistake of huge and epic proportions not to build the berth when the ships arrive, and that has led to serious, serious waste of money. We have ships that are still sitting idle, *Spirit V* still sitting in Victoria, unable to operate out of our existing berth and unless the old ships are sold before the new ones come into service, we'll still be paying for their upkeep and them to be sitting idle as well.

I would certainly hope that we see the sale of those ships sooner rather than later because we are talking about millions of dollars being wasted, millions of dollars that could be sitting in Tasmania's balance sheet, delivering services and infrastructure for the Tasmanian

community that is simply not because of decisions that are being made by this government. I have grave concerns about the finances of TT-Line. Grave concerns. The auditor-general has referred TT-Line to Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC), believing that it is, in his opinion, likely insolvent. So, we have a potentially insolvent TT-Line that does not have its new ships running -

Mr Abetz - You know that's wrong.

Mr WINTER - What was that, Treasurer?

Mr Abetz - You know it's not insolvent.

DEPUTY SPEAKER - Please, through the Chair.

Mr WINTER - Well, no, I don't. The Treasurer, in interjection, has said I know that it's not insolvent; I do not. I would love to be assured of that and it speaks to the Treasurer that he's prepared to simply believe the current board that it's not insolvent despite not having seen the advice that they're relying on to say that they are solvent. I don't have the evidence that they are solvent and I'll tell you who else has given evidence to Estimates and elsewhere, and that's the auditor-general.

Now, the auditor-general is a very important position and he doesn't have that confidence and he's had it to referred to ASIC. So, it's very important and it is waste.

Time expired.

[11.50 a.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and I rise to talk to this MPI of waste and thank the member for Lyons for bringing it on. I wasn't quite sure whether we were talking tin cans and plastic bags here but no, true to form, it's about money, it's about budget, and it's about this government and their inability to actually manage these issues.

I listened to Ms Butler, closely, around the prison kitchen issue and it does seem like a significant issue. I want to put on the table as well the waste and our position when it comes to prisons - that a new 52-bed maximum security unit at Risdon is something that is completely unnecessary and we should not be spending our money on it.

However, I'm more than thankful to the Treasurer for raising the stadium in the context of this debate, and indeed, the shadow Treasurer raising the *Spirits* fiasco, because if we thought the *Spirits* fiasco was the height of this Liberal government's incompetence and waste and expense to the taxpayer, I think it's going pale into insignificance against the stadium. I'm glad the Treasurer raised the stadium. The stadium is already, writ large, epitomised by waste. We've paid over \$3 million to a Melbourne housing developer not to build houses at Macquarie Point. We paid them out of a contract that we entered into. That is a crying shame. Not least to say the 10 years of wasted time and the millions and millions of dollars we gave to the Macquarie Point Development Corporation to work up an accepted development plan for the Macquarie Point site. It was quite a comprehensive plan, quite a well thought-through plan, well consulted. It had housing, it had a Truth and Reconciliation park, it had an Antarctic science precinct, and a commercial area as well. This was completely junked; completely thrown out after 10 years

and millions of dollars, because suddenly there was a stadium that was imposed upon us by the AFL as a cost to get the team that we deserve in our own right.

Now, the waste doesn't stop there. We're going to see waste across this project going forward for many, many years to come. Of course, this government then engaged the Tasmanian Planning Commission. This parliament, in fact, engaged the Tasmanian Planning Commission to assess the projects and, as best we can understand it, there was \$3.3 million spent on legal costs by the Macquarie Point Development Corporation, the government, to have this project assessed, maybe \$6 million for the Project of State Significance (POSS) process itself, only to be what? Completely ignored. The advice from the Tasmanian Planning Commission - with experts in planning, with experts in governance, experts in architecture, in finance - the advice was very clear: do not proceed with this project. It is a problem. It's going to have impacts on important values like the cenotaph, the heritage district, the traffic of the city. It's going to cost way more than it said it would cost. In fact, the very day the Planning Commission released its report, the Premier announced a third cost blowout from \$900 -odd million to the current price of \$1.13 billion. No-one expects the cost to stay there and, of course, it's going to cost the Tasmanian economy, and the Planning Commission said that it would diminish the economic welfare of all Tasmanians.

The stadium is going to be a case study in many years to come as to how not to waste money, how not to make bad decisions, because we are looking at a slow-moving train wreck. It's clearly going to blow out in costs. There are a whole lot of hidden costs that we don't even understand yet. They've already had to abandon one proposal for power - spent tens of thousands of dollars with TasNetworks to get a proposal to connect power to the site and a substation, and now that's abandoned. Of course, we're going to be borrowing hundreds upon hundreds of millions of dollars to develop this project, and that's going to cost us tens of millions of dollars - over \$40 million a year from the general government sector simply to service the debt. We're going to be borrowing money to service the debt to build the stadium.

This is a slow-moving train wreck that comes on top of other wasteful projects that the government seems to be keen to push on with. Common ticketing for buses, the AI accelerator project, \$10 million to a private developer of a convention centre at Launceston. Why is it that a developer should get \$10 million of public money? There's Marinus Link and, of course, Tasracing: a \$40 million subsidy a year for Tasracing, and a significant amount of that, almost \$10 million, to greyhounds - to torture greyhounds on the racetrack.

Time expired.

[11.55 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass) - Thanks to the Labor Party for bringing forward this matter of public importance today. I'm pleased to speak to it. I thank Ms Butler, the honourable member for Lyons, for raising it. The origins of the MPI, of course, are grounded in a speech that the member made in relation to questions that were asked during Question Time of the Deputy Premier around the Risdon flooring, and I will come to that in a short minute. Before I do, the debate has moved on a little bit as different speakers have taken their turn, and I want to make a few comments about some of the infrastructure and other projects that have been contested by members who have raised them. First of all, there have been some major issues that have been singled out for special criticism, including the TT-Line project in Devonport, which is frankly a terrible mess the government has cleaned up - to its credit, it has cleaned it up. I want to thank Mr Winter in his absence. He has left the Chamber now, but he and the other members

of the Public Accounts Committee have done an investigation into that matter and I commend the report to all members.

I also want to bring up the fact that we have had different views on the stadium. I again note Mr Winter wanting to go through Treasurer Abetz's history on this. The way I see it is that Treasurer Abetz, before he was a member of this House, went from undecided or unconvinced to becoming decided and convinced on the stadium project whereas Mr Winter has not had the same journey, as he tried to claim. Mr Winter has gone from fierce opponent to supporter. That's a fairly big change and a fairly significant difference to the alignment he tried to claim with minister Abetz.

On the stadium, to the Greens, I have to say, I think that's a really interesting rendition of history from you, Mr Bayley, honourable member for Clark. The fact is that before the unnecessary election that you helped to take us to -

Mr Abetz - Costly.

Mr FERGUSON - Also the costly election. Oh, no one's talking about that waste of money. I think that should stand on the record. We actually had special legislation before the House to deal with the matter. You could have voted against it and we know you would have but nonetheless, we had a process. We had an opportunity to deal with the matter and to allow the elected members of this House to make a judgment on the stadium.

Mr Bayley - And you threw it out.

Mr FERGUSON - Well, Mr Bayley, thank you for your interjection. You took us to an unnecessary, costly election. You're as guilty for that decision as members of the Labor Party. You're as guilty.

Mr Abetz - That's right.

A member - But then he supported you to be government, so what are you complaining about? I thought it was just our fault.

Mr FERGUSON - You're as guilty. And as you - yeah, your grin.

Mr Bayley - Get a grip. Get a grip of yourself.

Mr FERGUSON - I like you. I think you're a good person and I like your good sense of humour -

Mr Bayley - That's a joke, that is.

Mr FERGUSON - but you're exposed. You've been found out. You have.

Mr Bayley - Oh yeah, you got me, didn't you? Oh yeah. You're so good at this.

Mr FERGUSON - An honest statement from you, Mr Bayley. Thank you, I agree.

Mr Abetz - Now you're being appreciated.

Mr Bayley - Tongue-in-cheek, just for the record, thanks very much.

Mr FERGUSON - Sometimes an interjection is an unwise decision. The fact is, as you know, during the subsequent caretaker period that took place, we know that the planning commission then advanced their legislative process that it was following - under what? The Project of State Significance process that was commissioned and then followed through, and then ultimately was the vehicle by which this House and the other place made their judgments on the matter.

I also want to make some comments about the prison kitchen. I want to let the House know I've not had a single member of the Bass electorate raise this with me as a concern. Not one, not a single person. You've made out like it's the number one issue for Tasmanians. Well, it isn't. The claim that we're not a government that's feeding our prisoners has been proven false.

Ms Butler - A state that can't feed their prisoners.

Mr FERGUSON - It shouldn't have been said. You've focused on a Victorian provider when in Question Time - and I have it in front of me - the Deputy Premier competently made clear that there's a lot of local provision of the food for our prisoners to have a nourishing, healthy, tasty meal.

Ms Butler - You can't think that's okay. You can't say this is alright.

Mr FERGUSON - National Pies, proud Tasmanian company; PFD Food Supplies, proud Tasmanian company; Launceston Catering Company; a proud northern Tasmanian company, and Custom Catering Moonah who I'm less familiar with. They're stepping in to meet the issue of the meals.

On the cost, I think it's fair for the Labor Party to bring this up, but do it in a proper way. The fact is the government, through its contract and through the department's contracting is seeking redress through that process under the contract. The appropriate steps are being taken. The Labor Party, on the other hand, are not being responsible with the way they've raised these issues today.

[12.00 p.m.]

Mrs GREENE (Bass) - I do find it really quite amusing that the honourable member for Bass, Michael Ferguson, opted to speak on this MPI today about waste, given his role in the *Spirit of Tasmania* ferry and berth debacle - a project that was meant to grow our economy.

Mr Ferguson - Would you have me not speak?

Mrs GREENE - Yes, I would. That project's become a huge mess of cost blowouts and poor planning and delays - waste. We're in a budget crisis, and each government department has an efficiency dividend. Seventeen-hundred-plus public sector jobs are going. We're told that the State Service has to shrink, and the people who are paying for those decisions are the public sector and the communities that they serve. Those opposite talk about rightsizing the public service as though you can just cut jobs and it's not going to affect services, but when you cut people from the public sector, you lose knowledge and you lose experience. You lose

the people who understand how government actually works, and you lose the people who can manage projects, people who oversee contracts, design infrastructure and give advice to ministers and government departments.

The work still has to be done, and so it's going to get outsourced, and in Question Time this morning, Labor outlined a body of work that has been outsourced to a company in Victoria, work that was previously being done by a project team in the Department of State Growth. Where is the transparency around these decisions, and what is the cost? When we're cutting public sector roles and then paying a private company to provide the expertise that you just got rid of - it doesn't make any sense, and Tasmanians are going to pay either way. Quite often they end up paying more. That's how privatisation creeps in. We know that the honourable Treasurer likes small government, and we know that outsourcing begins by underinvesting in our public services. First, the team gets smaller, then they struggle to do the work, then someone decides that the department no longer has the capacity to do that work internally. Then the contract goes out and you get more consultants and more Labor hire, and it costs a huge amount of money and often results in worse services for Tasmanians.

Each time that happens, the government becomes a little more dependent on the private sector to do the work that it used to be able to do itself. That capability is very hard to rebuild once it's gone. One of the worst examples, and it's one I've mentioned in this place many times before, is the outsourcing of work that occurred in child safety services last year. There was a backlog of notifications relating to child abuse and neglect, some 2000 referrals, which the former minister for children and youth, the honourable Roger Jaensch, outsourced to Tradewind, a labour hire company based in Melbourne and Sydney. He was very proud of that decision. He tried to justify it. Well, I say outsourcing the state's most vulnerable people is an absolute disgrace and Tasmanians deserve better. Tasmanians deserve a strong public service and we need people inside government who know how the state systems actually work and can tell ministers when a proposal doesn't stack up.

Government waste has consequences, and the consequences are cuts. Child safety and youth justice workers are currently facing a 40 per cent reduction in their retention allowance. They took industrial action last week to raise their concerns. These are people who already do extraordinarily difficult work, and it's really difficult to recruit and train people in those roles, to keep people there. After everything that Tasmania has learnt through the commission of inquiry and the failures in our child safety systems, cutting the allowance that's designed to keep experienced staff there just makes no sense.

I'd also encourage you all to look at Service Tasmania at the moment. In Queenstown, in Oatlands and Flinders Island Service Tasmania shopfronts, they're reducing their opening hours. These aren't communities that can just go, you know, 10 minutes down the road to another shop. You might be able to do that if you live in Hobart, but if you live on Flinders Island, there's no other option. If you live in Oatlands, the next centre is, what, Longford? In Queenstown, it's a very long way away until the next Service Tasmania centre. At the moment, they're not open until lunchtime on a Monday. There are days when they're closed for almost a full day, and I don't think that's going to get any better.

When a government cuts jobs and services, the community suffers. People in our community notice when the doors aren't open. They know that they're having to wait longer already. They notice when there are fewer people left to help them. We're talking here about the services that people really rely on, particularly services in our regional communities.

Tasmania has skilled public servants, but what we haven't had is a government willing to properly use that capability, to invest in it -

Time expired.

[12.05 p.m.]

Ms DOW - I rise to speak on this matter of public importance, and a matter of public importance it is, Deputy Speaker. I've sat in here and I've listened quietly to all of what's been said around this issue. I want to point out a couple of facts on the record. The first is that it was actually the Premier who called an early election and it is yet another example of the waste of this government. It's not the first time that this Premier has done that. Each time the Premier has done that it has been because of instability in this parliament and instability and the undermining of his government. It was due to a lack of confidence in that instance, but in the previous instance back in 2024 it was due to the instability within his own team.

The Treasurer came in here and spoke about delays to the stadium project, but what he didn't talk about was the conflict on his side of the House around this project. I call to the memory of the House previous members Lara Alexander and John Tucker. It was actually those two members of the government who defected to the crossbench because of their dissatisfaction with the transparency and the waste of this government. It was those two who then informed the POSS process which came to this parliament, which has been pointed out by others, but at all times, these measures and steps were taken by this Premier and this government in order to keep themselves in government and in power.

That's the problem we have in Tasmania. We have a government that puts the Liberal Party first every single time, and the waste that Tasmanians will now have to pay for after 13 years of this Liberal government is a product of that. That's plain and simple, Deputy Speaker.

Others have spoken about different projects such as the *Spirits*, and I'll get to that in a moment. I will always take the opportunity to speak about the waste in the state's most important infrastructure project, but I just wanted to reel off a couple of reports and reform processes that this government has done that have absolutely achieved nothing and I think demonstrate the waste of this government. This is waste that Tasmanians are now paying for through proposed budget cuts, which we've discussed in this House at length this week. That is the local government reform bill - \$3 million. It all got too hard, there was a little bit of internal rupture in the Liberal Party and so they stopped that process.

We've had feasibility study after feasibility study into things such as shipping on King Island, a second crossing across the Cam River in my electorate, and the need for new crisis accommodation at the North West Women's Shelter that's gone absolutely nowhere. This government always points to reports and feasibility studies to kick issues down the road and not address them. They are another example of waste they have used at election time to say that they're doing something about an issue but never following through or delivering for the people of Tasmania.

As I said, there is no greater example of waste from this government than the *Spirit of Tasmania* project. When you look at waste, you look at wasted economic opportunity as well. These ships have been delayed five years. Every year that they have been delayed there's been a half-a-billion-dollar hit to the economy that could have led to more jobs and economic activity

right across our state. Our tourism industry, our farmers, our producers, particularly in my region, have suffered from that lack of action by the government and delay that was caused by the incompetence.

To have the former minister come in here and have no accountability around that - the minister who said to the heads of the GBEs in Tasmania that they needed to go to the sandpit and sort out their issues - I find that atrocious. Tasmanians will be paying for this project for generations. It doesn't stop when the new vessels pull up at that berth, hopefully at the end of October. The *Spirit of Tasmania* as an entity is being put under extreme financial pressure by this government and just last week, we called for this government to be upfront about the ongoing costs that will be endured by the Tasmanian community when we continue to have those other two ships on the market when they're not in service.

It is entirely the actions of this government and the waste of this government that has put the financial pressure that is on TT-Line right now, and that will be endured across future generations. The government should say what their plan is for the current vessels and be more upfront about the sale process and what parameters they'll put around that when the cost for storing them outweighs the valuation of those vessels.

Deputy Speaker, there's waste largesse wherever you look across this government. They're never accountable for their actions, and this is a very important matter of public importance.

Time expired.

Matter noted.

JUSTICE AND RELATED LEGISLATION (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL (NO. 2) 2025 (No. 39)

JUSTICE AND RELATED LEGISLATION (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2026 (No. 12)

Bills returned from the Legislative Council with Amendments.

[12.11 p.m.]

Mrs ARCHER (Bass - Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing) - Honourable Speaker, I move -

That the last two mentioned messages be taken into consideration at a later hour.

Motion agreed to.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

The SPEAKER - I'd now like us to all welcome to the public gallery members of Tasmania's hospital auxiliaries who have travelled from all around Tasmania to join us all here today. On behalf of the Parliament of Tasmania, we want to thank you all for your dedication,

generosity and incredible contribution and difference that you make in our hospitals, health services and communities right around Tasmania. It's wonderful to have you all here today and we hope you enjoy your visit to our parliament. Thank you for joining us.

Members - Hear, hear.

MOTION

Music Activities for Health Ageing

[12.12 p.m.]

Prof RAZAY (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I move-

That the House

- (1) Acknowledges that participation in music enhances physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing, contributes to healthier and more active ageing for older Tasmanians, and also encourages important inter-generational connections.
- (2) Recognises that many older Tasmanians face financial barriers to participate in musical pursuits – including choirs, orchestras, community bands and singing groups – despite the significant health and wellbeing benefits these activities provide to both individuals and communities.
- (3) Agrees that investment in preventative health measures that promote lifelong learning, creativity, and social connection can improve quality of life, reduce loneliness and support healthy ageing while strengthening community connection.
- (4) Calls on the Government to:
 - (a) broaden the Ticket to Wellbeing program to include music activities as a means of promoting healthy ageing, social connection and wellbeing; and
 - (b) encourage partnerships between all tiers of government, community organisations and music providers to maximise access and participation across the state.

To some, the subject of this motion might seem minor, especially as we focus - quite rightly in this Chamber - on big issues, but in my experience, it can be the small things that quite often have the greatest impact. When times get tough, and they are tough at the moment with cost-of-living pressures affecting so many households, it can be the little things that give us comfort, hope and some much-needed joy, so today I am speaking to the power of music and it is perhaps timely, given the outpouring of grief for Dolly Parton, a true music icon loved around the world, who used her gift to bring people together.

For many Tasmanians, especially older Tasmanians, access to music, creativity and community can make a real difference to health, wellbeing, confidence and quality of life. My question is: how can we help more older Tasmanians take part in low-cost, community-based musical pursuits with an aim to keeping them connected, confident and healthy? I think part of

the answer lies in the tremendous success of the Ticket to Wellbeing program which focuses on sport and active recreation.

I am proposing that the government broaden this scheme to include music participation. It could be a music or connection pass, if you like, a \$100 voucher to help people register with an orchestra, a community choir, a ukulele ensemble, a folk group, a community band, or another local music activity. This would be an investment in practical prevention, keeping older members of our community actively involved in our community and, in doing so, promoting physical and mental wellbeing.

Honourable Speaker, a growing body of research supports the idea that music is not a luxury or a fringe activity but a contributor to healthy ageing. The World Health Organisation has reviewed more than 3000 studies on arts and health. It concluded that art participation can support prevention and help in the treatment and management of illnesses across the course of one's life. Music is one of the most accessible forms of art participation because it can be enjoyed alone or with others through listening, singing, dancing, learning, performing, or joining a community group. For older people, the benefits appear to be both cognitive and social.

A Monash University study of 10,893 Australians aged 70 and over found that people who always listen to music had a 39 per cent lower risk of dementia and 17 per cent lower risk of cognitive impairment compared to those who never, rarely or only sometimes listen to music. A 2025 systematic review and meta analysis of 33 randomised controlled trials involving 3058 older adults found that music therapy significantly improved cognition, memory and executive function. Another review of music interventions for depression in people aged 60 and over found that active music therapy delivered for more than 60 minutes per week by a music therapist was the most effective option.

In addition, the therapeutic power of music has also been shown to be effective in management of patients with dementia and Parkinson's disease. I remember one of my patients in his 80s had severe Parkinson's disease. He couldn't speak and he couldn't move easily. One day in my ward run I played music, I chose *Con te partirò* - he was an Italian - and I put it near his ears and suddenly his eyes lit up. I left it for a minute or two and he enjoyed it. Next ward run, I thought I will play him another one. I tried this time *O sole mio*. This time, he moved his hand and he held the phone, so I left the phone with him. Music can lift up people's spirits.

Moreover, a recent meta-analysis showed that playing a musical instrument was associated with reduced risk of dementia among older adults, and suggested that older adults should be encouraged to engage in musical activity. In addition, singing and karaoke have also been shown to reduce the risk of dementia.

Music has been shown to engage many areas of the brain, activating subcortical and cortical regions, including the hippocampus, amygdala and prefrontal cortex, which are involved in memory. This can be seen on brain and neuroimaging. It showed that listening to music lights up multiple areas of the brain and playing an instrument sparks fireworks - yes, the impact on the brain is so amazing that researchers coined the term's 'fireworks' - with the auditory, motor and visual cortexes all firing messages back and forth at a very high speed. Playing a musical instrument has also been shown to promote neuroplasticity, which is the brain's ability to produce neurons and change its activity in response to stimuli by reorganising its structures, functions and connection.

Moreover, learning music can strengthen connection between the two hemispheres. Professional musicians playing instruments have been found to have an unusually thick corpus callosum, which is the bridge that connects between the two brain hemispheres, much in the way that athletes can grow their muscles. The corpus callosum is like a highway with many lanes which allows a fast transfer of information between the right and left side of the brain. Moreover, having a thinner bridge, with fewer lanes, leads to congestion of information and slowing down physically and mentally, resulting in memory problems and dementia, balance and walking difficulty as in the case of a condition called normal pressure hydrocephalus. A simple act of singing has also been shown to release endorphins, dopamine and serotonin which lifts the spirit and lowers anxiety. It also has been shown to lower stress hormones like cortisol and can synchronise heart rates in group settings, creating a calming and meditating effect.

The wellbeing benefits are not limited to clinical outcomes. Music can reduce isolation, provide routine and purpose, and create a sense of belonging. Group singing, community bands, orchestra, ukulele groups, choir, and informal jam sessions all provide opportunity for older people to leave the house, meet others, practise a skill, be heard and contribute to something shared. These are protective factors for mental health and resilience, particularly after bereavement, retirement, illness or changes in mobility. In public policy terms, music participation is therefore highly relevant to prevention. It supports the same goals already recognised in sport, active creation and healthy ageing strategies, which are connections, confidence, participation, prevention and quality of life. A modest voucher or participation scheme would not replace clinical care or formal music therapy, but it could help older Tasmanians overcome cost barriers and join a community music activity that already exists across the state.

I recognise that former music therapy may be available through some support pathway including the NDIS, but we have seen the recent scaling back of the federal government contribution to that. This proposal, therefore, is about something broader and more everyday and something that we as a state could provide; regular participation in music as a community activity, social activity and prevention activity.

Honourable Speaker, the government's 20-year prevention strategy, the Health Revolution, is described as a framework to help more Tasmanians to stay well, prevent illness and live life to the fullest. It's pleasing that the government has extended the Ticket to Wellbeing program for a further two years until 30 June 2028. Under the program, Tasmanians aged 65 and over who are listed on the Service Australia Healthcare or Pension concession card can apply for a \$100 voucher. This can be put toward sport or active recreation membership or registration with an approved activity provider.

I applaud this initiative and its success in keeping Tasmania active, connected and healthy. Over the Tickets to Wellbeing two year trial, 9500 Tasmanians received the voucher. I understand that tai chi was in demand along with golf and bowls, but the program covers a wide range of activity including - I am pleased to say - dancing, which combines music and physical activity. According to government data, in the first round of vouchers, one in ten participants took up a new sport, which is just amazing.

As good as it is for you, not everyone wants to or can play a sport. This is where music might be the answer to getting people out of the house, trying something new and finding

people to connect with, finding their people while giving their brain a workout. The Australian Bureau of Statistics 2025 general health survey found almost half of Australians, 48 per cent, participated in cultural activities in the 12 months before the survey. So, there is an appetite for cultural pastimes.

Honourable Speaker, in just my electorate of Bass, there are so many examples of how music is connecting people. Jackie Barnes, who runs the Launceston Ukulele and Guitar Jam, which meets fortnightly at Launceston Bowls and Community Club, says the power of music to promote social connections shouldn't be underplayed. She tells me that the oldest player at her regular jam is 86 and the lead guitarist in the house band is 83. Ms Barnes says it's a safe space where everyone is made to feel welcome: 'We have people from all walks of life, some might have been through domestic violence, others have lost their partners, others are undergoing cancer treatment and we nurture and support them. It's a lovely community we have built.' She says that some of the people who come to jam session say that it is the highlight of their week and she can see their confidence and self-esteem grow. This commenter on a group of Facebook probably sums it up best:

I always feel happier when I leave than when I arrive every time. No better reason for turning up every fortnight.

Vanessa Clark, with the UTAS Community Music Program, says that such programs exists because of the goodwill of volunteers, yet their impact reaches far and wide. The community music program has around 130 participants of all ages, but there is strong representation among seniors. Ms Clark says that these orchestras create a sense of belonging. They are a place to be seen, heard, and valued, strengthening the wellbeing of the wider communities. Darren Papworth, the musical director of the Launceston City Band - which celebrates it's 150th anniversary this year - says what he loves most about the band is its great sense of community. He says:

We have people from all walks of life and all levels of musical ability meeting up every week. And no matter how old you are, you can take part.

Take the band's oldest member, Stoli, now in his 80s, who has been playing cornet with the Launceston City Band for 60 years. For Stoli, it's not a band, it's a family.

In halls and club rooms scattered throughout our suburbs and country towns, these programs are being delivered week after week. Many of them run on the goodwill of volunteers. They are not about profit, they are about people. The question is: how many more older Tasmanians would find their way to one of these often life-changing groups if a small voucher helps them to remove the cost barriers?

Honourable Speaker, then there is the intergenerational connection that music can create: a community orchestra, a choir, a band, or a jam session can bring children, parents, grandparents, and older residents into the same room, working towards the same song and the same performance. In those settings, skills and stories are passed both ways; younger people gain confidence and learn from experience, while older people are valued for what they know, what they can teach, and what contributions they can make. These kinds of connections build empathy, respect, and a stronger sense of community across age groups.

Monte Mumford OAM, founder of the UTAS Community Music Program and recognised internationally as a conductor, educator, adjudicator, and clinician, says music is a rare space that allows for intergenerational connection. He says that Tasmania has a real chance to be a leader in this area, recognising and championing music to promote healthy, happy, and connected communities. We have the opportunity to create a blueprint that the rest of the nation can follow.

Honourable Speaker, I also want to recognise today that for children, the benefits of music participation are equally compelling. Learning an instrument, singing in a choir, or playing in an ensemble can strengthen concentration, memory, listening skills, language development, and emotional regulation. It also teaches persistent teamwork and confidence. Just as sport gives young people a place to belong, music can give children a pathway into friendship, discipline, creativity, and community life.

Honourable Speaker, I have spent my first year in politics putting forward motions to promote health and wellbeing with a focus on the importance of physical activity in the prevention of disease, especially dementia. My message has been simple: just walking three kilometres a day can reduce the risk of dementia by 25 per cent. The inspiration for today's motion on music and wellbeing came from a 95-year-old woman who I met in a restaurant two months ago. She looked at me and smiled. Her daughter explained that she had been following my work, so I gave her a copy of my book. I met this wonderful 95-year-old lady recently and she told me that she had read my book and decided to go back to playing the piano, giving her a new reason to get up every morning.

The government's Health Revolution talks about belonging, connection, and resilience. The fact is that with around a quarter of the Tasmanian population aged 65 and over, fostering social connection has never been more important. It improves the quality of life and supports better outcomes for health and wellbeing. Music gives people a reason to leave the house, to learn, to practise, to listen, to be heard, and to belong. If we already recognise the preventive value of sport and active recreation, we should also recognise the preventive value of music and community culture. A virtual system promoting access to music will help older Tasmanians to stay active, connected, confident and well. With that, I commend the motion to the House

[12.31 p.m.]

Mrs ARCHER (Bass - Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing) - I rise today in support of the motion and acknowledge the important role that music can play in improving health and wellbeing across our communities. I thank the member for bringing this motion forward and for his ongoing commitment to preventive health measures that reduce loneliness and support healthy ageing while strengthening community connections.

It highlights an area that is receiving growing attention both in Australia and internationally as researchers, health professionals, and communities continue to explore how creative activities can contribute to healthier lives. The evidence tells us that participation in music and other creative pursuits can support health and wellbeing across all stages of life. Research has shown that these activities can strengthen social connection, reduce loneliness, improve mood, support emotional wellbeing and help people feel more connected to their communities. Importantly, music and the arts are often accessible, enjoyable and community-based. It brings people together and creates opportunities for participation that can benefit both individual wellbeing and community connection. I understand that while the evidence varies

depending on the intervention, there is a strong and growing body of research supporting the positive contribution that creative activities can make to health and wellbeing.

As the honourable member has said, this approach aligns strongly with the vision of Tasmania's 20-year preventive health strategy, the Health Revolution. The strategy is about placing prevention at the heart of our health system and demonstrating the future we want for Tasmanians now and for generations to come. We want a future where more Tasmanians can live well, stay well, and have the support they need to live life to the fullest. We know that when people have stable housing, secure jobs, access to education, safe transport, healthy food and strong social connections, they are far more likely to enjoy good health. These things sit outside hospital walls and they're central to wellbeing.

The Health Revolution sets a long-term direction for action across government, services, communities and sectors. We're prepared to be bold, think long-term and lead with ambition. We know that it takes people working together across sectors and across governments to tackle the root causes of these health outcomes. It recognises the importance of connection, participation, belonging and creating communities where people can thrive.

The first action plan establishes a framework for improving health and wellbeing over the next 20 years by addressing the factors that influence health across the course of people's lives. Importantly, the strategy is not intended to prescribe every individual program or initiative. Instead it provides broad direction for action that allows communities, organisations and services to develop evidence-based approaches that meet local needs.

Music can be part of that approach, whether it's a community choir reducing social isolation, a dance program encouraging physical activity, a music program supporting mental wellbeing or arts activities helping older Tasmanians stay connected. These initiatives can contribute to the objectives of preventive health, and we have seen examples of this already in Tasmania.

Through Healthy Tasmania funding, our government supported projects that have used music, dance, and creative activities to strengthen mental wellbeing, increase social connection, encourage participation and improve access to health information. Examples include Beaker Street, Second Echo Ensemble, Drill Performance Company and Big Heart that have used creativity to reach people in meaningful ways, while community projects on King Island and in Bridgewater have helped strengthen wellbeing and bring people together.

These projects demonstrate what can be achieved when communities are empowered to design solutions that work for them. Looking to the near future, our older Tasmanians can engage in music through activities scheduled next month for the Seniors Month program. Our government supports the Council on the Ageing with \$400,000 for Seniors Month and digital inclusion. I encourage members to take the time to look over next month's program. Featured on this program includes Strum and Sing together with the Fuchsias, the Bellerive Sound Museum, and a Discover, Create and Connection movement workshop in Bridgewater. Many of the Seniors Month activities are no- or low-cost and a great way to engage in music or other activities to increase community connections.

I'd like to also briefly touch on the role of music and dance for people living with dementia. We know that music can be a powerful way to help people stay connected, engaged and involved, and it can bring back memories, encourage interaction and help strengthen

connections with family, friends and carers. While music is not a cure for dementia, it can make a real difference to a person's wellbeing and quality of life. Many families and aged care providers have seen first-hand how familiar songs can create meaningful moments of connection. Early research also suggests dance can help improve mood, support physical activity and encourage social participation. Together, music and dance can help people remain active, connected and engaged in their communities. This aligns closely with our preventive health goals of supporting healthy ageing, reducing social isolation and helping Tasmanians stay connected throughout their lives.

Today's motion presents opportunities for Tasmania to continue learning from best practice and participating in national conversations about creative health. Our government continues to invest in preventive health through initiatives such as Ticket to Play, Ticket to Wellbeing, Healthy Tasmania grants, and infrastructure that supports active lifestyles. I look forward to exploring how music can be further supported as part of these efforts, recognising its role in promoting wellbeing, social connection and healthier communities.

[12.37 p.m.]

Ms BROWN (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise today to speak on the motion brought to this House by Prof Razay, and I do so as the shadow minister for the Arts. From the outset, I'll say that Labor will be supporting this motion, because this is an issue that I hear about very regularly in Franklin and all throughout Tasmania, of Tasmanians finding purpose later in life through music and art. Really, once they open themselves up to the arts sector, they really find their people, so this is something that's really important that speaks to that.

Quite rightly, in your first point, Prof Razay, you really speak to that with saying:

Participation in music enhances physical activity, mental, emotional and social wellbeing, contributing to healthier and more active ageing for older Tasmanians, and also encourages important intergenerational connections.

We know that the benefits are well understood. We know that music brings people together. It provides opportunities for everyone to participate in creativity, connection and inclusion, and it can play a huge role in helping older Tasmanians remain active, engaged and connected within our communities.

This is why it is just so disappointing that the honourable Premier has unleashed his one-man razor gang, the honourable Treasurer, Eric Abetz, to attack the arts right across the sector. Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG) has been given the direction to reduce its permanent staffing by 30 per cent, and I note the honourable minister, Mr Jaensch, has still not set the record straight on exactly how many FTE that is. Screen Tasmania has been left with only 1.8 FTE to cover the entire state in gaming and screen. The fact is, this government talks the talk when it comes to supporting the arts. Indeed, they do talk a big game. However, they simply do not walk the walk. It's just so disappointing to see the gutting of this sector and the reduction in Tasmanians having access to the arts, because we know how important it is.

That brings me to point two of this motion, which recognises that many older Tasmanians face financial barriers to participate in musical pursuits, including choirs, orchestras, community bands and singing groups, despite the significant health and wellbeing benefits

these activities provide both individuals and communities. We know that Tasmanians are doing it tough, particularly older Tasmanians. We understand the enormous health and wellbeing benefits that come along with participating in groups such as this. Choirs, orchestras, community bands and singing groups do more than just provide opportunities to make music. They create friendships, combat social isolation, build confidence and strengthen communities, which we all benefit from. That is why Labor supports Professor Razay's recognition of financial barriers and the importance of ensuring that participation in music is accessible to all Tasmanians, regardless of your background.

I'll now turn to paragraph (4) of this motion, which calls on the government to broaden the Ticket to Wellbeing program to include musical activities as a means of promoting healthy ageing, social connection and well-being, and encourage partnerships between all tiers of government, community organisations and musical providers to maximise access and participation right across the state.

Honourable Speaker, as I flagged earlier, Labor supports this motion because getting involved in music at every stage of life is a very good thing. It promotes lifelong learning and creativity. It provides opportunities to foster lifelong friendships. It strengthens communities and helps people remain connected and engaged. Importantly, it recognises that the arts are not a luxury but an essential part of a healthy, connected and vibrant community in which we all belong. Unlike those on the Liberal benches, Labor will always support more arts, more music, more creativity and more life in our communities, and for those reasons we support this motion.

[12.42 p.m.]

Ms ROSOL (Bass) - I rise to speak in support of this motion and thank Prof Razay for bringing this to us today. I also want to welcome the hospital and healthcare facilities auxiliary volunteers in the gallery upstairs and I look forward to meeting some of you at the reception soon.

As I said, the Greens support this motion. It makes some very important points. There's been a lot said already in this debate about the importance and value of music and the arts in general to physical health, mental health and wellbeing. Prior to being elected I worked in mental health and did some study in the area of creative arts and I also did an art therapy course. It is well established that creative arts therapies have a really important role to play in people's wellbeing at whatever stage of their life.

I live that out a little bit personally in my life as well. I'm a member of a community choir myself and on those weeks when we're not sitting in parliament, I'm able to go along to rehearsals and performances and definitely feel the physical, mental and emotional impacts in a positive way of being in a choir. I'm in Vox Harmony Choir which has 70 members across the whole age range and it's a really beautiful place to connect with each other, sing together and enjoy the benefits that Professor Razay referred to in his speech earlier.

We know that the arts and music are important in the health and wellbeing of people and I want to draw out one of the points in paragraph (1) of the motion, which is about the importance of intergenerational connections. We know that community organisations provide a really great opportunity for people of all ages to meet together and share something in common and we definitely see that in arts organisations where all sorts of people from the whole spectrum of the lifespan can come and meet together, so there are many benefits to music for health and wellbeing.

In terms of paragraph (2) of the motion, the financial barriers that older Tasmanians face, there are significant financial barriers to people being able to participate in what you might call activities of enjoyment or pleasure. The cost of living at the moment is incredibly high and we know the reality is that many people are struggling to get by. They're making difficult decisions between food, fuel, rent and power. There's really not a lot of money left at the end of a fortnight, particularly for people who are on the pension, to have anything left over to be able to put towards musical pursuits or things for enjoyment and recreation. That's where Ticket to Wellbeing has been such a great program in the state because it has provided support for older Tasmanians to participate in activities that are great for their health and wellbeing that they otherwise would not have been able to, because they're able to use that Ticket to Wellbeing voucher to pay for the fees to be part of a club and get all the benefits of that.

It was great to hear earlier this year that the Ticket to Wellbeing program has been extended and now goes through until 2028, and how amazing would it be if it was broadened, as in this motion, to include musical activities as well so that people had a choice about the things they go to, because there are some people who may not be physically fit enough to do some of the physical activities but would still benefit from being able to participate in musical activities and feel the joy and wellbeing that comes from that. That's why we support this and recognise it as an important part of enabling older Tasmanians to live well.

I want to affirm the Greens commitment to valuing older Tasmanians and their right to live well and age well. That's what we're talking about here: having access to activities that help them to age well and to be treated with respect and have their rights respected and be treated with dignity, and what better way to do that than helping them join with other people participating in activities that they may not be able to do any other way.

I note earlier that the member for Franklin, Ms Brown, mentioned the propensity of this government to talk the talk but not always follow through with actions. I want to speak about that particularly in relation to older Tasmanians. The Greens have had people approach us with deep concerns about the situation that some older Tasmanians are living in. They're isolated in their communities and many of them are in pretty dire situations. Last week we were able to host a round table in Launceston where we had more than 25 people join, between people in the room and people online, and we talked about the needs of older isolated Tasmanians.

One of the issues that came up as a problem that people see as contributing to the isolation of older Tasmanians is around silos and a disconnect sometimes within services. For example, within state services, people talked about the disconnect there, but also there's a lot of disconnect between the different levels of government and the services they provide for older Tasmanians.

I note in paragraph (4)(b) of this motion it talks about the importance of the different tiers of government and community organisations being encouraged to partner with each other. That was certainly something that came up in the conversation last week about the need to really map out services that are available, to have role clarity about who does what and to work at removing the silos there are in the services that are available for older Tasmanians.

There are many things that we can be doing to support older Tasmanians to age well and to enjoy life and get the most out of every day. We can be working on doing better service provision and we can also be doing things like expanding the Ticket to Wellbeing to include

music so that older Tasmanians have the opportunity to participate in musical activities, enjoy life and experience all the beautiful benefits of that.

[12.50 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark) - Thank you, Speaker. I rise today to support this amazing and wonderful motion. Prof Razay, you know I love rock'n'roll so you are singing my song with this motion. The last time I spoke in depth about music, we were putting a band together. I remember there were bagpipes, Minister Pearce, there was the oboe, I think we were going to include the saxophone and I've now just discovered we have a flautist and lead singer in our midst.

A member - No singing.

Ms OGILVIE - Oh, she says 'no singing', but anyway, very good. So, all our wind instruments so far. Looking for a drummer.

Mr George - Parliamentary band.

Ms OGILVIE - Yes, that's right. Do you play the drums?

Mr George - I could.

Ms OGILVIE - Tambourine for you. Triangle for you. I jest, but I do love music, and we've bored you all in this Chamber many times with my childhood fun with the Tasmanian Youth Orchestra, and I have to say the word oboe because there's oboe bingo that goes on, I believe. Music is such a powerful force for bringing people together. It's great for the brain, it's great for your schoolwork, for learning maths, and also concentration. I used to have to do an hour a night music practice. I felt like it was unusual and difficult sort of punishment, but it develops character, so that is a good thing too. Whether it's a child who's learning their first instrument or a young person performing in a band, an adult singing in a community choir - we've heard about that tonight - or older Tasmanians joining or rejoining or picking up the oboe again later in life. I'm sure we have musicians up there. Musicians? Yes? People still playing? They don't want to confess, but I feel like we have some pianists up there. We'll see.

As Prof Razay has noticed in this motion, music benefits us in so many ways, and it's for everybody. We want everybody to have an opportunity to contribute and to be part of it, to be part of the cultural fabric that makes Tasmania such a wonderful place. We all know that Tasmania has an arts and culture sector that punches well above its weight, and I know this as the former minister, a particular interest in music, and our incredible arts community. I can't say enough good things about our musicians, particularly from down the Huon, the bands, right up to the islands as well.

Our government is committed to supporting the sector as we see in the 2026-27 Budget, which included a \$10 million uplift for the arts. I was really proud of that. I think that's really important. It will assist the delivery of programs to support Tasmanian artists, musicians, filmmakers, arts workers, screen and games professionals - I love the gamers; great work they do - and take their games to market.

We will continue to strengthen our state's creative industries through targeted investments that deliver substantial cultural, social and economic returns. Our grants program

and industry development initiatives are designed to bolster the state's vibrant arts and culture heritage sectors, creating opportunities right across Tasmania. In our beautiful state, we're fortunate to have extraordinary musicians. I include you, Mr Pearce. I'm yet to hear you on the bagpipes, but I'm sure it's good. We are acutely aware that our creative industries support employment and economic activity, but more than that, they help tell Tasmanian stories. From large-scale festivals, concerts in regional towns, the arts contribute enormously to our shared identity. Now, these opportunities for participation, for belonging and expression are often difficult to achieve through other means, and we know that when we invest in the arts, we invest in people. This rings true particularly when we talk about music.

Participation in music has been shown to support cognitive development, improve concentration and memory - I'm getting the nods from the professor, feel like I'm on the right track here - strengthen communication skills and foster collaboration. Research has highlighted the positive influence that the arts participation can have on educational outcomes and broader personal development. For children, these benefits are particularly significant. Learning music fosters creativity and imagination and encourages discipline, builds confidence in young minds, showing persistence yields results and that joy is found in self-expression. It provides opportunities to set goals, overcome challenges and celebrate achievement. For many children, music becomes a pathway to discovering their talents and finding their place within a community.

This motion recognises these benefits and encourages greater participation among children and young people, and also recognises the significant contribution that music can make to healthy ageing. We've heard a lot about how that can work today already, so in the spirit of - and I've written my word down here, being 'allegretto', with my speech, Prof Razay - I will move onto the bits that I think we haven't covered yet in today's session. Participation in choirs, bands, musical groups, community performances - they do combat loneliness, they prevent social isolation. We want Tasmanians to remain active and connected throughout their lives. In a lifetime, our engagement evolves. Our lives change, we grow older, have families, change jobs. Our relationship with music may change during those seasons of life as well. So I believe it's fitting that this motion recognises another important benefit of music: its ability to foster intergenerational connection. In an increasingly busy and fragmented world, opportunities for meaningful connection between generations are invaluable. I should note that Tasmania's arts organisations are no stranger to tailoring programming to span generations.

The Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra (TSO) does just that. They have delivered live concerts in aged care homes with interactive performances where residents sing and engage with musicians. The TSO for Schools program, designed for primary and secondary students, reached more than 12,000 students in 2024, with the goal of having every Tasmanian child experience the orchestra by year 3. The TSO is committed to engaging children in music. We are a proud contributor, as a government, to the TSO. We allocate \$9.6 million over four years to support the orchestra's activities and industry development initiatives.

Government support for arts programming for young people extends beyond the TSO. Youth organisations such as DRILL Performance Company, Slipstream Circus and Young Voices of Hobart, offer rich programs that engage music and dance. Kickstart Arts and the Cygnet Community Arts Council have that youth focus, while Encore Theatre Company, Moonah Arts Centre and Burnie Coastal Art Group also deliver youth arts activities. Through

Arts Tasmania and Creative Tasmania, government continues to support artists, organisations, festivals, cultural programs and creative industries across our state.

Currently, arts and music funding does not include a subsidy for participants, Prof Razay - this will not be news to you. While the benefit of music is clear, it is important to acknowledge that not all Tasmanians have equal access to these opportunities. For many families, the cost of participation can be a significant barrier. Lessons, registration fees, instruments and travel can place pressure on household budgets. For older Tasmanians living on fixed incomes, participation costs can also create barriers. As Prof Razay has pointed out, many people who would benefit enormously from musical participation are simply unable to access the opportunities.

This motion calls on us to consider ways of improving that access. Tasmania has experienced supporting participation through practical programs - thank you, Mrs Archer. The Tasmanian Government's Ticket to Play program helps eligible young Tasmanians participate in organised activities, while Ticket to Wellbeing assists eligible older Tasmanians to engage in activities that support health and social cohesion. These programs represent a significant government investment. They demonstrate that government understands the value of preventative approaches that help people remain active, connected and engaged. This motion proposes that the government consider broadening those programs to include music as a means of promoting healthy living. Creative Tasmania, consisting of Arts Tasmania and Screen Tasmania, is geared towards providing support for professional and not-for-profit arts and screen industries. While these business units support an articulation of community benefit through economic impact, jobs and ancillary contributions to social health and wellbeing, there will be much to consider in any kind of program that subsidises costs for participation, so we'd have to work it through. The government will need to do some consultative work along the way, and examine options to resource a program that would help make music participation more affordable. This is a positive and constructive proposal.

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

MOTION

Music Activities for Healthy Ageing

Resumed from above.

Ms OGILVIE - In the immortal words of David Byrne of Talking Heads, 'You create community with music, not just at concerts, but by talking about it with your friends'. I support the motion.

[2.30 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Deputy Speaker, I rise this afternoon to make my contribution to this incredible motion before the House. There is no doubt that Professor Razay has added music, song, laughter, smiles, dance and joy to this Chamber and, in his motion, it is going to be fantastic that through this support we can extend that into the community, particularly into the older members of our community.

There is no doubt many of us, I'm sure, and many in the community were raised with music. We were raised perhaps with the joy, but maybe also the discipline, the benefits of what it does to the soul, what it does to the spirit, how it extends the mind and, as has been mentioned in this motion, particularly for older members of our community, many who may be living alone, many who may have had a competence and an enjoyment of actually playing, entertaining and/or performing, may, as they age, lose, those opportunities but shouldn't lose the opportunities to engage, to enjoy, to participate.

With many activities in our community, not just music, sometimes attending and participating but not being able to contribute also brings joy, allows the mind to continue to expand and be challenged and the heart to stay open and those community connections to grow. I'm sure we all have experiences with our own families, but I use my father as an example. I watch him engage with his friends and encourage them to go and try something new. At School for Seniors in Launceston, there are music classes and he enjoys inviting his friends to participate. He enjoys preparing for that and experiencing that. Whether it's choirs, whether it's singing groups, or whether it's dance, Professor Razay, with your tap dancing, but particularly around those vocal opportunities, there is no doubt that older members of our community who live in many different ways, at many different levels, and who in many different applications have contributed to our community and our lives, should have the opportunity to be supported to continue to do that in a really positive way in our community.

I commend the motion before the House. I love being in your world. You make it lighter and happier and more fun, and that's what this is about, to make sure that older members of our community also have the influence of that and the opportunities of that in our community. I commend the motion.

[2.33 p.m.]

Prof RAZAY (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I just can't stop smiling. I have to concentrate. I would like to thank all those who have contributed to today's motion. First, the honourable minister, Bridget Archer, Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing and Ageing, the honourable Meg Brown, the shadow Labor minister for ageing, the honourable Cecily Rosol, member for Bass, the honourable member for Clark, Madeleine Ogilvie, and the honourable shadow Deputy Leader, Janie Finlay, for all their support for this motion and recognition that art, music and dancing are so important for healthy ageing.

I hope we can continue to work together to achieve a great outcome in supporting our seniors. Perhaps a voucher system will not only place this activity to make it easy for everyone over the age of 65, but it will inspire people to take on new challenges in their lives. My own interest in music began 15 years ago when I decided to engage in learning new skills to prevent dementia. I spent many years discussing the treatment and prevention of dementia and, as they say, you should walk the walk, not just talk the talk, so I decided to learn music.

I started by joining the Launceston General Hospital choir and discovered, to my surprise, that I have a tenor voice. Then I decided to learn to play a musical instrument, so I joined the UTAS community music program in Launceston. My instrument of choice is alto saxophone. Then a few years later I decided to engage in activity to improve my balance to prevent falls, so I decided to join dance classes and I am enjoying tap dancing. I am lucky that I already have access to this activity, but for some it is not easy for them to access these activities. With Dementia Action Week coming up, I will be bringing my walking message south to mark the

week. It's a reminder that now is the time to invest in the wellbeing of older Tasmanians. As a state, we cannot afford not to. Thank you.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER

Criticism of the Speaker

[2.36 p.m.]

The SPEAKER - Before I call on the next order of business, I need to make a short statement to the House as a reminder of the rules regarding criticism of the Speaker's actions, either incidentally in debate or outside the House. Any reflection on the character or actions of a Speaker inside or outside the House is highly disorderly, as by convention a Speaker does not participate in public debate about matters that occur in the House except to clarify rulings. Therefore, a Speaker is not in a position to defend themselves against public reflection from a member. Any such criticism can only be done by way of a substantive motion.

Once again, I've been made aware of a social media post by the honourable member for Bass, Ms Finlay, reflecting on the reasons for her suspension from the House this morning. I want to make it very clear that the reason for the suspension of the honourable member was because of constant and loud interjections and failure to come to order when asked to do so. The Speaker is required by Standing Order 117 to maintain order in the House during proceedings.

This is the second time this year that the member has undertaken similar action on social media. On 24 March, I drew the House's attention to a similar incident and asked the member to withdraw her comment, which the member did. As the honourable member for Bass is now very well aware of the rules relating to this, I will have no alternative, if there are any future instances of this conduct, but to name the member.

Consistent with precedent, I now ask the honourable member for Bass to now withdraw her comment and to apologise.

Ms Finlay - Comment?

The SPEAKER - The comment that is on your Facebook page now and to apologise.

Ms Finlay - I withdraw.

The SPEAKER - And to apologise.

Ms Finlay - I apologise, Speaker.

MOTION

State Service Workforce Reductions

[2.38 a.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, a vote will be required. I move -

That the House

(1) Notes:

- (a) the 2026-27 State Budget outlines \$1.47 billion in operational efficiency savings and a reduction of at least 1,700 state service positions; and
- (b) the Government has not provided a comprehensive account of which jobs, services, programs, and contracts are being cut.

(2) Orders the Treasurer to table, by 6:00 p.m. Tuesday 27 October 2026, for every general government sector entity, covering the period since 21 May 2026, the following information:

- (a) any relevant agency plans, strategies or policies relating to the workforce reductions and savings outlined in the budget;
- (b) every:
 - (i) position vacated through a redundancy, including position title, band level, business unit, location and whether the position has been abolished, replaced or refilled;
 - (ii) position abolished or removed through a savings measure, restructure or workforce reduction, including position title, band level, business unit and location;
 - (iii) position left unfilled, frozen or abolished following resignation, retirement or other natural attrition, including position title, band level, business unit and location;
 - (iv) fixed-term employment, contractor, labour hire or consultancy arrangement discontinued, reduced or not renewed;
 - (v) program, service, unit, team or function abolished, discontinued or materially reduced; and
 - (vi) instance where work previously undertaken by an employee, contractor or position identified above has subsequently been outsourced or transferred to another provider, including the provider, location, contract value and duration.

- (c) the total headcount and FTE reduction, redundancy payments and recurrent savings for each agency; and
- (d) all new consultancy, contractor and labour-hire engagements entered into, including their value.

I'm not sure if I have 20 minutes in me today, honourable Speaker, though some may say that's good. We'll see how I go.

This motion is substantially around the Tasmanian Budget. The most important thing that this parliament does every year is to accept, pass, and scrutinise the Budget, and this seeks further clarification on the government's actions resulting from the Budget.

I'll start by moving an amendment to make this a little easier. The reason I'm doing this is that after the motion was tabled, the Treasurer and I sat down with the secretary of Treasury this morning and discussed the practical implications of the motion as it was drafted. I wanted to make sure that I wasn't causing any undue work for the public sector that is already under stress and obviously has important work to do. The amendment that I'm about to read out reflects the discussion that took place between the Treasurer and me, and I hope that that leads to us being able to agree today in the Chamber rather than having a big debate around the merits of the motion itself. I hope it can be agreed upon in the House and we can all get more information around the Budget.

I will move the motion - and I have distributed it, I think, to everyone, but if not, there's a copy there on my desk. I move -

That all words following 'the House' be left out

And insert instead;

- (1) Notes the 2026-27 State Budget outlines \$1.47 Billion in operational efficiency savings and a reduction of at least 1,700 State Service positions by 2029-30.
- (2) Orders the Treasurer to table by 6 p.m. Tuesday, 27 October 2026, covering the period from 1 July 2026 to pay period ending 9 September 2026, the following information:
 - (a) current approved savings for Agencies for the financial year 2026-27 and estimated FTE impacts, that will include agency restructures or service delivery changes;
 - (b) in relation to the approved savings;
 - (i) a listing of programs, services or functions to be reduced or amended;
 - (ii) a listing of positions vacated through a redundancy that includes position title, band level, business unit and location, including confirmation that the position has been abolished from the agency establishment;

- (iii) the aggregate number of positions unfilled, or abolished following resignation, retirement or other natural attrition including details of position title, band level, business unit, and location where this is possible through current system reporting;
- (iv) a listing of fixed term employment contracts ceased in the period;
- (v) a listing of contractor, labour hire or consultancy arrangements commenced or ceased in the period, including the contract value of those contracts commenced;
- (vi) where services in (i) have been outsourced or transferred to a provider, a listing of those services including the provider, location, contract value and duration of contract; and
- (vii) the total FTE reduction and value of redundancy payments in the period, with an estimate of the recurrent savings.

I'll table that now.

On the amendment, which hopefully will become the substantive motion, we seek this information today for very good reason. The 2026-27 Budget outlined almost \$1.5 billion worth of savings across the Budget and forward Estimates but unlike other budgets - I'm particularly talking about federal budgets that I've seen, but other state budgets as well - this budget didn't provide any real level of detail as to how these so-called efficiencies would be found. In fact, it takes until, I think, the second last page of budget paper No. 4 before you find this magical paper in Chapter 19 called 'Operational Efficiencies', where it lists across all the agencies the operational efficiencies that these agencies are expected to find.

Across that you find Brand Tasmania with \$136,000; Department of Education Children and Young People \$25 million - this is just for this current financial year. The Department of Health this financial year is expected to find savings of over \$131 million and it goes on, honourable Speaker, with no detail about what this actually means for the agencies themselves.

Mr Jaensch - You voted for it, didn't you?

Mr WINTER - For the Budget?

Mr Jaensch - Yes.

Mr WINTER - Okay. What the motion seeks to do is it seeks from the government, through the Treasurer, the answers to exactly how these efficiencies are being felt within the agencies and how they are being delivered. The stark one that that sticks out to me is the Health efficiency of \$131 million in this current financial year. We want to understand exactly what that means, where that's being felt in terms of the positions that are being made redundant, the voluntary redundancies in particular, the positions that might not be refilled, as outlined in the motion but then right through all of the agencies that are listed through these so-called operational efficiencies. I think that's important that the parliament does its job and holds the government to account and understands exactly what government is up to.

For context on this, I think it's important that we understand why we're here. Over the course of the last few years in particular, we have had a succession of reports that have outlined really deep concern about the state of Tasmania's budget. Economist Saul Eslake highlighted that the improvement seen in the bottom line in this year's Budget stemmed mostly from federal GST and grant windfalls, not from genuine government expenditure discipline. While the budget projects over \$1.4 billion in operational efficiency savings, he went on to warn that achieving these targets requires 'an unprecedented degree of expenditure restraint' from a government that has historically failed to control spending. This is something that will be quite outside of the sort of budget work that we've seen this government do over a long period of time.

We also saw the Treasury fiscal sustainability warning and the report that they issued which compared Tasmania to Greece and outlined concern that if there were no corrective actions taken, then Tasmania would end up with a net debt position of something like \$140 billion worth of net debt rather than the \$6.5 billion that we have at the moment if there isn't some kind of corrective action taken. That net debt growth has been driven by ongoing and major operating deficits as well as fiscal, cash, and underlying deficits that have seen successive budgets now post-COVID continue to deliver larger deficits and a larger net debt.

We should also remember and we should never forget that Tasmania is in this position coming from 2014, when the government inherited no net debt. In fact, there was \$208 million worth of net cash and investments in the bank - to the position we're in now, where, as of the preliminary outcomes report that was reported -

Mr Shelton - With deficits in the forward Estimates.

Mr WINTER - With deficits in the forward Estimates?

The SPEAKER - Order, just ignore the interjections. Interjections will cease, allow the honourable member for Franklin to make his contribution, please.

Mr WINTER - I do recall that period of time where there was no net debt, and in fact Tasmania was able to gain revenue from the cash and investments in the bank. Now, under this budget, we are expecting to spend around half a billion dollars a year just servicing debt - brought to us by only one political party, the Tasmanian Liberal Party, which has wrecked Tasmania's budget and led to the waste that we are living through right now. This is money that's being spent on interest rather than money that could be spent in our hospitals and in our schools. We're now seeing the Rockliff and Abetz cuts in our budget that are hurting Tasmanians and are likely to hurt more the longer this goes on for.

This is an important motion for the House to, I hope, agree to, because what it means is that we will not just see the headline figures of the sort of cuts that the government is putting forward in their budget, but we'll also see what that actually means. What are the positions that are being cut? What's the actual FTE reduction across those agencies? What are the plans within those agencies to achieve the savings targets? The concern that we have in what we've seen so far, particularly what we're hearing from the workforce - who I note were demonstrating this morning on Davey Street - is really important. Their concerns are for the services they provide, and for them and their workmates of course. There is a lack of strategy that seems to be around this. The approach that's been taken appears to have very limited or very little strategy, but is mostly about trying to achieve these numbers without actually understanding what services are

being cut and potentially not delivered in a way that keeps Tasmanians safe, healthy, and educated. These are the core functions of government.

I'm looking forward to hearing what the Treasurer has to say in terms of the government's approach to these operational efficiencies. I'm very pleased that, as I understand it, the government is now going to support this motion and the transparency that comes with that, and that they are prepared to table this information. I think that will help with the public debate. It demonstrates to Tasmanians that this parliament is prepared and willing to hold this government accountable. Also, from the government's point of view, I am very pleased that they are prepared to support this motion. It will add to public debate and will support Tasmanians to understand exactly what's going on with our budget.

[2.49 p.m.]

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Treasurer) - Speaker, I can indicate and support the commentary from the Shadow Treasurer. It matches how we agree to the terms of the motion. I would simply add to that that we note that our understanding is that the general government sector entities listed in Page 103, Chapter 19 in budget paper No. 4 of the 2026-27 State Budget, subject to operational efficiencies, are those which this motion seeks to address, and we intend to provide information to members on that basis. We also note that to support greater expenditure transparency, government has committed to release monthly financial reports commencing from November 2026, time constrained by audit processes for the period from 1 July 2026 in addition to all existing statutory reporting. With that said, I can indicate that, as a government - and I will put this caveat on our support for the motion - that we will use our very best endeavours to provide the information that is being sought.

The original request was a huge workload, and I thank the shadow treasurer for acknowledging that and, as a result, curtailing the motion to a certain extent. With the rewording, you would note that the motion came out at 249 words, coming in under the 250-word limit. A lot of work was done in being able to achieve that.

Having put that on the record, let me deal with the politics of this, and it's always useful to remind those in this place, especially those opposite, that they called an early, unnecessary, costly election on the basis of the need for 'budget repair'. Yet again, we have had a discussion here without a single alternative proposal being put before this House. Not a single alternate proposal. On the one hand, out of one side of the Labor mouth, we hear that the interest bill is too high. On the other side of the mouth, they tell us they don't want any rightsizing in relation to the public service or anything else. Now, you can't have it both ways. If you are genuine about the need for budget repair, if you want to see the interest component of the budget go down, then you do have to deal with the expenditure side of the budget, something that Labor has refused to deal with or acknowledge. No alternate budget, no solutions, no suggestion, just a shopping list of complaints. That is their right, but of course, it is the right of the people of Tasmania to come to the self-evident conclusion that Labor are not ready for government. They have no solutions. They can provide a list of points as to where they want to complain, but they don't provide us with any solutions.

We find ourselves in a situation that federal Labor finds itself in, and state Labor finds itself in up and down the east coast of Australia. What's that situation? The huge expenditure required as a result of COVID, after which the trend of that expenditure growth was allowed to continue. We can have a debate as to whether that was good, bad or indifferent, but we are where we are. The issue is: how do we bring back our budget into a situation where it is

sustainable, so that we can have the strong economy which is so vitally important if we want a caring community. That's why my colleagues and I are in this place - because we want a caring community, and we know it can only be sustainably underpinned if there is a strong economy. That is the reason that we focus on matters economic. It's not to try to win a prize in 'Economics 101' or pure economics. It is about the social dividend that can be delivered, and that is why our focus has been to continue to deliver the vital services Tasmanians need.

Before I came into this place, Labor told the people of Tasmania they had to put, I think, 200 hospital beds into storage. They had to sack nurses - I think one a day for nine months straight or something - because the Health budget had reached 28 per cent of the Budget, and that was completely and utterly unsustainable. Talk about caring? Today, Health is 35 per cent of the state Budget, because we put a premium on health and health services knowing that is what the people of Tasmania want, and that is what we are seeking to deliver. That is why, despite that which is said so repetitiously by those opposite, yes, we are seeking savings in Health, but at the end of the day over the forward Estimates, there's a \$580 million increase in Health expenditure.

However, when the state Budget has in it about 50 per cent of expenditure related to the public service, there is a need to rightsize the public service so that it is factored in with the size of our Tasmanian population. There was an exponential growth, quite understandable, during COVID, given all the factors with which government needed to deal. Having dealt with that now - well and truly over COVID - it is right and proper that we get back to rightsizing the public service for the benefit of the continuing public servants. Let's be very clear: if we don't rightsize, then the capacity to keep funding public servants will also be diminished.

Can I also say to those opposite, I just wish they would get on to the concept of Team Tasmania. Yes, and straightaway we get a groan from the opposition. I would've thought it would go without needing any discussion that everybody in this place ought be on Team Tasmania. Those opposite run protection for their federal Labor colleagues when they know that we have three hospital wards full of patients who are medically able to be discharged into aged care or disability care facilities - costing us well over \$70-\$100 million each year. That is part of the reason we are in this position. If you were genuinely concerned about our budget position, you would be saying, 'Come on, Canberra, come on, Labor colleagues up there, it is time you lived up to your responsibility.' Similarly, in relation to the percentage of Commonwealth contribution for our public hospital system, they promised 42 per cent of our public health expenditure, and what did they do? What was their idea? Cut state government expenditure so that their contribution would therefore be commensurately increased to the 42 per cent. We weren't going to be -

Mr Ferguson - 45 per cent.

Mr ABETZ - Or 45 per cent, thank you, member for Bass, Mr Ferguson. These are the areas where if Labor were genuinely concerned about budget repair, wanting transparency, wanting to support the people of Tasmania, there would be some very easy asks.

Similarly with Bell Bay this morning, they ran the protection racket for federal Labor, saying, 'What are you doing? What are you doing?' knowing full well, courtesy of minister Mr Duigan and others, what we have been doing. Yet not a squeak out of them in relation to what state Labor have done to advocate to federal Labor in Canberra that they might replicate

that which federal Labor has done for two other aluminium smelters in the country - just absolute silence.

Let's be very clear: we, on this side, are about engaging in ensuring that we balance our budget, that we look after our future generations, that we have a strong economy, which ensures that we can be the caring community that we, on this side at least, aspire to. What I would call on Labor to do is get on with a project of looking after Tasmania and get on to federal Labor to do their bit.

Time expired.

[2.59 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Honourable Speaker, I welcome this motion from the shadow treasurer, Mr Winter, and indicate upfront that we support it. We would've supported the original one but certainly welcome the constructive approach across the Chamber in terms of sitting down and resolving this in a way that is practical for Treasury staff and departmental officials to be able to deal with this. This, at its heart, is a transparency motion, and that is good, because the more transparency we have on the processes that the departments have to respond to with regard to the Budget and the so-called 'efficiencies' that are in it, the cuts that are in it, the better. The more transparency the better, and the more we understand how the full scale of these cuts are going to be addressed, and they are cuts. It's very clear that they are cuts and they're written in black and white, as the honourable Treasurer likes to say, on page 103 of budget paper 4 and they are indeed quite shocking.

Mr Winter read through some of the sort of immediate numbers for the immediate budget year, but I think it's worth also extrapolating out across the forward Estimates about what some of these departments are going to have to find. Education, Children and Young People, that massively overfunded, bloated department, is going to have to find \$228 million over the forward Estimates. Similarly, the Health department, is going to have to find \$700 million of cuts over the forward Estimates. Justice, at a time when we still can't keep our children safe, is going to have to find \$67 million across the forward Estimates. NRE, at a time when it's in one of the biggest crises it's faced in many years when it comes to bird flu and the needs of additional biosecurity measures, additional testing, a whole lot of additional PPE and all sorts of different approaches, is going to have to find \$59 million over the forward Estimates. Police, Fire and Emergency Management is \$72.3 million and State Growth, now Building Tasmania, \$264 million. We've heard some of the debate play out in the course of the last couple of days about the implications of that, whether it be within Film Tasmania, or TMAG and other entities.

These are very real, very deep and very painful cuts, so maximum transparency about how they're going to be implemented is absolutely welcome, because the question on every Tasmanian's lips - or the Tasmanians who are talking to us anyway - is how the hell are we going to do this? How are we going to be able to sustain these level of efficiencies, these levels of cuts, when we've already got a health crisis? We already have a health system that simply cannot cope with the ageing and increasingly unhealthy population of Tasmanians. We're not investing in preventative health measures, which means we're getting more acute health outcomes in this state.

Then there is the housing crisis. We have got a housing waitlist at record levels as we speak. There are record numbers of people, 5600+ applicants on the waitlist. That's almost 10,000 Tasmanians, and shockingly, one in three of them are children. It's simply not good

enough. Our education metrics are some of the lowest in the country, and then there's the economic shocks that come, be it war in the Persian Gulf, be it increased costs, and what is next? How is our economy going to sustain another shock?

The reason the shadow treasurer is putting on the record and ordering the government to produce this information is because there is no dissent that we've got a budget crisis, but when it comes to budget repair, with the Treasurer, we effectively have a one-trick pony here: the only approach the Treasurer is willing to entertain when it comes to budget repair is cuts and cuts to public services.

Whatever happened to the recommendations of the experts about reducing infrastructure spend, setting yourself a sustainable infrastructure budget and actually prioritising within that? Whatever happened to the advice of Treasury and others like Saul Eslake about increasing our own-source revenue? We've put some ideas on the table about how you do that. You'd make mining royalties equal to the national average and make sure that big corporations, fish farms and the like, pay their fair share. We need to be raising revenue as well, but we've got this one-trick approach, which is cuts, and hence this motion is all about transparency and how we best understand the impacts and the implications of those cuts, because they are going to be profound, honourable Speaker.

The number of 1700 State Service positions is not small and \$1.4 billion over four years is going to be a significant amount for Tasmania and Tasmanians to sustain and, of course, this is all at a time when we're spending money on things that we absolutely don't need and don't want, like a Macquarie Point stadium. Our budget forecasts going forward and the level of cuts that are built into the budget, these efficiencies, they're taking into account entirely optimistic, in just about everyone I talked to's minds, cost estimates around the stadium and how much that will cost. People are actively talking about well and truly over \$2 billion to build that stadium.

I know Labor will put the position that it's a one-off infrastructure spend, don't worry, but I reject that outright, because we know that to service that debt we're going to have to borrow to build that stadium, we're going to have to borrow more - tens of millions of dollars, over \$40 million every single year, and pay for it out of the general government sector. Where do you think all these positions that we're asking about here are paid from? They're paid from the general government sector. So when we hear the Labor Party talk about cuts, challenges in terms of staffing, efficiencies and the positions that are gone, let's remember that in budgets going forward for many, many years, our children are going to be paying for them. It's going to be tens of millions of dollars simply to pay the debt costs of the money that we, the state and the Macquarie Point Development Corporation, need to borrow to pay for the stadium.

It's very welcome to see Labor get back into the business of ordering the government to deliver information. That's really welcome after some experiences a week or two ago. Working through the amendment, it's a comprehensive list of things that it would be useful to see. We want to see a list of programs, services and functions to be reduced or amended, positions vacated through redundancies, aggregated number of positions that remain unfilled, listing fixed-term employment contracts that ceased over the course of the period we're talking about, a list of contracted labour hire and consultancy arrangements where services have been outsourced or transferred to a provider, and also the total FTE reduction and value of redundancy programs in the period. That's really welcome. Also, given this sets a date in late

October, 27 October 2026, two months is, I think, a reasonable period for the departments to be able to respond to this order.

Transparency on the Budget and the implications of the Budget that was handed down back in May is very welcome. It would be good if this state got into a position where this kind of information was being put on the record and tabled as a matter of course. I think in the interests of transparency, it would be good for us to be in a situation where we understand this information simply by virtue of the declarations and publications of the various departments, but if it takes an order of this place to lever this information out of the government, that's something the Greens are willing to support.

I thank again the shadow treasurer for putting this on the table. We will support it. In the interests of time, I'll reserve my right to jump again but I'm happy probably just to leave a contribution on what is effectively now the substantive motion, which is the amendment. It's welcome. It will add transparency and some understanding about the challenges we are going to face as we go forward once these positions are cut out of these various departments.

[3.09 p.m.]

Ms BURNET (Clark) - Thank you, honourable Speaker. I rise to speak to the amended motion that Mr Winter has put forward. I support it and thank him for bringing this to the House. I'd also like to thank the Treasurer for his involvement in getting to a point where the government can accept and support this motion, because I think, at the heart of it, it goes to the transparency of what is a budget, that is of great concern to the Tasmanian people, of great concern to the departments which are trying to deliver with less and less and fewer and fewer staff. This ongoing cut to services and staff is one of the big question marks that we have around this Budget, and whether the Budget, in my mind, can actually be delivered. Getting to the point of surplus within the time of forward Estimates all sounds pretty unbelievable, really.

I believe that Mr Winter's motion is very detailed and very forensic, and I think there's great need for that, because we want to see the Treasurer being open and honest about how public monies are being spent and those cuts to services. In the first clause of this motion, it talks about \$1.47 billion in operational efficiency savings and a reduction of at least 1700 State Service positions by 2029-30. That's staggering, to think that a place like Tasmania that depends on public services - we have some of the worst health figures, some of the poorest literacy figures. To maintain our population, all of these things depend on a robust public service. Any considerable change - and this was quite a radical budget in many ways by Mr Abetz - has to be considered in relation to what impact that will have on the Tasmanian people and the Tasmanian environment.

There was talk earlier about the Health spending in this financial year. Mr Winter, you might have said it was \$131 million to be cut from the Health budget alone -

Mr Winter - In savings, yes.

Ms BURNET - in this financial year - which is considerable for even a large budgeted department like Health. I know, and I know other members in this Chamber, have conversations with people who work in our Health Department who are under the pump. I was on the HACSU website yesterday and I was listening to nurses talking about trying to get wage negotiations happening. They are under considerable strain, and we know that. I hear stories of going into the emergency department and people waiting for a huge length of time. Now, is that because

of the shortage of doctors, nurses, orderlies, anything that makes the system work? Is it the fact that there aren't enough supplies and things to make the emergency department work effectively?

I appreciate that Mr Winter has brought to us a very forensic and detailed motion and these answers are important and should be the basis upon which decisions are made, and not a hidden, untraceable, opaque process. So, I was also very pleased to be reminded by the Treasurer that there'll be monthly financial accounts from 1 July in addition to existing statutory reporting. I think that's also a very good thing.

Now, to a couple of points that Mr Bayley, Deputy Leader of the Greens, has said. He referred to the cuts, the way the Treasurer, Mr Abetz, takes to the public sector is to rein it in by cutting finances like money to the public sector but also positions. I also think there's a lot which comes out in the language. We heard this during Question Time, not only from the Treasurer in his contribution to this debate, but we heard it this morning, and that's about the blame game - the blame game of the Commonwealth not coughing up, not paying. I know that Mr Abetz would love more of the GST funding as well, but we have to get our own house in order. I think what this motion does is help us on the way.

I'd like the government to take responsibility in relation to their spending and their reporting, so I'm very pleased that this motion is before us. I do think that we lose so much not only when we lose FTEs (full-time equivalents) through vacancy control, but we also lose it when people take redundancies. They are, in a way, lured out of the public sector when they have so much to give. One FTE is not necessarily equivalent to another FTE when you think about the corporate knowledge and the responsibilities that that person may have had over the course of their working life.

I support the motion and I thank Mr Winter and Labor for bringing it to the House.

[3.16 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - I thank our shadow treasurer, Dean Winter, for bringing on this very sensible motion, No. 144, because it goes to a simple principle: when a government makes decisions that affect jobs, services, and communities, the government should be prepared to tell people what those decisions actually mean.

In the 2026-27 Budget, the government announced \$1.47 billion in operational efficiency savings and the reduction of at least 1700 State Service positions. Every job represents a person - a family, a friend, losing their job because of a government that are very poor money managers. A reduction of 1700 jobs is not 'downsizing', or 'reshaping', 'a small restructure', or 'some small changes around the edges'. Those are amongst the most significant workforce and spending decisions made by any Tasmanian government in recent memory. Yet, despite the scale of these cuts, Tasmanians still do not know where they're falling, and neither do we.

We would like to trust the Treasurer's judgment, but I walked through the CBD the other day here in Hobart and I witnessed all the empty shops. I learned of more businesses that are going into administration, more friends leaving the state to relocate in the hope to find jobs. Families 'couch surfing' or living in tents are coming into my office or having meetings with me in the hope that I can help them find shelter. We are handing out more food hampers and directing people in our communities to food relief agencies for assistance. I can spend a morning calling every single women's shelter in the south of Tasmania and they're all full, and

that's including the caravan parks, which are over-capacity. When I witness all this, I must admit I have lost faith that we are in safe hands with this government.

This motion is really important. We do not know which jobs are being lost and we do not know which services are being reduced. We do not know which programs are being scaled back, we do not know which communities will be affected, and we do not know whether jobs removed from the public service are simply being replaced by consultants, contractors, and labour hire arrangements. The government says it has a plan and this motion simply asks the government to show us the plan. That should not be controversial, in my view. Every public servant wondering about their future deserves some certainty. Every Tasmanian who relies on government services deserves honesty, and every member of this parliament deserves to know the information necessary for us to properly scrutinise and make decisions that are in the best interests of the people whom we represent.

We are already seeing examples that raise legitimate questions. Just today I asked a question about a transport specialist who previously coordinated a school bus data project and worked directly with bus operators right across Tasmania. Following the restructure associated with Building Tasmania, her contract was not renewed - but the work has not disappeared. Our understanding is that the work is now being undertaken by Urban Transit Solutions. They're a Victorian or a Melbourne-based consultancy, and what's happened there is we've consulted out a position that relies on a history of knowledge and relationships that this particular public servant had with bus operators in Tasmania - understanding who people are, having those personal relationships with those people and understanding how our invaluable school bus system operates. That person is going to be replaced with a consultant who lives in Victoria. If a skilled Tasmanian worker leaves and then the work is picked up by an interstate consultant, surely parliament is also entitled to ask that question, which is why we did that this morning.

We also need to understand what the value is of that contract. Is it costing more or less? Is this an isolated example or part of a broader pattern? We're starting to think it is part of a broader pattern of contracting out public service jobs through consultants. That is exactly what this motion is trying to uncover and there are examples that should concern us.

We also know Department of Police Fire & Emergency Management (DPFEM) are facing budget reductions of around \$70 million and we understand that civilian staff within departments may lose their jobs as a result of that. If that is the case, what does that actually mean? What does it mean for firearm services? What does that mean for staff processing, licence applications, renewals and compliance activities? What does that mean for the front of house workers in police stations, the people who are often the first point of contact for members of the public seeking help? We are hearing that many of those jobs will be targeted as a first step. What does that mean for the police radio room, the ambulance radio room, the people who coordinate, communicate and support frontline police officers and other frontline service workers? What does it mean for forensic services where delays and staffing pressures can have direct consequences for investigations and prosecutions? We know that a bulk of our forensic work is already undertaken interstate - what does that do for our existing forensic services, especially when trying not to cause delay to an already very slow judicial system?

We know that these are not abstract numbers in a budget paper. We know that these jobs are real people's jobs and that they support essential public service. When the government talks about efficiencies, Tasmanians deserve to know exactly how those efficiencies are being found,

and whether services will be reduced. It makes sense that yes, they will be. You can't cut the public service by 1700 people and not have reduced services. It makes sense.

Will workloads increase for those who remain? That is something that has been raised with us by a lot of public servants that we have met with, where the workload doesn't change, but the number of people undertaking that work has changed significantly. Will their workloads be increased? Will specialist expertise be lost? We know that with the dismantling of our old housing system in Tasmania, where we used to build our own houses, when we used to have whole works that would go out and work on our roads, for instance, and then that was all replaced with consultants. It's actually very expensive now to do that and we've lost great expertise.

If jobs disappear, will the work itself disappear or will it simply reappear under consultancy contracts and labour hire arrangements? That's really very much what I think will be happening. That is a privatisation of sorts, isn't it, to privatise those public service jobs?

These are reasonable questions and they are accountability questions and they are exactly why this motion is needed. The government has repeatedly argued that savings can be achieved without affecting frontline services. If that is true, then providing this information to us should be straightforward and transparent. In fact, it should also strengthen the government's argument. If services are being reduced, if positions are disappearing from regional communities, or if work is being transferred elsewhere, then parliament and the public have the right to know that as well.

The motion is not asking for opinions, it's not asking for political spin, it's not asking for the Treasurer to give us a histrionic lesson about Labor versus Liberal and GST shares - which he signed away, by the way. It is actually asking for facts. It asks for workforce plans and strategies. It asks for details of redundancies and abolished positions. It asks for information and roles that have been frozen or removed through attrition. It asks for details of discontinued contracts and consultancy and it asks agencies to identify programs, services, teams and functions that have been materially reduced or discontinued. This is about providing invaluable information to the parliament in one of the biggest cuts to the Tasmanian public service that I've ever seen.

Also importantly, it asked the government to identify where work previously undertaken by employees has been outsourced, and that is a critical question. This is a very rare thing to happen in Tasmania, what this government is doing when it comes to our public service. You can call it downsizing or all the buzzwords that keep coming out, but when it boils down to it, there are 1700 people from our public service; a lot of those roles are going to be very hard to replace. It's going to leave huge gaps in services and we really need to understand how that's going to look.

[3.26 p.m.]

Ms BROWN (Franklin) - I'd like to thank our shadow treasurer, Dean Winter, for bringing on this motion, which talks a lot of common sense in what all sectors are really crying out for, which is information, something that this government is not actually good at supplying. Good at making directives of cutting 30 per cent of staff but not good at actually telling anybody how that's going to look, which services are going to be cut or which staff are going to be cut. There's no actual direction from this government, just a blanket cut, 30 per cent of your staff, thanks very much.

This motion will actually pull out the nitty gritty of this motion and give us some real answers. I thank our shadow treasurer, Dean Winter, for the motion. Point one of this motion notes that the 2026-27 State Budget outlines \$1.47 billion in operational efficiency savings and reduction of at least 1700 state service positions by 2029-30. Now, 1700 positions, that is a hell of a lot, and for no information to be actually behind that, of who they expect to be leaving the state service because, for a lot of these sectors, it's like drawing blood from a stone.

A lot of them are already operating on a very, very lean staffing operation and so, with that, every volunteer redundancy, every person who is leaving the public sector, those are specialised positions, that is knowledge that we don't get back. Let's have a look at TMAG for example. All of those positions are really specialised services that hold our history and there is an expected or directed 30 per cent reduction of permanent staff. I don't know how they're going to get to that number, but I'll say this: that knowledge doesn't come back. Once it's gone, it's gone and that is something that this government really needs to think about very carefully because that is the legacy that this government is leaving behind - a gutted public service.

On top of that, we need to look at Building Tasmania, which has been an absolute dumpster fire from the moment that the Premier stood in this place and said that this is what he's going to do, because I guarantee that that morning, he went to a whiteboard somewhere and said, 'Right, what am I going to do to fill out my speech? Right. Building Tasmania, that's what I'm going to stick in there' -

Mr Ellis - Your guarantees aren't worth much.

Ms BROWN - because the fact that there is no detail, there is not a skerrick of detail - there is still none, minister Ellis, there is still nothing that the minister can bring to this place and tell us about how it's going to look, how it's going to operate, who's getting the sack of that 250 jobs, and how you're going to do more with fewer workers, because I still don't know how you're going to get to this 10,000 new social and affordable homes when you're going to be sacking the people responsible for putting them on the ground. I appreciate your interjection, but I will say you're wrong.

Mr Ellis - You don't mean that.

Ms BROWN - Not really.

On top of the 250 jobs on the chopping block, like I've already said, the minister can't come into this place, stand up and tell anybody how it's going to operate, what it's going to look like or how it's going to affect vulnerable Tasmanians, the ones who really need this to work. There was no-one in this place who thought Homes Tasmania was working and, in fact, Labor didn't think it was going to work from the get-go. However, this experiment has been proved a failure and now we need to know how we're going to make it successful, because Tasmania needs it to be successful. Tasmanians need a roof over their heads. Really vulnerable Tasmanians need to be in safe, secure housing because that's when they thrive. We know that, and we are seeing more and more Tasmanians on the housing wait list in really vulnerable positions, with some who can't leave really dangerous homes because of fear of homelessness. They hear every day that the shelters are full, there's nowhere to go, so they either make a very difficult choice to stay in really dangerous homes or face homelessness. That is what this

government is putting on Tasmanians. That is the choice they're leaving them when it comes to the housing sector.

The latest blowout that we're currently working through is the new timeline around Building Tasmania. This won't be operational until June next year. If we needed any more evidence, Minister Ellis, that this was not anything but a thought bubble, this is it. This is it because we have a thought bubble that's been blown out, which are typical traits of this government, and now this is what we're seeing - blowouts, broken promises and so on and so forth, but actually no real outcomes happening for Tasmanians. That is what we are seeing.

I'm really grateful that our shadow minister has brought this motion to the House and I'm really looking forward to this government and this Treasurer delivering on what is in this motion, because this is something that the unions, the sector, real Tasmanians and all workers within those sectors, need to know because it impacts them the most. With that, I commend this motion to the House.

[3.33 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass) - Thank you, Speaker, very much. I want to rise to briefly address the motion, or rather the amendment before the House. I note with some appreciation that the shadow treasurer has taken the opportunity provided to him by the Treasurer to sit down and discuss a more workable way forward. I believe that that has occurred. If you would compare the amendment we're currently debating with the original motion, it's substantially different. I think that reflects on the way in which the Labor Party approached it from the outset, which was in a way that would have drawn massive resources from the Department of Treasury and Finance to allow the Treasurer to even attempt to comply with the original motion. The new one is much better, so I want to acknowledge the shadow treasurer and the Opposition being reasonable about reassessing that situation and coming forward with something the Treasurer thought was more reasonable for his department to be able to deal with. That's what we've got in front of us right now.

There's a lot of free advice that flows in debates like this one. As a former Treasurer of our state I was someone who very proudly put forward the position that we needed to see budget repair in Tasmania after the pandemic, which cost billions, and after the commission of inquiry, which cost hundreds of millions - I believe it was more likely around the \$1 billion mark - all of which was necessary and worthwhile spending. We needed to do it. We also supercharged our upgrade programs for infrastructure right around the state - schools, hospitals, port, rail, road, bridge, water infrastructure - catching up on decades of neglect and helping to set up the state for a really strong and positive future.

However as I've said many times, you cannot continue to have structural fiscal deficits into the future. It can't be left unaddressed. It can't become BAU (Business As Usual). It needs to be refined over time. We as a parliament did, I believe, a very good job of uniting around some of those central objectives when the state was facing those major challenges, and I've mentioned those. The House, though, needs to also be as good with each other at addressing budget repair. I took the opportunity to go back to my office and lift off from my rare books shelf the Labor budget repair document which they took to the last election. I don't know if Mr Winter would say it's his best work, but it was his work on June 28 2025, last year, when the Labor Party, in this document, in this little red book, said that they would bring forward a billion dollars of fiscal repair measures. That's what it said. Without me opening the book and reading from it and critiquing, giving ticks and crosses on my opinions about what I think about

that document, I think it hopefully serves the purpose that there was a time last year when the Labor Party and the Liberal government agreed that we needed, over time, to improve the sustainability of the state's finances. Where has that gone?

Earlier this year, in the lead up to the state Budget, the opposition were demanding that the government, not just the Treasurer, who they love to pick on -

Mr Winter - I thought you were talking about yourself, for a second.

Mr FERGUSON - No, I was talking about you loving to pick on the Treasurer. The fact is you were challenging the government, the Premier, the Treasurer and the ministry to address the budget challenge that is before the state, but immediately after the Budget the Labor Party changed their tune. While the government presents a different path forward to a more sustainable financial platform going forward, the government is under attack. It's very obvious through its question time strategy, if I can use that word generously, that the Labor Party targets the Treasurer. They'll ask a question of the Health minister and blame the Treasurer. They'll ask a question of the Police minister and blame the Treasurer. They'll ask a question of any other minister and blame the Treasurer. That's the game the Labor Party are in, but of course every minister is more than aware and have said that they're part of the Cabinet process that led to this Budget.

The fact is our public servants are greatly valued and we value them, and the evidence is before us, because we've employed them. We've invested in our strong public services, not just in the lead-up to the pandemic, but during and after it. The budget operational efficiency savings are being worked through right now, in particular by heads of agency, and I have to remind the House that it sometimes escapes our attention that it's heads of agencies who also have a significant responsibility under the *Financial Management Act* for their agency to operate within the budget that's been assigned to that agency. Why don't we hear more about that in this House? No, it's always the political invective. Let's attack the minister, let's attack the Treasurer, let's attack the Premier.

I also want to say that the government, as it works through this difficult challenge, is working to protect the things that matter most. When I say that, I mean those strong public services in health and health infrastructure, in housing services and more homes, and in education. I remind the House again that before coming here I was a state secondary school teacher. I taught in classrooms that had no heating. It wasn't that unusual in the 1990s to have schools without air conditioning, but I'm talking about classrooms with no heating. That's the kind of legacy upgrades that have had to be tackled by this government. I hope you're not laughing at what I just said, I hope it's just my tie that you're laughing at.

Mr Bayley - No.

Ms Badger - Your tie's fantastic, Michael.

Mr FERGUSON - Okay, but I didn't think it was that funny. We've addressed that historic backlog of underinvestment in our assets. I think our government, and our Treasurer in particular, is doing a fine job, but it's a difficult job. The best way that you can see improved public financial management is if the Labor Party have a coherent position of their own which they can not only use to prosecute but also to be held accountable to. Now, where is that alternative budget? Has it been 13 budgets now? It's not 13 years - Labor often make that

mistake - it's 12 years. There have been 13 budgets in those years and how many alternative budgets have we had? Don't tell me this is an alternative budget.

Mr Winter - You should acknowledge and look who's in the Gallery.

Ms Butler - The last person to do one.

Mr Winter - It's right there for you.

Mr FERGUSON - Well, I welcome the former treasurer and the former premier, I really do. If I may, Speaker, I welcome former premier Gutwein to the Chamber. Thank you for the encouragement. I need a bit of cheering on from time to time.

Don't tell me that this is your alternative budget, okay? For a start, you banked \$100 million in savings on what you say is indefinitely deferring the Southern Outlet fifth lane, but you banked the full \$100 million in savings, but you've claimed you're going to reallocate the federal funding. Reallocate it to what? Are you just going to spend money that we haven't qualified for because you banked it as a saving? You can't bank it twice, and that's just one thing. There's a billion dollars in claimed savings in the document that's one year old.

Our government and our Treasurer could do an even better job if you were encouraging him. Our government could do a better job if you were lobbying for Tasmania to Canberra rather than lobbying for Canberra in Question Time here. You've backed Canberra on Bell Bay Aluminium against Tasmanian taxpayers. You're backing Canberra on health policy against the interests of Tasmanian taxpayers and in aged care. You're backing Canberra with your education policy, where you want the state government to pay for pre-compulsory education in our state when you're actually doing a cost shift from who? From Canberra.

Mr Winter - Are you opposed to that, are you? Are you opposed to those policies?

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Winter, I won't be distracted. You're trying to say that money that Canberra currently pays for should be paid for -

Mr Winter - We've been trying to find out if you support it or not.

The SPEAKER - Honourable member for Franklin, Mr Winter, you do have the time after this is finished to wrap up.

Mr FERGUSON - by the Tasmanian taxpayer, and that's just a few examples. So, thank you for the more reasonable working arrangement in the amendment. It's far better. I understand that the Treasurer can make best endeavours to meet the objectives of the refined motion, but Labor needs to be part of the solution, not just the problem.

Recognition of Visitors

The SPEAKER - I'd like to officially acknowledge, in the Speaker's Reserve, the honourable Peter Gutwein, former premier and former treasurer, who I'm sure is very interested in this debate that we're now having.

Members - Hear, hear.

[3.43 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon) - Welcome to the former Treasurer. I want to commend my colleague, Mr Winter, on bringing forward this motion before the House today in private members' time. It's a really important motion and, as others have said, there's been some negotiation across this Chamber around the details of that motion and I think that shows a willingness to work together on our behalf as well. I want to acknowledge that because a lot has been said about that in this place today, that we don't have a willingness to work together for the best interests of Tasmania when, in fact, we do.

Whilst I'm at it, I'll put on the record that we will always stand up for Tasmania when it comes to our federal colleagues. We will always do that, and you can be rest assured that we raise issues with them daily, and I do that personally in my own electorate around a number of issues.

The previous speaker has spoken a lot about alternative budgets and, as others have pointed out, the last person to present an alternative budget, other than the Greens, is the former treasurer himself, who's with us here in the Chamber. I don't think Tasmanians are so much concerned about whether or not the Labor Party's put forward an alternative budget; what they're concerned about is what is in this current Budget that is before Tasmanians and what that means for those 1700 State Service employees who provide valuable essential services right across Tasmania, in many instances to vulnerable Tasmanians, and they want to understand what the consequences of that are.

I haven't heard anything from those on the other side around a rationale for that number of 1700. It's almost like it's been plucked from the air. I haven't heard anything from others on that side about the skills matrix across our public service, their concerns about voluntary redundancies being taken in highly skilled areas of expertise and the intellectual property across our State Service being lost as a result of these cuts, and that concerns me. It's almost like this is just something that they've concocted. I know we've spoken before about Building Tasmania, which Ms Brown did quite articulately in her prior contribution, about the fact that perhaps that was just something that was on the back of an envelope a couple of nights before the Premier did his state of the state speech here in this place as a way of looking like the government was doing something around efficiency in an area of government that they have failed miserably now over many years, with major infrastructure projects blowing out in budget, being delayed by many years, and that having economic consequences and an impact on the day-to-day lives of Tasmanians.

I'm always one to point to concrete examples of how all of the information that's in this motion might impact the lives of Tasmanians. I don't think there's any greater example of that than the current state of our road network across Tasmania. If you drive on the Bass Highway at any given time you will see the patching of the potholes, the uneven surface and the reductions in speed limits on major highways, which can in fact lead to accidents with people having to decelerate quite quickly. You will see that each and every day. There will be members in this place who feel that as they're driving along, I would hope, in their parliamentary cars.

I'm really concerned about what these cuts will mean to the Department of State Growth and now Building Tasmania - whatever that is in its form and function and however that will

look like. If we're losing skills and expertise out of our road building departments of government when we've already got a significant problem with delays to road maintenance and investment in the renewal of road pavements right across this state, what will these cuts do? That is something that will impact Tasmanians in their day-to-day lives. It puts extra risk on our roads. We've already seen projects across this state that have had funding allocated by the federal government to this government to execute projects, like road projects right across this state, but this government has pushed those projects out across the forward Estimates for whatever reason. That might be because they don't have the current capacity now, but what is that going to look like in six months' time when they've reduced the numbers in the Department of State Growth/Building Tasmania even more?

That is an example of where the federal government has worked proactively with Tasmania to fund road networks and road projects and those projects have been pushed out across the forward Estimates or delayed for a number of years. There is significant work that needs to be done across our road network when it comes to the type of materials that are used in building our roads and the under-pavement. The minister himself has said that the patch jobs being done across the network simply aren't good enough and the renewal of pavement that needs to be done quite extensively on the Bass Highway is a good example of that. I'm yet to be convinced that the changes this government is going to put in place in a concrete example of our roads department are going to make things more efficient and see more roads projects delivered. I'd like them to be able to demonstrate to the contrary for me.

Getting back to the context of this motion, this is work that the parliament should be doing. This government isn't transparent. They don't tell Tasmanians and they certainly don't tell this parliament the full extent of things and matters of public importance. The *Spirit of Tasmania* debacle is yet another example of that. We have every right in this place to request this information. We're working very closely with the union movement across the state to understand the impact on workers of these changes. There are lots of concerns in departments about the way in which this is being rolled out, the capabilities that will be lost across government departments and the lack, quite clearly, of any strategy around this as a state government when it looks to the types of capacity it wants across its State Service to continue to deliver for Tasmanians into the future.

This is a good motion. We've reached a good point with the amendments that have been agreed to by the Treasurer and shadow treasurer and I ask the House to support it.

[3.50 p.m.]

Mrs GREENE (Bass) - I welcome the opportunity to speak on this motion today from the shadow treasurer, because Tasmanians deserve some transparency about public sector cuts and budget repair. It was quite an extraordinary contribution from the honourable member for Bass, Michael Ferguson, in the debate, and I wish to respond to that.

Honourable Speaker, I appreciate that the former Treasurer was explaining that the cuts are indeed a team effort, because apparently we on this side of the House misunderstood the situation. These are not just the Treasurer's cuts. We all need to take responsibility for them. They're collectively conceived, collectively approved and collectively defended. It appears that the former Treasurer seems concerned that we have been unfairly concentrating accountability in one place. I think that's really a remarkable defence - don't blame the Treasurer, blame all of us - but I don't think that really lands quite the way he thought it would.

I am very concerned about the approach this government is taking when it comes to public sector cuts and those of us on this side of the House will be holding the government to account and holding you responsible for the decisions that are being made. From the budget papers we can see that the government has decided how much money it needs to save and how many positions that it wants gone, but then agencies are being left to work backwards and somehow make those numbers fit, and I think that's precisely the wrong way to manage the public service.

A competent government would start by asking what functions does the state actually need to perform, what capability is required to perform them, what are the workforce risks and where are the critical skills coming from? Where are the single points of failure? What is the capability that we actually need in five years, not just at the end of the financial year? Only then should you be looking at establishment and workforce structure. This government has reversed the process and it is going to hurt Tasmanians and the services that all Tasmanians rely on.

Tasmanians are still not being told what the consequences of the cuts will be. We keep hearing about targeted redundancies, voluntary redundancies, we hear about RIPS, about vacancy control. We hear constantly about frontline and non-frontline positions, essential and non-essential roles, but what criteria are actually being used to determine if a role is essential and who is undertaking the capability assessment? Is there a whole-of-government framework or is it every agency left to fend for themselves to meet their savings targets and work it out alone? Also, what weighting has been given to specialist qualifications? What consideration has been given to succession planning? All of this is really important in each and every single agency.

What consideration is being given to positions where just one or two employees hold knowledge that cannot be readily or easily replaced? Just yesterday I was speaking to union delegates within Building Tasmania. There are people within that department who hold incredibly detailed knowledge about their work areas. Those skills are not easily replaceable, but they know that if they put their hand up for a targeted redundancy right now, it would probably be accepted because that agency are far behind where they need to be when it comes to cuts. What consideration is being given to regional Tasmania, where you cannot simply assume that there's another worker within the regional area with those same skills to fill a role?

These are the types of things that genuine workforce planning looks at. That is why this government's obsession with the distinction between front line and back line really is quite dangerous, because anyone who understands the State Service knows they do not operate like that. For example, we know that a child safety officer would be considered front line, but what about the worker who recruits them, who trains them? What about the people who do the quality assurance and the data collection, the people who are managing their case systems, the policy records and the professional standards? Are they somehow less important or necessary?

We sit in this Chamber day after day raising concerns about court backlogs and the lack of support for victim/survivors of crime, access to legal services and community safety, and then this government turns around and starts removing capability from the very system that we are all expecting to perform better. We talk about gaps in child safety, we talk about the implementation of the recommendations from the commission of inquiry, we talk about bird flu preparedness, biosecurity, and emergency response. We talk about our waterways and environmental monitoring, and we talk about teacher shortages and the pressure in our schools

at the moment. We talk about planning delays, housing approvals, hospital performance, and community safety. Every single one of those issues depends upon public sector capability. We require scientists, teachers, inspectors, lawyers, policy officers, researchers, regulators, and ICT professionals. We rely on administration staff. There are people in each and every agency who have deep institutional knowledge, who know how legislation, policy, and operational systems actually work together. Yet somehow, this government's answer to almost every failure in public administration or any budget difficulties we're having at the moment is to simultaneously remove the people that we need to deliver these services.

We're seeing cuts that will hurt our Tasmanian way of life. Those opposite love to talk about our Tasmanian way of life. Well, let's talk about TMAG. Staff were told, reportedly last week, that they need to lose about 30 per cent of the workforce. Nineteen full-time equivalent positions could be affected, and that represents a very substantial proportion of the workforce. Now, I know that the government disputes that figure. However, if we've got it wrong, then tell us what the numbers are. It should not be so difficult. How many positions is it? What classification level are they? Which functions do they perform? What programs will be affected?

I believe that a team met last week on Tuesday to make some of those decisions in TMAG, so it shouldn't be too difficult for somebody to show some accountability within government and tell us what these figures are. What assessment has been undertaken on the collection management, or conservation, research, education, and public programs within TMAG? I know that TMAG requires specialist expertise. It cares for close to one million objects, and that requires a lot of knowledge. It requires curators, scientists, conservers, researchers, collection managers, and educators. The expertise inside an institution like TMAG has been built over decades. Once it leaves, you cannot simply just advertise next month and hope that you can get that expertise back, because it's very hard to fill those roles. The honourable member for Franklin, Meg Brown, and I met with TMAG staff this morning. They were wobble-boarding down in the Hobart CBD and let me tell you, those staff, they are loved by the community. They had so many honks. They had people coming up to them and saying, 'We support you, we don't want these cuts, we love TMAG.' I would really caution the government around cuts to TMAG.

I also would like to place on record that there is a member of Cabinet who should understand better than most about what is actually at stake at TMAG. The honourable member for Bass, Bridget Archer, very proudly advertises on the Liberal Party website that she worked as an assistant curator at the Tasmanian Herbarium, and that sits under TMAG. I would like to know what she thinks of the cuts, because she knows what special curatorial work involves. Would the job she once held survive the government's definition of essential? I think we'd all really like to know that. Perhaps the Premier should revisit his own maiden speech in 2002, because he stood in this place and he spoke very passionately about investment in the arts and the contribution to community development, diversity, creativity, and cultural identity. Well, I say to the Premier that investment in the arts means investing in the people who make those institutions function.

The same contradiction exists within the Commission of Inquiry; the government accepted all 191 recommendations. Those recommendations repeatedly require stronger capability, better workforce development, improved training, better oversight, and stronger systems. So, are roles involved in Commission of Inquiry implementation protected from these cuts? What about safeguarding? What about quality assurance or data? Are they essential? I

would have thought so. At the LGH earlier this year, we know that cuts in the child wellbeing and safety area have been cut. I just couldn't believe it. I didn't think it was true. I didn't believe it until I saw the change proposal but it is true. Those positions have already been cut. When you cut internal capability, the work doesn't disappear, it just moves. We know that that will lead to privatisation by stealth.

I'm really glad that we have this motion on the agenda for us to be discussing today. I hope that it receives the full support of the parliament. I don't want the government to continue to hide behind this rhetoric of right-sizing. We need the government to publish its agency workforce reduction plans. We do need that information. We need to understand what the criteria is around targeted redundancies, and you need to explain how these redundancies are going to be assessed, and if there is a capability risk to us as a state. Tell us how the agencies are making these cuts. Tell us what the assessments will look like. Good governments build capability in the public service, not rip it out.

Amendment agreed to.

[4.01 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Thank you, Deputy Speaker, I really appreciated the debate. When I submitted a motion yesterday, I must admit I was expecting to be fighting all afternoon and lobbying crossbench. It's very pleasant that almost all the speeches indicated a willingness to work together and make sure that we could turn this motion into something that would deliver Tasmanians, and public sector workers within the Tasmanian State Service, answers about what the government's plans are.

I guess to go back to the heart of this, the concern we have is that, for all of the rhetoric in the Budget, when you turn to the second-last page in chapter 19 in budget paper 4, Operational Efficiencies, it is simply a list of savings that these agencies must find. There is no further directive on what that actually means. That's what the motion does - it allows the parliament to see what this actually means, because there doesn't appear to be any strategy or plan around it apart from a number at the end that each agency is expected to save.

I want to go to some of the comments, particularly the honourable member for Bass, Mr Ferguson. If I'd presided over the two budgets with the two largest fiscal operating underlying deficits in Tasmanian history, I could not deliver a speech like that. Quite extraordinary that you could deliver the sort of budgets that he did and then stand there and lecture others about how budgets work. Absolutely staggering. I sat there and listened to him as the last treasurer to deliver a surplus was actually sitting behind him, the honourable Peter Gutwein, the former premier and treasurer who last delivered a surplus. That was a long, long time ago. A long time before I entered this place, unfortunately.

The honourable member for Bass talked about running protection for our federal colleagues. Once again, that was interesting, having the former treasurer in the House as he said those things. It reminded me of the media release that the former treasurer Peter Gutwein put out on 5 July 2018 where he said:

Labor turns its back on an extra \$112 million. Labor needs to explain why they are opposed to even looking at a proposal that, on face value, will deliver an extra \$112 million for Tasmania and then increased revenue in perpetuity.

That was the former treasurer talking about the GST deal that Scott Morrison and Malcolm Turnbull cooked up in this state. That is the media release that came out from this Tasmanian government saying that the GST deal would actually be in Tasmania's best interests. It was only this side of the House, led by Rebecca White at the time, that opposed it. I know the Greens did as well; opposed that deal. We held the line the entire time. Treasury, to their credit, put in an outstanding submission to the Productivity Commission at the time saying this was a bad deal for Tasmania. The treasurer and then-premier and the entire Liberal government went against that advice and gave political cover to Scott Morrison and Malcolm Turnbull to deliver the worst policy decision of the last century, according to Saul Eslake. So, don't let it be said that they're standing up for Tasmania, because on the worst deal this state has ever seen, they backed it in. They even told Tasmanians that they would be \$112 million better off. We are demonstrably worse off. This deal has undermined Tasmania's financial security, our prosperity, our ability to deliver services in the long term and I deeply, deeply, deeply regret that the Prime Minister of Australia, as well as the Opposition Leader in Canberra, and other political parties, including One Nation, it has to be said, which has an even worse policy, aren't prepared to fix this right now and we will stand up to Canberra on this GST issue because we have, every step of the way unlike the Liberals who sold Tasmania out. So, don't be standing there and giving us lectures about standing up to Canberra when it was this government that sold Tasmania out on that GST deal, put out absolute rot like this media release that came out. It says:

We owe it to every Tasmanian to closely examine the proposal as an extra \$112 million would deliver more nurses, more teachers and more frontline services. We have worked with our federal colleagues and today's results shows you get a better outcome when you pick up the telephone rather than the megaphone.

Goodness me, Deputy Speaker. That media release has been shown - and, I should say there are other media releases as well that attacked Rebecca White for her staunch defence of Tasmania's GST position - and it's been proven to be completely wrong. She's not here to defend herself, she's in another place, not as good a place as this, Honourable Deputy Speaker, but I commend the motion to the House.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

MOTION

Moratorium on New Data Centres

[4.07 p.m.]

Ms BADGER (Lyons) - Honourable Speaker, a vote will be required. I move -

That the House:

- (1) Recognises the significant community concern expressed over AI factories in northern Tasmania and the present lack of trust between this new tech industry and community.

- (2) Acknowledges that Tasmania could have suitable, socially accepted technology developments, done at an appropriate island scale, in consultation with the Tasmanian community.
- (3) Notes that:
 - (a) neither the State nor Federal Governments have guardrails in place to ensure the public interest is preserved, including in local job creation, and the protection of local communities and public resources;
 - (b) there is no binding obligation for AI data facilities to provide their own renewable energy requirements;
 - (c) the Standing Committee on Government Administration A has established an inquiry into AI data centres, with Terms of Reference including the recommendation of legislative and regulatory guardrails; and
 - (d) one of the largest ever parliamentary e-petitions calling for a moratorium on AI data centres has attracted circa 10,000 signatures.
- (4) Calls on the State Government to:
 - (a) table, by 8 September 2026:
 - (i) transparent public updates on energy negotiations, including emails, briefing papers and meeting notes, for Firmus' Bell Bay and Wesley Vale sites; and
 - (ii) details of all proposed AI data proponents working with the Office of the Coordinator General, their locations, and estimated power and water consumption.
 - (b) establish an immediate moratorium on all new AI data facilities that have not been provided a power contract, until the Standing Committee on Government Administration A's Inquiry has been completed, and legislative and regulatory guardrails are in place.

Thank you very much. I want to start by saying an enormous congratulations to the community of Tasmania who have taken an incredible stand against the current unregulated growth of AI data centres in Tasmania. This has come as an enormous shock to a lot of members in the community to see the three centres, in particular in the north of the state, and the enormous percentage of this state's energy that they alone are set to consume when the Tasmanian people have not yet had an opportunity to have a fair say on how they want to see AI and data centres rolled out across this state.

It is understandable that over 10,000 people signed a petition calling for a moratorium until guardrails are in place, because they have been seeking answers. People in this place have been seeking answers from the government for months and we simply can't get any. Just this morning in Question Time, we're asking really basic stuff here, like who are you talking to,

how is it going? What are the energy agreements looking like for centres that have actually been approved through the council process, and we can't get it. That is not good enough.

Yet again, we are here with another motion before the House just to try to extract basic information that the Tasmanian public have a right to know out of this government. It is absolutely shameful, the way that this government has handled the roll out of AI and data facilities in this state because let's be very clear, they do have a role in Tasmania's future but that is done at an appropriate island-scale and in consultation with the Tasmanian community.

These are resource-intensive centres and it is public resources that they are consuming. They are going in Tasmanian neighbourhoods, like at St Leonards, and yet people are not having a fair say. At Bell Bay, the George Town Council made a decision on that development application just last week. Now, before that decision was made, Ms Rosol, the Greens member for Bass, and I, did write to the Premier and the Energy minister because two of the greatest concerns that that community has is, naturally, around the energy consumption and where the water allocation, albeit less than a traditional data centre, was actually going to come from. They just wanted answers and so we asked the Premier and the energy minister to be really clear with how those negotiations were going if no conclusion had been made. They didn't even have the respect to reply to us. In fact all they did was make a few comments, fob it off to the GBEs, to Hydro, TasNetworks and TasWater, through the media. That is not answering adequately to the Tasmanian people who have concerns.

To Firmus' credit, they did have community consultation on that project after there was serious community uproar, but what about the people at St Leonards? What about the people at St Leonards, who didn't even know until the development on the new centre there had actually started, what was really going on? There was even a development application alteration in July and the community can't get answers as to what it actually means to the site. Now, they're not outright opposing this. They just want clarity and answers. When they're not getting it and when decisions appear to be made behind closed doors, understandably, they have concerns, and then they start asking for things like a moratorium. That is completely understandable. Where is the community consultation from the Liberals or from Firmus for the people in St Leonards and in Wesley Vale?

The DA has just dropped and the community there have serious concerns about what it's actually going to mean now that we have councils going into caretaker periods. What does it actually mean when we have what is a very distinct type of development that councils themselves are raising concern about the processes that they do or indeed do not have when it comes to approving or declining these centres. We've heard it from the Launceston Council, we heard it again from the George Town Council and no doubt we will hear it from the Latrobe Council when it comes to Wesley Vale as well. The community want to know what this actually means when the council is in caretaker mode, and what difference is that going to make for them in terms of things like lodging petitions or trying to get extra meetings and briefings? It's because of all of this that trust is simply not being built with the Tasmanian community and the future of this industry, because of the conflicting information that has come out from major proponents as well.

That's not good enough. Tasmania can and does deserve a future that is clean, green and equitably connected. We should see a situation where if we're seeing these centres built - at appropriate scale that is fitting with Tasmanians - that Tasmanians are seeing a very clear

tangible benefit from having these centres in their backyard and that Tasmanians understand exactly what benefit they are getting from them.

We do already have in this state several small data centres and they've existed in their locations - there's one in the mall that's been there for over a decade. They are small-scale centres that have operated in harmony and with an absolute social licence for quite some time. We can do this. We can do this the right way, but the current way that the government has undertaken is the complete wrong way.

Let's go back to really where all of this came from in some ways, with Firmus and the announcement of the first AI factory zone - or indeed was it the first 'AI green factory zone', it really just depends who you ask. Let's be really clear: Firmus have set up here for quite some couple of years now, since around 2020 their Bitcoin mining company at that point had set up in St Leonards and was about half built. That's when the CEO Oliver Curtis' father, Nicholas Curtis, started writing to the Tasmanian government to show them what they had on offer to seek some support. At that time, they said that the centre was half built in 2020 and they were still trying to find some key customers and clientele for their product. We know since then they've shifted from Bitcoin mining to the proposed AI factories. Firmus in itself, as we know, is currently seeking ASX listing, and it's really come from the backing of Nvidia, who is the chip company that is supplying it. Just recently there was an article on them in the *Australian Financial Review*, talking about how Nvidia's quarterly revenue is doubling year on year. Annual revenue should hit, in United States dollars, 400 billion this year. For context, that is roughly ten times BHP's revenue.

It was in July 2025 that the Premier came out - this was in caretaker mode last year - and announced the creation of the world's first AI factory zone in northern Tasmania. As a part of the media release that went out, there was a quote from Co-CEO Mr Rosenfield who said, 'Producing these AI tokens' - that's the product that Firmus is going to produce - 'in Tasmania will create a new type of green AI token - clean and powered by renewables - enabling AI to scale sustainably'. The question is, what really is a 'green AI token' that is being produced in these centres? That's a question that Tasmanians want to know. Well, if you go to Nvidia's website and have a look, given that they're the chip supplier for Firmus and really where the financial backing is coming from, they describe it on their website, the project that they're doing, they say it's powered 'entirely by firmid hydroelectric, enabled by Tasmania's green AI factory zone, a government backed initiative to unlock energy pathways for next generation digital infrastructure'. That raises a lot of questions.

First of all, what is an 'AI factory zone'? I've said this before in this place and I've asked the Premier, indeed, when the caretaker convention committee was having hearings, we said to the Premier, what is an AI factory zone? His response was: 'Let's not be pedantic about words'.

Actually, let's be pedantic about words because we've gone from an AI factory zone to a green AI factory zone to create green AI tokens for Firmus, which is their business point that's different from any other AI factory because it's green, so what is it? They actually describe it as 'the backing and support of Tasmania as a state'. It is the reputable endorsement that this Premier decided upon himself to give Firmus without any consultation with the Tasmanian community. Our state, our state's reputation is what is behind this private company seeking ASX listing. That is absolutely shameful.

As the motion notes and as we've already spoken about today, there are no binding obligations or guardrails on data centres, not just here in Tasmania but indeed across the nation. We know that there are statements of expectations and guidelines that have come nationally and we know that there are intentions nationally to implement various pieces of legislation, but already here when we have the St Leonards Firmus site, the one at Bell Bay and the DA for Wesley Vale heading through and the chunk of energy that those three alone in this state are going to be consuming, it is not good enough that there is nothing binding in place to actually set out what the obligations are going to be. Simply having expectations is not good enough because that means that we entirely are being asked as a state to trust proponents of data centres to go by their own policies and Tasmanians are asking us why would we trust Firmus, for example, as the biggest one coming in.

This is a company that accidentally put on their website disclosure of supposedly talking to Tasmanian Irrigation for water at Wesley Vale. This is a company that has been condemned by the UN for the misuse of its logo, a fact that was passed in a motion unanimously in this place. This is a company that has routinely changed its power efficiency estimates. Now that is important because if that is not correct, this company is going to end up using more water and more energy than what has been projected and on the energy front that is already enormous, that is not something that Tasmania can afford to get wrong. This is a company that very clearly wrote in its own job advertisement.

Firmus runs on narrative as much as it runs on engineering and you want Tasmanians to trust them.

There is an inquiry underway: The Standing Committee on Government Administration A specifically into AI data centres with the terms of reference looking into the recommendation of legislative regulatory guardrails, among many other things.

That's a really good start and I want to congratulate everybody across the board who's been part of that because it has been so welcomed by Tasmanians that that step has been taken but really it's not up to getting to the point of an inquiry. That should have all been put in place years ago. We've been talking, the Office of the Co-Ordinator General (OCG) has been part of this since 2018. We have Firmus talking to the government since 2020 about what they're planning to do and move forward. That's plenty of time to assess the growth and how we can actually implement it in a way that best fits Tasmania.

This motion is calling on a series of updates and information from the government so that we can provide it to Tasmanians and help them understand what's actually happening; to help us as decision makers, as scrutineers of the government, what's actually happening as well. They're all really, really basic things. It's really just following up from what we asked in Question Time. It's following up from the letters that multiple people across this Chamber have been writing to the government about for some months now.

We've asked and it's by 8 September which would provide us the next sitting weeks to actually have this information and have a look at it. The precedent for providing this in such a way that is fair and transparent has been set by the previous motion that was passed unanimously by this House. That's important. It is important that the community understands where energy negotiations are up to for Firmus' Bell Bay site that has already been approved and Wesley Vale that is before the Council.

It is important that we understand who the Office of the Coordinator-General is working with, or if we can't know who, how many people? Where are their sites actually being proposed? We know the Office of the Coordinator-General was helping Firmus look at the specific sites as to where they could put up a centre, so where else are they suggesting to these other proponents that they could set up shop in Tasmania, and what scale are they looking at? How much more energy are we looking at allocating to these centres?

I understand that there will be some amendments put forward in addition to the asks under 4A to look at- I'm just going to speak to them now to save time- to really look at what the requirements might be that the Tasmanian Government are asking in regards to energy and if, as has been previously circulated, I can indicate that we will be supporting them and I want to thank the Labor Party for working collaboratively on those with the expectation that your two amendments will be moved separately, because we would sincerely like to be able to support the first one.

I think it is a series of really clear information around exactly how the expectations that this government say that they're going to put on data centres in relation to producing extra renewable energy in Tasmania. Well, how does that look? What kind of renewable energy? Will you or won't you be accepting money from, as Firmus has proposed, giving funding to Hydro? Then how are you going to oblige Hydro to ensure that that money goes to a new project, or are you going to be accepting that as payments to your costly Marinus project? How exactly is it going to work and how is it going to be binding and not just more expectations that relies on Tasmanians to trust the government and trust the proponents of these centres because, frankly, we're not off to a start where we're actually able to do that.

The final point in this motion is really clear and it has come from the Tasmanian community resoundingly in the petition and that is calling for an immediate moratorium on all new AI data facilities until we have the guardrails in place that are currently being looked at. This is so important because really the horse is well and truly bolted on this one. It is too late. We've got three centres here that have, really, been approved without any adequate ability for scrutiny because we simply haven't had the information available to us. That is despite the best efforts of members in this place and members in the community trying to get that information. We have got processes underway to get those regulations and guardrails in place, but they're going to take some time and it's simply not enough to appease the concerns of the community.

Again, I want to thank the community for everything they have done and those who have absolutely never campaigned against anything in their life, who do not want to be opposing this, who have had to learn what it actually is like to campaign. They've started making banners and how to write to politicians and how to make petitions that conform with the standing orders, with councils. That is an enormous amount of work for people to learn in what is, really, just a matter of months.

So, I want to congratulate everyone who, in whatever form they have taken, to make their voice heard on AI and data facilities in Tasmania and just say well done and good on you for getting involved in what is a really important democratic issue on what, if we get this wrong, will be one of the greatest intergenerational burdens that we leave on this state, which is why it is so important that we get this right and why a pause should be considered.

[4.23 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Minister for Innovation, Science and the Digital Economy) - Thanks, Deputy Speaker, I rise to address the notice of motion and advise that the government will be opposing the motion. I also advise that there are some amendments proposed by the opposition and we will be opposing those as well. Government's position is straightforward; we'll soon be releasing Tasmania's draft statement of expectations for data centres and AI infrastructure. That'll be for consultation. We believe that stakeholders should have the opportunity to participate in that process and to help shape the final policy settings.

For that reason we do not support seeking to pre-empt that consultation process through amendments moved in this House. We'd encourage members, including Labor, if you'd like, to make a submission. We'd be happy to provide a briefing on the government's draft expectations and, as has been noted, it will be released as part of this tranche of 100-day items. At the outset, it's important that we acknowledge an obvious reality: new technologies often generate questions within the community.

Large-scale data centres and AI infrastructure are no exception. Community members are entitled to ask questions about energy use, water use, employment outcomes and the broader implications of major projects proposed for their regions and these questions are all ones that are welcome, but equally, this House should be cautious about allowing fear of a new industry to overshadow the significant opportunities that presents for Tasmania and jurisdictions around the world.

While the government acknowledges the importance of community consultation and a robust assessment process, we do believe this motion is anti-business and it's anti-technology. The government recognises the significant economic opportunity presented by data centre and AI infrastructure developments, particularly in northern Tasmania. Data centres and AI infrastructure are rapidly becoming part of the essential infrastructure for modern economies, and indeed, Tasmanians and Australians are some of the highest users of AI services in the world. Perhaps, it could even be said, that those who oppose them are also regular users of AI services in their campaigning material against AI data centres, but we will leave that irony where it is.

Every online business transaction, every cloud service, every digital government service, every advanced manufacturing process and, increasingly, every AI-enabled application relies on digital infrastructure operating somewhere. It needs to be somewhere. Would we prefer our data and our compute to be here in Tasmania, or would we prefer it to be in China and other jurisdictions? As demand for cloud computing and artificial intelligence continues to grow globally, countries and regions around the world are competing to attract investment, jobs and innovation that accompany these facilities. The reality is that Tasmania is well positioned to participate and to attract AI data centre and AI infrastructure investment and capability that we need. We possess several advantages which are increasingly valuable to digital infrastructure developers. We've got a strong renewable electricity base, a temperate climate, available industrial land, a stable investment environment, and established planning and regulatory frameworks. It's instructive that, when we have an industry where Tasmania could potentially be a global leader, the Greens are already lining up to attack it. That won't be a shock to anyone in this place, nor our broader community.

This government recognises the importance of maintaining a stable and predictable investment environment. It is one of the things that attracts people to this place. It's how we

attract private capital, jobs and new industries that will support Tasmania's future prosperity. The government's draft statement of expectations for data centres and AI infrastructure developers will be released for public consultation shortly. It identifies these advantages clearly and notes that well designed projects can diversify Tasmania's economy, create specialised operational jobs, support apprenticeships and training, and strengthen local supply chains, which help to grow our digital ecosystem. We believe that Tasmania can support development, maintain community confidence and realise the economic opportunities associated with emerging digital industries, at the same time.

We don't support calls for a moratorium and the scaremongering of the Greens when it comes to Firmus or any other proponents. Let's be really clear - the moratorium would be bad for Tasmania. Tasmania does not have to choose between the industries employing Tasmanians today and the industries that can employ them tomorrow. We can support both - the economy is not a zero-sum game - and by growing the energy system and ensuring that new development delivers genuine benefits to Tasmania. Tasmania already has well-established planning, environmental infrastructure and regulatory processes that apply to new developments, including data centres and AI infrastructure projects. This is one of the fundamental failings of the speech from Ms Badger - the seeming belief that there is no regulation. In fact, there is substantial regulation, and they are going through regulatory processes as we speak. You mentioned some of them in your speech.

Ms Badger - Yes, they're not data centre-specific. What don't you understand about this, minister? Do you not get it? No. Regulations for data centres, table 1.

Mr ELLIS - These projects are assessed through Tasmania's resources and planning system, the Tasmanian Planning Scheme, environmental legislation, and the normal suite of infrastructure and utility approval processes. The government's planning advice is clear that these frameworks provide a comprehensive and consistent approach to land use decision-making, and are capable of addressing issues including local impacts, hazards and environmental considerations.

Tasmania cannot afford to stand on the sidelines while that transformation takes place and potentially that data and compute goes elsewhere - our data and compute goes elsewhere. The Tasmanian Government recognises this reality. That's why we released recently the Advanced Technology Strategy, which sets a clear direction for accelerating the development and adoption of advanced technologies across Tasmania's economy. The strategy is focused on helping Tasmanians to work smarter, unlock innovation, build workforce capability, and strengthen the infrastructure that's needed to support advanced technology industries. The opportunity is to use new digital infrastructure to help existing Tasmanian businesses become more productive, more competitive, and more innovative. Our ambition is clear, and it's shared by business. By working together with industry, researchers, educators, and communities, we can lift productivity, accelerate innovation, and build a more resilient and diverse economic base. This approach complements the government's broader Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy. This strategy recognises that yesterday's economic formula will not be enough for the challenges of the next decade. Global competition is increasing, technology is changing rapidly, and Tasmania is competing with the rest of the world for investment for skills and emerging industries.

The draft Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy makes an important point: we cannot simply spend taxpayers' money on our way to prosperity. Future economic growth

must be driven by private investment, by higher productivity, and businesses that have the confidence to innovate, expand, and employ Tasmanians. The role of government is to create the conditions that allow business to invest, take risks, and grow and create jobs. Data centres and AI infrastructure investments are the kind of private sector opportunities that can contribute to these objectives, and this motion is fundamentally opposed to them. They bring significant capital investment; they create demand for construction, engineering, and professional services; they support digital capability; and they encourage the growth of local suppliers, all while helping to establish the infrastructure platform upon which future industries can develop.

The Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy recognises that Tasmania needs a diversified economy. Strong traditional industries will remain fundamental to Tasmania's success. In fact, they will be using more artificial intelligence than ever before. Economic diversity also makes us more resilient when individual sectors experience global market pressures or economic shocks. We're talking about creating opportunities for Tasmanians to develop skills in AI, cybersecurity, software engineering, cloud services, and advanced computing to do their jobs more efficiently and productively in traditional industries, where Tasmania has long had a strength. We're talking about opportunities for apprentices, trainees, graduates, and researchers. We're talking about creating high-value careers that allow talented young Tasmanians to remain here and build their future in our state.

We should be embracing these opportunities and helping to ensure that they benefit Tasmanians, not attacking private businesses for considering to invest in Tasmania. Success requires collaboration between government, industry, and researchers, and by fostering that collaboration, Tasmania can build an innovation ecosystem that drives productivity growth, economic diversification, and high-value employment opportunities. Our tech sector generated an estimated \$1.3 billion in revenue during the 2025 financial year. That is clearly set to grow under these kinds of investments.

Time expired.

[4.33 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Deputy Speaker, if you were to believe what the minister says on his feet, you would think Tasmania would be open for business. However, the central problem with everything the minister just put on the record is that this government, over the life of its term, has made Tasmania the hardest place to build a wind farm, to build renewable generation, in the country, perhaps even in the world. Therefore, yes, we should be able to have both. Yes, Tasmanians want both. Yes, Tasmanians want to back in our traditional industries and welcome new investment in high technology, but they can't, because central to it all is: that we don't have enough energy. Now, had the minister been able to push this government to make it a place where you could invest your dollars, where you could build a wind farm, build a solar farm, create more renewables in Tasmania, then we would have a plethora of investment happening here and our economy would be pumping - but it's not. What we have is a tension in the community. What we have is frustrated capital. What we have is competition for the capital that wants to invest here, but it gets pulled to other countries by boards across the world because this government has made it too hard, too slow, and too frustrating for that investment to land here in Tasmania.

We find ourselves in this position again, where this government, the minister, just talks about another strategy, another report, another idea. What Tasmanians need and want, what the young people of Tasmanian need to have a job, to have a future here, to be confident to make

the decision to stay here, is action. It is investment. It is outcome. That's what working together is. That's what industry, community, and this parliament looks like when it works together. There is an abundance of opportunity with the energy that we can generate on this island, and we can have both, but we can't right now because this government haven't done the work and what it means is that, when opportunities arise and the government don't communicate openly with the community, don't answer questions, they build distrust. They build concern. Then things like the community rising up against AI infrastructure and factories in Tasmania is because there's a void of important and essential information.

So, we have this motion on the books, and I thank the Greens for bringing it forward. Generally, the items in the motion, we are aware express the concerns of communities. Would we have expressed it exactly how it is here? Probably not, but we appreciate it coming forward. We acknowledge that there is an inquiry and, in fact, by the interjection, there is an inquiry that's been brought forward, but there's actually a second inquiry.

The Energy Matters Committee has extended its scrutiny specifically to look at this point, to look at the tension between what's happening with our major industrials and why they can't secure their energy deals; what's happening with major industrials and why Boyer can't get its 45 megawatts to electrify from a cold fired boiler; what's happening and what's the understanding about the commitments that the government are making to AI infrastructure proponents in Tasmania without there being a statement of expectations already grounded for this parliament to consider and for the community to understand because, oh my boy, if there's anything this government's good at, it is - and I will use your quotes - 'letting the horse bolt before they've done the work'.

Anyone would think, for the years that this has been before us, there would be a statement of expectations in advance of proponents actually putting forward development applications, actually putting forward investment but, of course, no, there are three well known large projects proposed for Tasmania. One already has a power agreement. Two are probably looking to negotiate right now before the statement of expectations is landed, because that's how you get things done with this government. Actually, I think most proponents here take this government as a fool. They know this government can't do the work. They know this government is incompetent so they get in, they hustle and they're able to get the outcomes that they want. It has been said, and I actually find it hard to speak negatively about proponents who take that opportunity, because wouldn't you? Wouldn't you take the opportunity when you know that it's there that you can hustle and advance your idea in the state of Tasmania because this government's not up for the task? We know the outcomes of this government's ability to negotiate. There is plenty before us; their lack of ability to negotiate, their lack of ability to deliver, their lack of ability to be timely.

Tasmanian Labor thank the Greens for this motion. However, we want to be clear, we do have some amendments, and we will circulate the hard copy of the amendments. They have been circulated previously electronically.

I acknowledge that minister Ellis talks about wanting to consult with the community about the statement of expectations. Absolutely that should happen but, you know, years ago these statements of expectations should have been building. This should be out in the community now. The Greens have called for some things to be tabled by 8 September. We call for the first pass of this statement of expectations also to be tabled. Yes, consult. Yes, involve the community in that, but we have a series of items that we think should be included in that

statement of expectations. I'm going to read through my amendment. I'm going to run them in two lots. First Amendment, I move -

In paragraph (4), after subparagraph (a)(ii), insert the following new subparagraph:

- (b) table, by 8 September 2026, a clear Statement of Expectations for Data Centres and AI Infrastructure that includes, but is not limited to:
 - (i) what exactly constitutes 'new renewable generation';
 - (ii) how much additional generation is expected to support each facility;
 - (iii) how that generation will be demonstrated to be genuinely additional to the existing Tasmanian energy system;
 - (iv) whether the Government considers direct developer payments to Hydro Tasmania and/or imports via Marinus Link appropriate to satisfy new generation requirements;
 - (v) whether new generation must be built and operational in advance of any new AI or data facility load coming online and, if not, how Hydro Tasmania is expected to manage the gap between new load and new generation coming online;
 - (vi) whether the Government considers batteries or augmentation of existing Hydro Tasmania facilities to constitute new generation;
 - (vii) requirements for the disclosure of power purchase agreement pricing and key terms; and
 - (viii) how the above matters would be mandated.

Ms FINLAY - Now, speaking to that amendment, the questions that the community are asking is: 'When you say there's got to be new generation and AI infrastructure needs to bring it on, what do you actually mean?' There's a lot of mixed messages going on. There's a lot of changing mixed messages from proponents. There's a premier who was in the Chamber just in the last couple of weeks, saying well, maybe it could be come down the line in Marinus. There's been commentary in media exchanges saying, 'Well, we're just going to give Hydro some money.'

The community need clarity, the parliament need clarity around what actually is new generation and how much generation is required, because Firmus say, 'We're going to put two times the amount of generation we need to run our load.' They've, in fact, told me that it could be up to three times. What's the minimum requirement? What's the minimum expectation from this government that a new load would bring on in generation, and how are you going to genuinely demonstrate that new generation is actually additional to the existing system?

UNCORRECTED PROOF

We know there have been for many, many years projects that are proposed to land in Tasmania and we know that in the business case for Marinus there was only a certain amount of new load contemplated in that. What is new load? The government should be very clear about that. When does the new load have to be augmented by new generation? Can an AI factory get up and be commissioned and be running in like 10 years later, 12 years later, 16 years later, some new generation comes on, because things take so much time under this government. If there is a gap and if you're expecting and you believe it's appropriate that there is a gap between new generation and new load coming online, then what's Hydro Tasmania going to do about managing that?

We were talking to one of the proponents, I was speaking to Firmus this morning, and they said they're okay to disclose their price. So, what will the requirements be around price with power purchase agreements and how will you make these conditions mandated? How do we actually trust that what you say is what's going to happen? That's the purpose of these amendments. It's to give instruction to the government about the types of things that are important to include in the statement of expectations. There is only a certain amount of time this afternoon, so, I'm going to test the Chamber with this amendment. Happy to take questions, interested in contribution, and then I'll propose the second amendment.

DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mitchell) - The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The House divided -

AYES 18

Ms Badger
Mr Bayley
Ms Brown
Ms Burnet
Ms Butler
Ms Dow
Ms Finlay
Mr Garland
Mr George
Ms Haddad
Ms Johnston
Mr O'Byrne
Prof Razay
Ms Rosol
Mr Willie
Mr Winter
Dr Woodruff
Mrs Greene (Teller)

NOES 14

Mr Abetz
Mrs Archer
Mr Barnett
Mr Di Falco
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Mr Jaensch
Ms Ogilvie
Mr Pearce
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Mr Vermey
Ms Howlett (Teller)

PAIRS

Dr Broad

Mr Fairs

Amendment agreed to.

Ms FINLAY (Bass - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - As circulated, I have a second amendment. Tasmanian Labor support the intention of the motion. We understand and reflect the concerns in the community. We're grateful that the Chamber have seen to send a message clearly to the government about the matters that need to be considered in a statement of expectations but Tasmanian Labor can't support a moratorium. We believe that the scrutiny on government needs to happen around the preparation of a statement of expectations. If that doesn't meet community expectations, if it doesn't pass the pub test, if it's not clear about what happens with new generation, that's the point of scrutiny in terms of what happens for proponents going forward. We love that there's an inquiry, we love that that scrutiny can happen through the inquiry, but that could take time and we believe very clearly that Tasmanians shouldn't be let down by a government that can't bring on new generation. Tasmanians shouldn't be brought down by a government that's not in action, it's just around words. We want to have a state that can have both. We want to have a state that has enough energy in its system to back in our major industrials, enough energy in our system to transition coal-fired power stations to electrification. We want to have enough energy in the system in Tasmania to attract in and land the investment in new technologies. I move -

Leave out subparagraph (4)(b).

I'm happy to hear the contributions from the Chamber.

[4.51 p.m.]

Ms BADGER (Lyons) - I will be very brief because I understand there are others who want to talk not only probably to the amendment, but to the motion as well. From the outset, obviously the Greens will be opposing this amendment. The point is that the inquiries are going to take time and we are not going to have in place the required guardrails from this Liberal government - if they're even capable of ever putting them in place - to protect Tasmania's public resources, the public interests and everything that makes Tasmanian communities great. That is the whole point of having a moratorium in place. Otherwise, if we wanted to stop it altogether, if the community wanted to stop this altogether, they would be calling for an outright ban, and do not be mistaken, there are people who would like that. The community are so deeply concerned that they're at the point they just want to ban this altogether. That is not the way forward for Tasmania, we acknowledge that and that's why we're supporting the community in calls for a moratorium.

It is the middle ground, it is a pause where when the inquiries are done, when we've got recommendations from input from experts, from the community as well, and from other places right across the world where this is an issue, that we can set up the guardrails to have in place. It is complete nonsense from this minister that this will divert any kind of investment from these centres in Tasmania. That is not true. That is not what we have seen at other locations around the globe who are doing exactly this and putting the interests of their community before the interests of Big Tech when they have nothing in place to ensure that those communities get the benefits. It is utterly shameful that the Opposition could not come on board to support this for Tasmanian people.

[4.53 p.m.]

Ms BURNET (Clark) - Thanks, honourable Deputy Speaker. I'll speak briefly to the second amendment of Labor's, which fundamentally guts the whole concept of what Ms Badger is doing in the Green's motion. I think it's a substantial change but I'm very pleased to support

the overall motion of the Greens, and I'll speak to that now, if I may, honourable Deputy Speaker.

We know that the issue of data AI data centres is white hot in the community. For many people, data centres are the physical manifestation of the greed, hubris and the power of the AI oligarchs, the richest, most powerful people in the world: like a parasite drawing on your scarce water and energy supplies, and delivering only a handful of jobs, but making the richest people in the world even richer and enabling technology that is likely to put people out of work. So what's not to like about data centres? At least with the major industrials, although they might have left their fair share of environmental degradation and sometimes divided communities in their day, they delivered many jobs. People see data centres as actually taking away jobs. Of equal concern is the government's blind pursuit of these sorts of major projects, the newest great white hope that the government blithely follows, and we saw from Minister Ellis's contribution that the government has a tin ear on this. They have a tin ear on many things, but particularly in relation to AI data centres and to think that Tasmania is the best place for AI data centres is to be completely drawn in and taken as fools, really, I mean, AI data centres are being proposed for South Australia, one of the hottest places in Australia. So, I'm not understanding why they think that Tasmania is so special.

At the same time, the government has that blind faith in what they're doing and they're not giving sufficient regard to community sentiment. The community thinks- and we're hearing this loud and clear- that this project will have major problems in their communities. It is this disregard from the government about community concerns that drives voters to lose faith in politics and consider fringe parties like One Nation. We've seen the disaster unfolding in the US with unbridled AI data centre proliferation. We don't want to repeat those mistakes here in Tasmania and yet, what is apparent is that we don't have the regulations and rules in place to assess these projects, which suits these developers just fine and I'd say that that's across Australia and in most places, we just don't have the governance structures there to deal with these AI data centres.

We know from correspondence from the Office of the Coordinator-General from 30 April last year that was tabled in response to a Greens motion earlier this year that Firmus wants certainty over the timing of approvals because, in the words of the coordinator-general, 'Speed to market is so critical to this rapidly evolving area'. Concerns have been raised by George Town and Latrobe councils that these projects are not suitable to be assessed under the current state planning scheme. University of Tasmania professor of management, David Adams, told ABC that the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act* was not fit for purpose to deal with the AI data centres. He said that that was because it did not require consideration of the broader cumulative impact of multiple AI data centres. He also said flow on state or national effects, like the centres impact on water, energy supply and pricing were beyond its scope.

I think, Honourable Deputy Speaker, it's telling that these data centre projects could be assessed under the major projects pathway, which I raised this morning in question time, and guess what? We heard this morning that there was no application by the proponents and the George Town Council didn't refer it to the Tasmanian Planning Commission (TPC) because the minister effectively said don't bother, and that was reported by the ABC. There must be a pathway which involves greater scrutiny, greater opportunity for public involvement and consideration of impacts at a statewide level, but the government is actively discouraging councils from using that pathway.

This is a catch-22 situation. I think it's pretty clear from Minister Vincent's answer to my question this morning, he's using the spurious claim that these projects don't satisfy the criteria to be declared major projects and yet, we have seen letters and correspondence from his government acknowledging the importance of the project to the state's future. We know these projects are worth billions of dollars and the government is hoping they will kickstart more investment in installed renewable energy projects around the state and that's an important amendment that has been accepted from Labor's first amendment, which I wholeheartedly supported.

These are exactly the sort of projects the government intended to be assessed through the major projects pathway when it created that pathway back in 2020. It's clear that this government wants to waive through these projects as quickly as possible because that is what the developers want. They don't want the added scrutiny of a major projects assessment process and I urge Latrobe Council to instead make a proposal for the development assessment for the Wesley Vale AI data centre to be declared a major project. At the moment, honourable Speaker, we have two data centres that have received planning approval that will draw around 400 megawatts. This will be about a quarter of our state's total electricity consumption. The question the government refused to answer is: where is this electricity coming from? At the moment all we have is a vague commitment from Firmus to fully match its electricity consumption with new renewable energy generation, but these projects can take up to 10 years to get off the ground. This means that until the new renewable energy comes online, Firmus will be competing with established industries and Tasmanian residents for power, which is going to drive up electricity prices during a cost-of-living crisis and yet we have been kept in the dark about this. The Energy minister was given the chance to answer the questions about where the energy will come from today during question time and his answer was the sort of weasel word non-answer that leaves Tasmanians certain of one thing: this government has no idea where the energy is coming from.

I thank the Greens and Ms Badger for bringing this to the House for discussion and I'll leave with these words: the community does not trust this government and does not trust our planning system to protect our communities from the impacts of AI data centres. That is why a moratorium must occur until we have the regulatory guardrails in place.

[5.02 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark) - Thank you very much. Now, much of the discussion around data centres and artificial intelligence infrastructure today has centred on what these facilities consume; how much electricity they use, how much water they use, how much land they require but there is another question that we have to ask ourselves in this House. We must ask this: what opportunities do these technologies create for Tasmania, for our future economy, and for our kids? If all we focus on are the inputs, we risk missing the much bigger picture. Across the globe, AI, advanced computing, robotics, and automation are transforming economies. Quantum is coming. Industries are changing. Occupations are changing. The nations and regions that position themselves to participate in this transformation will reap the greatest economic and social benefits.

We have a choice. Tasmania has a choice. We can view technological change as something happening elsewhere and simply watch from the sidelines, or we can ensure Tasmanians are equipped to benefit from it. This government has chosen the latter. That is why we developed the Advanced Technology Strategy. A lot of work went into that with very good thinking. The strategy establishes a clear direction for accelerating the development and

adoption of advanced technologies right across Tasmania's economy. Its purpose is straightforward: helping businesses work smarter, encouraging innovation, building workforce capability, and strengthening the infrastructure that supports technology-enabled growth. Importantly, the strategy is not solely about technology business; it is about every industry. Advanced technologies are already being applied in agriculture, aquaculture, manufacturing, logistics, healthcare, scientific research, and renewable energy systems. AI is becoming a tool that helps businesses improve productivity, solve problems, and remain competitive. The question for Tasmania is whether our businesses will be users of those technologies, creators of those technologies, or potentially both. I think both.

Our government's ambition is clear: we want Tasmania to be a place where advanced technologies are adopted, developed, and applied to solve real-world problems. We want a stronger innovation ecosystem, and we want a more technology-enabled business sector. We want more highly skilled jobs, and we want more young Tasmanians to see a future for themselves in technology-related careers.

The Advanced Technology Strategy and Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy recognises the importance of collaboration between industry, government, education providers, and researchers. By working together, Tasmania can build a more resilient and diversified economy while helping existing industries become more productive and competitive. Everybody else is doing this, so if we don't do it, we're going to miss the boat.

One of the most important aspects of this debate is around skills development. Around Australia and around the world, demand for technology skills is growing rapidly. Businesses need software developers, they need cybersecurity specialists, they need cloud engineers, they need data analysts. These jobs, these roles are global, they are important, and we can grow them and have them here. We need people capable of working with advanced digital systems and artificial intelligence. What does that mean in plain English? I just jotted down a few notes. The digital stuff that I like - music, social media, using my mobile phone, telecommunications, I love to ring people and chat to them, movies, playing games, government services, banking and finance, retail therapy - it's all digital. All of this stuff uses the cloud and uses data centres, so you can't just say, 'Well we don't like this particular one so we're not gonna engage in the dialogue'. We must have the conversation. As you all know, I'm a very reasonable person. I think there are questions that need to be answered, but we cannot say no to the advance of technology, because it is happening.

As I've said, one of the most important aspects is around skills. We want to see more employment opportunities. Already, I know one of the big providers is working with the University of Tasmania School of ICT. They are engaged there, recruiting from there. The government's draft statement of expectations for data centres and AI infrastructure is clear that proponents should engage with TasTAFE and the university. There you go - already happening. It also expects proponents to support apprentices, trainees, graduates and cadets so that Tasmanians benefit from these investments. It's not just the data centre we're talking about. They bring customers with them. They bring an ecosystem with them. Businesses and jobs come alongside. That is a good thing. These are precisely the sort of practical outcomes we should be pursuing, not simply debating whether technology is good or bad, but we need to be thinking about the big picture, the new economy, the new digital economy that Tasmania is beautifully placed to operate in. We know that there are already some great digital businesses here that are global in scope and we're very proud of them.

The government's draft Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy recognises that Tasmania cannot rely on yesterday's economic formula. The discussion is different to a discussion around energy and how energy brings investment. This is new economy investment. The structures are different. We're very happy to have those conversations. The strategy identifies the importance of private investment, productivity growth, innovation and economic diversification in supporting future prosperity. It's really meaningful and it matters.

We have renewable energy resources, we have advanced manufacturing capability, we have premium agricultural industries, we have our Antarctic expertise and research, we have a growing technology sector. The challenge is translating those advantages into investments, jobs, and long-term economic opportunity. Technology infrastructure can help achieve precisely that. One of the major components is bringing a new subsea cable to Tasmania. For 20 years we have been trying to get another subsea cable laid. This happens, it's a good thing.

Technology infrastructure can help achieve precisely this. Not because a data centre alone transforms an economy, but, as I've said, it creates the foundation for a broader technology ecosystem. We'll do it in our way, in our niche areas where we can operate in those areas and go global. The film sector is a prime example of that. Things that attract investment - it's a sector that encourages innovation. They put money into innovation. They encourage research, and strengthen digital capability. Everyone loves to use their phones. That's digital capability. That's what we're talking about.

It is important to recognise that we want to enable Tasmanian businesses to compete effectively in what is a rapidly changing world. Change is hard. We want to get that right. We note that Tasmania's technology sector generated an estimated \$1.3 billion in revenue during the 2025 financial year. It's a big, diverse and important sector. It's making a significant contribution to our economy and will play an increasingly important role in supporting technology adoption through other industries. As I've said, it doesn't mean that projects should escape scrutiny. It doesn't mean that people in communities shouldn't have a voice. We want people to ask questions, to understand what it means, to provide suggestions about how they would like things to be done. It certainly doesn't also mean developments should receive special treatment. Government has consistently said the projects must meet planning, environmental and regulatory requirements. Communities must be consulted, impacts must be assessed, and decisions must be made through proper processes.

There is, though, a significant difference between proper scrutiny and a presumption that new industry should be treated as unwelcome before they've even been assessed. Technology moves fast and we need to move at the pace of that. We believe Tasmania can embrace innovation while maintaining strong safeguards. We can support new industries while protecting the interests of local communities, and we believe, I believe, we can position Tasmania itself for future economic success without compromising the standards Tasmanians rightly expect.

At its heart, this debate is about whether Tasmania intends to participate in the opportunities presented by technologies globally shaping the future - this is happening. The government's answer is yes. We say yes to innovation, yes to skills and yes to investment, and yes to new opportunities for Tasmanian businesses and workers, and responsible development, and that is in all of our interests.

For those reasons, the government will be opposing the motion and, from my perspective, I'm very, very pleased and happy to be going on this journey with everybody in this Chamber and I think the dialogue is very useful. Thank you so much.

[5.12 p.m.]

Prof RAZAY (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to speak for motion No. 146 and thank the member of Lyons for bringing it to the House. There is a great unrest in the Tasmanian community and across Australia over the development of AI centres. People are very concerned that the I's haven't been dotted and T's crossed. I share those views.

In July, the federal government announced it will bring in world-leading legislated standards for AI early in the new year 2027. That will be too late for Tasmania. I understand we already have seven different groups, including Firmus, looking to bring AI factories to Tasmania. We need to have rules and guardrails in place now to ensure we don't have a situation where inappropriate development is occurring before the federal government legislates. These projects have such a wide-ranging impact that, at least for the moment, the state government should play an active role in decision-making and ensure accurate information is provided to the public.

These AI centres should be treated with utmost scepticism until proven to be safe. This is not a scare campaign. In the US, these enormous facilities have left a trail of misery in suburbs across the country from outrageous noise levels 24 hours a day, through to incredible power and water consumption and complete destruction of environmental landscape and neighbourhoods. We are told that it will be different here - different technologies and approaches. However, getting answers to questions is difficult. I have repeatedly asked for information on what price has been agreed for power and water supply. In early August, we learned that no atmospheric dispersion modelling was conducted or required on the direction and the impact of exhaust from shipping container-sized diesel generators - 100 of them at St Leonards and 276 at Bell Bay, which has now been approved. Prior to deliberating on the Firmus AI factory planning submission last Tuesday, George Town Council received 349 individual representations, and further, 5000 signatures on an e-petition. Yet none of this opposition could legally be taken into consideration as it is a statutory assessment on whether a proposal complies with provision in a planning scheme. The community was overwhelmingly opposed to this development, yet powerless to stop it. Will the government look at updating our legislation to ensure public opposition to proposals like this has weight in determining whether a development goes ahead?

The St Leonards Firmus AI factory's expected completion is early next year, and yet questions about its operations remain open. When asked about expected maintenance of 120-foot, shipping container-sized diesel generators - frequency, duration and methodology - the response was:

The maintenance testing regime is still being finalised, but will be in accordance with manufacturers' specifications.

The government said in the last sitting that you have a strong planning system and strong environmental regulations, so how is it possible that a project of this magnitude, sitting 300 metres from the nearest house, can be in full construction without a plan presented on how it will be maintained, which includes testing and running these large 100 diesel generators?

The overwhelming views of the community must have weight. AI has such state significance that they should be treated accordingly, and all levels of government should have a say in their approval and development. They should work together to address community concerns. There need to be guardrails, guidelines and a high strategic, consistent process for AI. Advocates continue to say there are billions of dollars of benefit, with no further detail, which adds nothing to the discussion. We need to know the level and price of power and water consumption, the noise and heat generated, the pollution from regularly testing the diesel backup power and where the used water will go. We want to see the health and environmental testing undertaken prior to the approval, and we want to see why they are considered so important that we are willing to plonk them in the middle of suburban Tasmania.

Despite repeated requests, we still have so many unanswered questions. I'm not against the proposal of AI centres, but we must be making completely informed decisions on these developments. Let's not make mistakes of opening the gate to something that we don't understand, until we get all the facts which we require to use these AI factory.

[5.19 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, I'll speak on the amendment and I'll provide some broader comments. I do support the amendment in getting rid of the moratorium. I understand the reason and the questions behind it and the linking to the work of Standing Committee A. However, at the end of the day, that will not define where the issue of data centres go. I think in terms of data centres, we're not King Cnut; we can't turn back the tide. This is new technology. Communities all around the world are dealing and responding to this newish - for Australia - industry and what comes with it. I'm not a Luddite - although I think the Luddites were heavily criticised unfairly. They were just against poor work practices, not so much new technology, so I'll defend those artisans who are defending their skills and their rights around the 18th century in the UK. I digress.

In terms of this - and obviously the first part of it, I do support the early sections of the motion. That's why I wasn't able to get to my feet before it was called in the previous motion, because the member for Clark was jumping and then didn't and I missed the call. I wasn't able to speak. I was supportive of it. I am concerned about the 8 September timeframe on the previous amendment, because the elements of the amendment that will need to be required are a part of a national discussion. I think that's important - national consistency around these things. No doubt when this matter, if it gets through today, comes back on 8 September, I believe some discretion and some intent should be shown from the government to respond to the information, because what is self-evident in the motion moved by the Greens, Ms Badger in particular, there is significant community concern. There is concern about these things. People are asking questions and they deserve answers.

My concern is not so much with data centres per se. I have some concerns about Firmus that I'm going to put on the record. If I'm going to quote the Luddites, I'll quote *The Simpsons* - the monorail episode, where in small places, the Cargo Cult culture, very wealthy people come down with a lot of money promising the world, and we're left carrying the bag. I'm not alone in raising concerns. I'm not against investors coming to Tasmania, clearly. We desperately need them - but not at any cost. I think other people, and a number of financial analysts and serious industry people have raised concerns not so much about the concept of data centres and what they do, but Firmus has a bit of work to do, I think, to prove themselves as corporate citizens in Tasmania. There's a number of investors flagging concerns about the

IPO and the lack of restrictions and fear of a pump-and-dump kind of approach, which I think are, based on what I've read, on the face of it, legitimate. Firmus does need to respond to that.

I'm worried that in the nature of all these things - I recall, and I've made this reference before when I first became economic development minister - a number of businesses came to the table and said, 'If you don't give us our large cheque, we're walking away from the state.' We didn't give them a cheque, they didn't walk away from the state - but it's a negotiation. Reflecting on the comment - and I'm paraphrasing, if I've got it wrong, I do apologise - when you say, well, if a company can do a deal and try and get an advantage to themselves in a government negotiation, why wouldn't they? Well, they shouldn't.

Ms Finlay - No, they shouldn't, but when the government is so hopeless, they do.

Mr O'BYRNE - All governments at various points can be called hopeless. I was part of a government that was called hopeless a lot of times, and we did our best given the circumstances that we had. At the end of the day, if we're going to accommodate investors in Tasmania and provide public resources in one way or another, direct or indirect, we want them to be of a standing that they're not only credible, but they have values that fit with our community.

Ms Finlay - I wasn't defending them.

Mr O'BYRNE - I know, I know, but I'm just making that very clear. I think I understand why the government is opposing the original motion. I think the amended motion, if there is some genuine intent around the first amendment that was passed by the House around the date and your commitment, understanding, acknowledging that there is a national conversation led by the Prime Minister on these things. I think it is important that there is consistency around some of these considerations and guardrails across the country. We don't want to be the soft underbelly or draining the swamp in the wrong kind of way in Tasmania where we miss out on the opportunity. There are pros and cons with that. I would urge the opposition and the crossbench that if there's intent to provide this level of information which does not compromise commercial negotiations and discussions which are consistent with national negotiations, and we're respectful of that, I think we should show the government and cut them some slack. If they do come back and say, 'Well, we're in discussions at the national cabinet around these matters, I think we should be flexible. The government needs to acknowledge that there is significant concern about this new industry to Tasmania, and they can't just say, well, it's jobs, jobs, jobs. That doesn't cut it anymore and it should never really cut it. Jobs are important but also, if we're told to roll over and have our tummy tickled and, then, all of a sudden this is a pump and dump investment, well we're left holding the bag. We should be a little bit more mature about it and acknowledge the value that we provide to the data centre industry in terms of our natural advantages. I'm sceptical, I'm nervous, but I'm willing to engage and I think the amended motion provides us with a path forward to work with other states on providing some national guardrails and a consistent standard. So, I will support the amendment.

I don't think a moratorium is the answer because the motion refers to the standing committee report. I'm not sure, with the greatest respect to committee A, which I'm a member of and I've proxied someone else in for this one, the member for Bass, who's got an interest in this. I'm not sure if committee A can direct the federal government and the national cabinet on these matters and I think that's-

Mr Mitchell - Oh, give it a crack.

Mr O'BYRNE - Well, we've done it before and it's worked out alright, hasn't it? Okay, so, I support the amendment, but I do support the intent behind the original motion and I think the government should acknowledge that there is significant concern, there are questions. It doesn't mean we reject the opportunity, but we need to embrace it carefully. Thank you.

[5.26 p.m.]

Mr GEORGE (Franklin) - Honourable Speaker, I regretfully oppose the amendment and I'm sorry the Labor Party has brought this on. I understand it, but at the heart of this debate lies a philosophical question which boils down in its essentials to who benefits. If you can't grapple with the import of AI and the data centres that enable it, then you haven't grasped the whole issue. The evolution of data centres and AI are no less significant or life-altering than the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century, with all that implies to the changes that we and our children will have to grapple with.

Those who want to slow down the process on this island, while there's still time to do so, are not following in the footsteps of Ned Ludd, nor are they opposing evolutionary progress in technology and community aspirations. That's why, when the Premier implies that concern expressed by MPs on behalf of their communities is somehow worthy of the old and clichéd saw of being anti-jobs, he loses any claim to either the esteem or the respect that he should be due as leader of the government.

How foolish and thoughtless and how insulting his approach was in question time today towards a Tasmanian community concerned about AI and data centres. I suspect it's because he simply failed to grasp what enormous changes AI and the data centres that enable them will wreak upon our island, our nation and the globe.

Honourable Speaker, this should not be a debate about politics as usual. It's far more important than that. It's a time for collaboration across parliament and across the community because of the depth of change that is coming and at which we are now at the starting point.

If the Premier's response in Question Time reflects the mindset of his front bench, then we must pray the Fates will guide us from such a shallow and thoughtless murder of ministers. If this minority government intends to ignore the rise in a very reasonable concern about the impact of AI and data centres on communities, community welfare and our natural resources, specifically water and energy of this island, then that's nothing short of criminal. If this government doesn't understand it must both listen to and then guide Tasmanians through a transition that may offer so many opportunities while posing so many threats, then shame on it. Why will it not let this parliament help?

It's hard to credit that this is a government operating in a minority and, were it not for an often compliant opposition, this parliament, this House, would be reminding the government of its minority status every single day. Instead, the government gets away with it so often that, when it comes to such life-altering technology, it reckons it can get away with telling parliamentarians to mind their own business, and then it does get away with it.

What does the Premier mean when he speaks of creating guardrails? What guardrails? What will those guardrails do? Where are they? When will they be invented? When will we be invited into the government's confidence? Presumably, as usual, once the government has made

up its mind and launches yet another faux consultation process. The best we have on offer is a promise by the minister for Industry that he will release a statement of expectations, which will be available, according to his answer to my question, 100 days from 18 August.

So, what a missed opportunity. Successful minority governments have learned globally that collaboration lies at the heart of good outcomes for their communities. Some government frontbenchers seem to have grasped the concept that working in minority means collaborating across the floor of the House. Some seem to have understood their own government's promises contained in the Foundations of Stability document. Some even appear to have at least partially implemented them.

However, when it comes to the honourable minister for Industry, well, in the past 12 months that I've had the privilege to observe this parliament close up, the concept of collaborative government, or even the Foundations of Stability, have evidently evaded the grasp of the honourable minister. On both this issue and on gun laws, the minister is a serial offender. He does have the gift of bombast, which he clearly relishes, and we all enjoy his theatrics, if not quite as much as he himself does but this doesn't lead to collaborative outcomes. My view is that he has yet to grasp the notion that he is a minister in a minority government. Why should it be necessary to wait 100 days to hear from the minister what our future holds? Here was the perfect opportunity for the minister and for the government to work across the aisle and building the foundations of a collaborative approach about where Tasmania wants to sit in this tsunami of a revolution that we know is coming.

Like the rest of the government's front bench, it seems the minister simply hasn't grasped the very enormity of what is coming down the track. Has he even noted growing global concerns about the impact of AI technology controlled by a very few demanding so very much of us all, all the power they will exert, and the growing rejection of data centres by communities around the world trying to defend their way of life? It's not too late.

Time expired.

The SPEAKER (Mrs Petrusma) - The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The House divided -

AYES 21

Mr Abetz
Mr Barnett
Ms Brown
Mr Di Falco
Ms Dow
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Ms Finlay
Mrs Greene
Ms Howlett
Mr Jaensch
Mr Mitchell
Mr O'Byrne

NOES 9

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

Ms Ogilvie
Mr Pearce
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Mr Vermey
Mr Willie
Mr Winter
Ms Haddad (Teller)

Amendment agreed to.

[5.38 p.m.]

Ms BADGER (Lyons) - Thank you, honourable Speaker. That is a really disappointing result, to see that calls of Tasmanians are not going to be listened to. Let's just go through some of the some of the talking points that people have used throughout this debate to defend their decision and just fact check a few of them. For example, the minister claimed that Tasmania was one of, if not the largest, users of AI in the world. No, we're not. There's also some talks about we have to have compute here, we must have compute here. Well, yes, we've got a subsea cable coming and that's something that the Greens have also been calling for. In fact, it was also in one of our alternative budgets because it's much needed and we can't rely on the current cable. So, that's a good thing to have.

You might ask, 'Now, why would Firmus be investing in that?' Oh, that's right, because the centres are so large that, for their business model to work, because there are not enough consumers in Tasmania, they have to export their product. That's a sensible decision from them. It's not as though the centres, at the scale that they are being proposed are not built here, that Tasmania would not have the data capacity or the AI factory generation to supply itself. We can, and that is the whole point, Honourable Speaker, is that we can do this at an appropriate, localised scale to support Tasmania. That's the conversation that the community wants us to be having as elected representatives - how we do this best for Tasmania, not just in the large-scale interests of other international-based companies and internationally-backed companies. It should be about putting Tasmanian people first. It is good that we've seen - and I assume that it's going to pass the House ultimately - the motion that's calling on the very basic information from this government, because they are at the bare minimum the answers that Tasmanians deserve.

It was also pointed out - and I have to agree, to a point, with Ms Finlay when she said this is not just on the proponents. If you could and you're a big billionaire, you would. I'm not, but I'm sure I would.

Ms Finlay - But I wasn't saying they should.

Ms BADGER - No, but you would. That's the business model.

The real scandal here is not necessarily just that they are, it's that they can, and that they routinely come to Tasmania because they can get away with it with this Liberal government. That is what they have been doing for years. They've known that it's coming and that's why there are no guardrails in place. Yes, there is work underway and no, Committee A, despite our best efforts, can't influence the Prime Minister but Tasmania can have its own regulations in place. We don't have to rely on that of the Prime Minister. Already, he's backtracked on some

of his promises in regard to how these AI factories and centres should be powered. They're looking at letting other states have things like gas and coal be permitted. That's not good enough. We don't want anything like that here. We don't have to wait for that from the national standards. We can do it on our own in Tasmania and we could have a best practice for Tasmania if the Liberal government chose to.

What has happened - the committee can't control what the government does, but it can put forward important recommendations on the record, and then we come to this place and we have motions calling on them to do so when they don't listen. That is what has been lost today by not putting forward a moratorium. We've heard it said that if a moratorium was in place, 'Oh, we're going to lose Tasmania's advantage'. We're not. It's happening elsewhere. These places are still going to be built here.

Yes, with a changing climate - actually, Tasmania is naturally going to lose its cool climate advantage because the planet is warming and that's going to be exacerbated by the unregulated growth of these centres but that's not something that we would lose overwhelmingly as a competitive advantage in the coming year.

Let's be clear, this is a good second place to have landed on this motion. Again, I want to thank the Labor Party for their collaboration on their first amendment. It is a good addition. The government should have that information to hand. It's not an excuse that it's commercial-in-confidence. That's appalling. The precedent has been set already with the previous motion that we had. If there is commercial-in-confidence, at least members get to see that unredacted, but quite frankly it should come out into the public sphere. If Firmus are okay, as we've been told, with having their prices revealed, they should. I call on them to also reveal transparently unredacted, all of their emails to Hydro negotiating prices over the past few months. Show that to Tasmania as well and show them exactly how you feel about Hydro Tasmania.

Thank you to those who have supported what is an incredibly sensible move forward for the future of Tasmania, supported the calls of the Tasmanian community and are actually going to help and are interested in protecting what makes this island so special.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Energy Policy

[5.44 p.m.]

Mr GARLAND (Braddon) - Honourable Speaker, a vote will be required. I move -

That the House:

- (1) Condemns the Tasmanian Liberal Government for failing to put Tasmanian communities and the environment first in its energy policy.
- (2) Calls on the Government to show some common sense.

I rise to speak on this motion tonight. I've been told over the years that I've got a bit of common sense, usually by people who then tell me there needs to be a bit more of that in parliament. Lately I've been hearing that quite a lot, so today I've brought what might be the shortest solution to Tasmania's energy problems ever put before this House. I'm calling on the government to display some common sense. That's it - no inquiry, no review, no consultant, no working group and no 2000 page report telling us what common sense looks like - and please, no advisory panel to define what common sense is. I'm giving it to you for free. I suspect the government is about to tell us they've already got plenty of common sense. Good. Then this should be the easiest motion they've voted for all year, but in all seriousness, sometimes I think we make these things much more complicated than they need to be. Common sense isn't anti-renewable energy, it isn't anti-progress and it doesn't mean pulling the plug on Tasmania and going back to candles. It means that, every now and then, when you've got your spreadsheets, your targets, your consultants' reports and your business cases all telling you where to go, you still need to look out the bloody window and make sure you're not driving over a cliff, because the fundamental problem I see with Tasmania's energy policy is that we've got the process backwards.

We adopted the target, we committed ourselves to Marinus, we started planning enormous amounts of transmission and then we effectively invited developers to work out where they wanted to put the generation. Common sense has you start at the other end; first work out how much electricity Tasmania needs and then determine where it can be generated with the least environmental, cultural and social damage. Put generation near demand where you reasonably can and then build the transmission that's actually necessary. Interestingly, the Energy minister himself has agreed with that part of this proposition.

When I asked him whether it made more sense to prioritise renewable generation closer to west coast mining and mineral processing operations that want more electricity, his answer was 'the short answer is yes'. He went further. He said, 'Building generation near load was a good thing and government should only build the transmission that's required.' I agreed with him. I don't get to say that every day, so enjoy it while it lasts, but let's actually apply that principle because there are alternatives. We don't have to choose between renewable energy and protecting Tasmania.

We don't have to choose between jobs and the environment. The right development in the right place for the right reasons and that is all I'm arguing for, and nowhere is that more important than Robbins Island. I've spent a lot of time on Robbins Island, I've spoken to people who know that country, I've listened to Aboriginal Tasmanians, I've listened to farmers, fishers, environmentalists and people in those north-west communities, and the more I've learned about that place, the harder I find it to understand how we ever arrived at the conclusion that an industrial-scale wind farm belongs there.

This isn't an argument about whether wind turbines are good or bad. It's an argument about place. Pilitika, Robbins Island, is an extraordinary cultural landscape. The Aboriginal Heritage Council describes it as country of the Pirilyunya people, of enduring cultural and spiritual significance to the Palawa community. It speaks of a place of connection, story, memory and lives lived and importantly, the council says Pilitika shouldn't be thought of as an island sitting by itself. Its connection to mainland Tasmania is part of that cultural landscape - through ceremony, stories, bird life and other cultural values.

Those words matter because planning processes have a habit of breaking a place into shapes on a map. A turbine here, a road there, a transmission line there, an eagle nest over there, a heritage site somewhere else. Then somebody runs it all against a set of criteria and decides each individual impact can be managed but a landscape is more than the sum of the boxes on an assessment form and culture isn't something you can fence off with a bit of bunting while you industrialise everything around it.

The Aboriginal Heritage Council's position could hardly be clearer; after the Commonwealth approval, it said Palawa country and heritage would again be compromised and potentially destroyed forever, and that is unacceptable. It said, 'it's community was again left grieving for the loss of knowledge, country and heritage' and it concluded 'the Aboriginal Heritage Council will never support this project'. That should matter to this parliament.

Mr Bayley - Hear, hear.

We get up every day and pay our respect to elders past and present - well, how about paying respect to the Aboriginal cultural landscapes that they hold dear, and this is an objection that appeared yesterday. The proponent itself acknowledged to the parliamentary energy committee that it had repeatedly attempted to engage with Aboriginal communities without achieving the engagement it wanted. Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation subsequently told the committee that, as far as it was concerned, the project did not have social licence.

At some point, consultation has to mean more than repeatedly asking people the same question until they finally give you the answer you want. Sometimes consultation means listening when people say no and then there are the environmental values. The critically endangered orange-bellied parrot migrates across and forages on Robbins Island. There are Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagles there and the white-bellied sea eagle, disease-free Tasmanian devils, thousands of migratory and resident shorebirds, and geological, coastal and ecological values that cannot simply be recreated somewhere else once they're gone. The Commonwealth approval is now being challenged in the Federal Court. I'm not going to tell the court what the answer should be - that's its job - but parliament doesn't need a court judgment to recognise something fairly obvious: Robbins Island is an extraordinarily sensitive place to put an industrial development of this scale. This is where common sense comes in. If Tasmania genuinely needs more renewable electricity, why would we start with one of the places where the cultural and environmental conflict is greatest? You often hear the developers bemoaning the fact of our stringent and strict environmental regulations. Well, my answer to them is avoid critical habitat; avoid Aboriginal cultural places of significance, and particularly when we can look elsewhere.

That brings me to Whaleback Ridge, and I want to be careful about this. I'm not saying Whaleback Ridge is perfect. No development of that scale is impact-free. It has to undergo rigorous environmental assessment. If there are areas that shouldn't be touched, avoid them. That's what environmental assessment is supposed to be for but Whaleback demonstrates the point: the west coast has an exceptional wind resource; it is in the top 1 per cent of renewable wind resources on the planet. That's something to remember. It already has mining and industrial electricity demand. It has existing energy infrastructure. It's a community with a long history of industrial development and a region that could certainly use investment, jobs, and population. Government itself has acknowledged its extraordinary generation potential. I asked the Energy minister in Estimates whether, if Whaleback were ultimately developed to its

proposed 3-gigawatt scale, it could get Tasmania to the 200 per cent renewable energy target. The minister said:

Getting close to 200 per cent.

I asked, 'To the target in one place?' and the minister replied:

If you build it out to that scale.

Think about that. I'm not saying improve Whaleback tomorrow, but what I'm saying is why wouldn't you seriously investigate whether concentrating generation in more suitable locations could avoid some of the cultural, environmental, and community conflict we've created elsewhere?

That leads to the question government seems strangely reluctant to answer: how much generation do we actually need? I asked Hydro Tasmania whether all the renewable projects being proposed would exceed the government's own 200 per cent target. The answer was, 'I'm not sure'. Now, electricity planning isn't simple. The wind doesn't blow all the time, the sun doesn't shine all the time. Storage matters. Firming matters. Demand changes. I understand that but surely government should have a reasonably clear idea of how much electricity Tasmania expects to need, how much it expects to export, and approximately how much generation is required to do so. Otherwise, communities are being asked to fight project after project without being told which projects are actually necessary. That costs communities time and money, it creates uncertainty for landowners and developers, and it creates enormous division. So, give the market some strategic direction. Tell people where generation is genuinely needed. Identify places of exceptional cultural, environmental, or agricultural value where industrial development should be avoided. Look for places where generation, transmission and electricity demands sensibly align. That's called planning.

I want to make a distinction with renewable energy zones previously planned by the government. This wasn't planning; this was simply drawing a line around existing proposals. It wasn't strategic, and the community rightly opposed it. The minister says he doesn't want to overbuild transmission and, again, I agree but go and talk to people affected by the North West Transmission Developments. These aren't lines on an engineer's map. They're people's farms, their homes, their businesses, their landscapes.

Late last year, dozens of landowners still hadn't signed the relevant easement arrangements. Then, just before Christmas, affected owners received letters warning that if agreements couldn't be reached, TasNetworks would commence the statutory process to acquire easements. Just before Christmas. Some described enormous stress and uncertainty about their properties, businesses, and futures. An easement through somebody's farm isn't an abstract piece of energy policy to the person who owns the farm. It's their home and it's their livelihood.

I'm not saying never build another transmission line. I'm saying don't build more than you need and don't treat the people carrying the impact as collateral damage in somebody else's energy plan. All of this is changing while we're having the debate. We've spent part of today talking about AI data centres that could create enormous new electricity demand. Battery technology is developing, distributed generation is developing, the economics of generation and transmission are changing. So, common sense means continuing to ask, 'Does this still

stack up? Is there now a better option? Can we reduce the infrastructure footprint? Can generation occur closer to demand? Could rooftop solar and household or community storage do more?' and, most importantly, 'What are we actually trying to achieve? What is Tasmania's energy system for?'

Our Hydro system wasn't built so somebody could boast that we hit an arbitrary percentage on the chart. It was built to turn one of Tasmania's great natural advantages into prosperity: affordable electricity, industry, employment, economic development, opportunity. After we've properly considered Tasmania's own needs, then ask what genuine surplus can be exported for Tasmania's benefit. Tasmanians don't want a landscape covered in generation and transmission infrastructure so somebody somewhere else can consume the value. The north of Tasmania is not a dumping ground for renewables. We are so endowed with farmland, forestry, critical habitat, special creatures, and we're feeling like we are once again being dumped on just like the seals were dumped up there, just like heavy industry in the past dumped all its refuse and whatever in the strait. We deserve better than that, and so do the people in my area.

Common sense says we need answers to these basic questions. Does Tasmania actually need it? Is it in the right place? Is there a lower impact option? Does the community have a genuine say? Have Aboriginal cultural values been respected? Are we building only the transmission we genuinely need? And, ultimately, are we Tasmanians better off? That's what I mean by common sense. Don't destroy an extraordinary cultural landscape where there may be better places to generate electricity. Don't keep asking Aboriginal Tasmanians to engage with the project after they've repeatedly told you what they think of it. Don't treat communities as obstacles to development. Don't become so committed to a target that hitting the target becomes more important than why we adopted it in the first place and don't be frightened to change direction when the evidence changes.

To rigidly stick to a plan and a process when all the evidence is coming into the contrary that is ignorant and it is just beyond words for me. I'm not asking government to agree with Craig Garland on every energy project. I'm asking them to look at the whole picture. Put Tasmanian communities first. That's what our job is in this place to do. If we've made a wrong call, and evidence has shown that, the community would completely respect owning up to it and then going in different direction. That's all we're asking - and respect Aboriginal heritage. They were here first. There's no argument about that.

All we're asking is to protect that landscape and, as far as that goes, the creatures that exist in there: the wedge tailed eagles, the devils, all these creatures that are held dear by the aboriginal community. We have to respect that. We certainly do and Robbins Island, there's disease-free devils - what are we doing?

Protect environmental values that cannot be replaced once they're gone, put generation where it makes the most sense, build only the infrastructure we actually need and use our electricity advantage to strengthen Tasmanian households and Tasmanian industry. I just call that common sense.

Surely, somewhere between the government benches, the Opposition, the Greens and the crossbench, we can scrape together enough of it to support this motion. So, Speaker, I'm offering the House something today that won't cost the budget a cent. No consultant, no feasibility study, no Commonwealth funding agreement, no massive loan for our grandchildren to pay back. Just a little common sense. Let's give it a go. I commend the motion to the House.

Sitting suspended from 6 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.

MOTION

Energy Policy

Resumed from above.

Mr GARLAND - Honourable Speaker, one in five jobs in Tasmania is tourism related. Now, flip back to Robbins Island. Tourists aren't coming here to see wind farm developments, they aren't coming here to see what corporations can do. They're coming here to see the landscapes and the creatures that make this place special. The migratory shorebirds on Robbins Island - the 'twitchers' go all over the world to find these birds where they're in abundance and then sit there and take their photographs or paint them or do whatever.

The disease-free devils on the island, the wedge-tailed eagles, these are all points of difference which are isolated to this little state at the bottom end of the world. The Aboriginal history - Robbins Island was the meeting place of the 12 tribes of the north-west. It was the only place where they met together, in October, every year. You look at everything that's associated with that island - the special species, the Aboriginal cultural values, the seagrass beds that surround the place, and you look at all the impacts that will be occurring from putting a wind farm there. Then you flip down to Whaleback Ridge. No migratory shorebirds, no Aboriginal cultural values that I'm aware of, no farmland, no forestry, no fisheries, only one landowner to contend with. Reece Dam, which you can hook your infrastructure, your power straight into - the first stage of Whaleback, you can do that without the need for expensive transmission lines going everywhere. So, you hold the two up together. Which one would you prefer? Plus the fact that one in five jobs are tourism. If we proceed with that project on Robbins Island, that's directly in the face of what people expect to see when they come down here. Building transmission lines is expensive and cumbersome, and catering for wind farms all over Tasmania is not smart, it's not strategic, nor is it financially responsible.

If Robbins Island/Pilitika is not going ahead, there's no need for expensive new overhead high-voltage transmission between Robbins Island and Sheffield. That will save millions of dollars. For all the farmers and those landholders who are currently now mulling over the fact of the devaluation of their properties, which they've poured their life savings into - most of these people in my area live on marginal incomes - and then to see your property devalued simply because there's transmission lines coming your way - that's not acceptable, especially when you can avoid it.

The north coast of Tasmania: we're a stronghold for eagles, highly productive farmland, abundant critical habitat, heavily forested and heavily populated. Why on earth would you push projects of this significance into that area when you can go to Whaleback Ridge and you can avoid all of that? In fact, the west coast is in much need of jobs and employment. Whaleback, I believe, will set up most of their workforce in Zeehan. Zeehan right now is a shell of a town. It needs employment. It needs a reason for a lot of those people to get up out of bed and go to work.

The 200 per cent renewable energy target that has led to a rush on energy projects before we have done the necessary planning on where to place them, that is putting the cart before the horse. The original intent of Hydro was to keep more affordable power for Tasmanians and to attract industry. I think we need to reflect back on that while we're looking at what we are proposing with all these wind farms, and remember what Hydro was put in place for. It was put there to keep power prices down for us Tasmanians and to attract investment and much-needed jobs. With Marinus, it was stated right from the start, under Marinus we would see two major industries go.

Time expired.

[6.37 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Deputy Premier) - I want to thank the honourable member for bringing forward this motion. I commend the member for Braddon, who has put a lot of time and thought into this and has spoken eloquently and comprehensively in support of the motion. I must say, much of what he says is common sense, and appeals, I think, to most Tasmanians. For and on behalf of the government, I want to commend him and thank the honourable member for sharing his thoughts and views and his heart in a most caring and thoughtful way tonight.

In terms of the exact wording of the motion, obviously we certainly support a commonsense approach and that's part (2) of the motion. It's a very simple motion - part (1) and part (2) - and of course we can support that. Obviously, the first part makes mention of condemning the Tasmanian Liberal government for failing to put Tasmanian communities and the environment first in its energy policy. We agree that Tasmanians should be first, and we want to put Tasmanians first at every step, but we won't be able to support the motion as it's currently written.

Having said that, I would like to speak to the key points that have been made by the honourable member. I also want to speak proudly for and on behalf of not just our government but, I think, Tasmania, with respect to our renewable energy credentials and the fact that there needs to be a commonsense approach, and we need to put Tasmanians first and we need to have a balanced approach.

I say to my kids, lean into your strengths, be the best that you can be. Tasmania has been blessed with incredible renewable energy credentials. When I say that, I'm thinking firstly of water. Tasmania has 1 per cent of Australia's land mass, but 12 per cent of Australia's rainfall and 27 per cent of Australia's water, in storage. That's 30 power stations and 50 lakes. We are blessed thanks to the 100 years of pioneers and working families across the Central Highlands and west coast, as the honourable member's made mention. We are so proud of our Hydro electricity development over that period of time and more than 100 years now. What I'm saying is water is one of our great assets. It's a renewable asset. Renewable energy is derived from it and, of course, it then flows down through our various - 16 of the last 19 major irrigation projects have been built in Tasmania, and we use that for farming and for agriculture and fruit growing. Water is so important. It's one of our great strengths here in Tasmania, and we need to use it wisely and carefully. We do have the trifecta in Tasmania with the affordable, reliable and clean electricity, we are now at 100 per cent, fully self-sufficient in renewable energy. We have got that target to 200 per cent, which as the relevant minister I about five years ago led the charge and got that through the Parliament with a lot of support, overwhelming support. We have the 100 per cent and are now targeting 200 per cent by 2040.

When I travel interstate or even overseas, people are absolutely gobsmacked that Tasmania has such incredible credentials. We should be pleased and proud of that and build on it. Today, likewise, I released the Tasmanian Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report 2026, which has been tabled. That basically says that Tasmania is now at zero net emissions for 11 years in a row. That's something we can be proud of and back in; another one of our great strengths in Tasmania.

I want to say upfront, thank you to our Premier, Jeremy Rockliff, and to our Minister for Energy and Renewables, Nick Duigan, for their leadership in progressing this. We want to put Tasmanians first at all times to do what's best for them.

Having said that, noting our credentials, we should also note that we want affordable electricity. We now, in terms of regulated electricity for both residential customers and small businesses, are amongst the lowest in Australia. We need to maintain that and hold on to that going forward. That's common sense. We want to put Tasmania first, having affordable and of course reliable - it needs to be reliable. Tasmania has that: it's hydroelectricity; you press a button and you have the electricity. Of course it's not perfect, but it's very much more reliable than the mainland and many other jurisdictions around the world. That is maintained through Basslink, and of course there are our plans for Marinus Link to provide not just energy security but that ongoing sustainability and financial support going forward. I think we do have the balance right, but the fact is we have a lot more work to do.

As I was asked in the parliament today by the honourable member, in terms of our wedge-tailed eagles and our threatened species, I'm looking forward to meeting Dr Wright next week, who's the chair of the Scientific Advisory Committee (Threatened Species). I look forward to working with the honourable member with respect to our threatened species as well, not just on the north-west coast, but around the state.

We have a lot to be proud of. There's a lot more work to do. I did want to note that we already have in place the guidelines for community benefit. There needs to be community benefit and Nick Duigan, our Minister for Energy and Renewables, has released the guideline for community engagement, benefit sharing and local procurement for renewable energy development. That's important because you talked about the landowners, the farmers, and I was minister for many years for Primary Industries and Water. We need to support them and protect them in what they do. There's a lot of work to do.

The honourable member made mention of the west coast, and of course the west coast and the north-west coast have world class wind resources, including in the Bass Strait. That's again one of Tasmania's great assets. We have the water, which is liquid gold, and then we have the wind which is a world class wind resource. In short what it means is it's pretty windy a lot of the time, and we can make the most of that. I was there at Granville Harbour and at Cattle Hill Wind Farm for their openings and I'm very pleased and proud to have been representing the government at that time. There's a lot more in the pipeline, as has been mentioned. The honourable member has mentioned Whaleback Ridge quite a lot in the contribution, but there are others of course that could be mentioned - Cellars Hill Wind Farm, Weasel Solar Farm, and my advices earlier this year have been successful through the Australian Government's capacity investment scheme. It's being recognised at the federal level.

I must say we do work with the federal Labor government on this. We've worked with the federal Liberal government. I was there when we signed that up with the federal Liberal government, with the Premier and the former premier and minister for energy at the time signed that agreement with Marinus Link. So, I've been through that and there's a lot more work to do but I wanted to commend the honourable member. I could say a lot more about our renewable energy credentials, but I'm pleased and proud to be part of a government that wants to ensure that we get the balance right. We don't have it exactly right in terms of all the time and there is more work to do. That's why we need to engage, we need to listen and we need to get that feedback and a common sense approach is absolutely supported but unfortunately, this time, we won't be able to support the first part of the motion and so, we won't be supporting the motion.

However, I do commend the member for his efforts and to be able to talk and speak about the importance of our renewable energy about our zero net emissions and the fact that we've now got 50 per cent of state in national park, World Heritage and other reserves. We are way ahead of the game compared to other jurisdictions. We are way ahead of the game when compared to most other countries throughout the world in respect of all those areas and criteria. There's a lot more work to do and I'm looking forward to the journey ahead and working with colleagues in this place and elsewhere to help make a difference. I thank the House.

[6.47 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I rise this evening to stand back in the motion from Mr Garland, member for Braddon, and in understanding the intent of his motion, energy policy in Tasmania should be about putting Tasmanians first, front and centre: The legacy that has been developed over many, many, many years and the hard work, the sweat and tears of many people who did extraordinary things to develop the hydroelectric system in Tasmania.

We now are in a place where we could be doing much more with that, but you have the former energy minister, the current environment minister on his speak, who- extraordinarily- can stand speak for 10 minutes and almost not say anything, and that's actually the problem in Tasmania. The gentleman who just took his seat for many years, as energy minister, talked a big game. This government talk a big game, but they don't create outcomes, they are not in action, and therefore we could still have the extraordinary reputation of being a powerhouse for renewable energy, but this state has stood still for many recent years.

This government, if they've done anything, have been successful in making Tasmania the hardest place to develop renewable energy. They have made it hardest for us to put Tasmanians front and centre with energy ambition and with energy opportunity because they have made it really hard for active and interested investment and capital to land here positively in Tasmania. There are billions of dollars worth of opportunity waiting to land in this state, but the government makes it hard. They are not in action. They frustrate the process and cause people to have to turn away and invest in other parts of the world.

Now, I know that at the centre of Mr Garland's motion here today is a deep care, concern and commitment to communities right across the state, particularly on the north-west coast, but right across the state and one of the matters mentioned in the motion is about the importance of having environment front and centre in energy policy. Well, at Tasmanian Labor, we know that the best way to support the environment in Tasmania is to address climate change and the

best way to address climate change is by renewables, but this government have made it so hard that we are unable to do just the basics.

We have four incredible major industrials in Tasmania: Boyer have had an incredible history making, and actually now being celebrated to make, Tasmanian and unique paper. Boyer want 45 megawatts to transition their coal-fired boiler and make it electrified to decarbonise and this government can't get it together to get them 45 megawatts of power, yet they can seem to attract AI data factories and give them 104 megawatts of power with seemingly not much effort.

What we need in Tasmania is putting communities first. We need to put people and families and sports organisations and community organisations and small businesses and our major industrials and new investment front and centre to support Tasmanians, but this government makes it so hard to do that. Not only are there challenges at Boyer, but there are challenges at Bell Bay, in my own electorate. We've seen the closure of Liberty - they couldn't get a power deal to continue on site. We know that what tipped them into administration was the challenges by the massive material increase in the power deal at Liberty and then to get them from administration and stop them tipping into liquidation, they couldn't actually negotiate and get a power deal that would mean that that site could continue. Just down the road at Bell Bay Aluminium, still to this day, Hydro Tasmania and Rio haven't been able to bring negotiations around their power deal to an end.

Now, the government - there are all sorts of foci and pressure on everybody right now - but the government are six months into a 12-month extension of a power deal that they were meant to bring together at the end of last year, that they had 10 years to understand that they needed to do, and now are seeking to blame everyone else. That's what they do. Energy policy in Tasmania should be driving the economy; we should be thriving in Tasmania off the opportunities that we have here with energy policy but this government don't have energy strategy or energy policy, and they are definitely not putting Tasmanians at the centre of that.

This government make an art of blaming everybody else. With the Bell Bay Aluminium issue, they're like, 'Well, what do you expect?' They had a 10-year deal. Of course they had to have an increase. Well, built into those 10 years, every year, were incremental increases. To suggest that a 40 per cent or 65 per cent increase on their power charges from day one to a new contract is reasonable and fair, I say this government have lost control of Hydro and Hydro should be reminded what the purpose is through their charter. The charter was amended just recently in the last couple of years to make sure that front and centre Tasmanians did come first and Tasmanian jobs and the industry and the economy came first. We have 550 incredible workers and their families, 1,200 other individuals across Tasmania in the supply chain, waiting on this government to finalise a power deal for Bell Bay Aluminium. Bell Bay Aluminium contributed \$1 billion worth of economic activity into this state and the government can't get a power deal done. We know right now whether it be Whaleback Ridge, whether it be Robbins Island, whether it be somewhere on the north-east, whether it be northern midlands, whether it be wind farms or solar farms, there have been people and proponents wanting to invest here who have been frustrated by this government.

This motion comes well timed. There's been a lot of chatter in the parliament today and in recent weeks about energy, about community, about jobs, about family, about small business, about contractors, about major industrials, about new investment in Tasmania, and it all hinges on the importance of a government being able to deliver around energy policy. But

I do have to take lightly one of the comments in this motion, which is about expecting that this government would have common sense. Well, whatever, that's unlikely but common sense alone I don't think is important at the centre of energy. Common respect, common courtesy, common decency - they are all things that are missing from this government. A common purpose; this government are so disconnected from what's happening in community, they are so disconnected from what's happening in industry that people are hurting daily. We have small businesses relying on the actions of this government waiting for this government to act and do the right thing but it's almost like they've lost the ability to know how; it's like they've lost the ability to care and understand the impact of their inaction.

Tasmanian Labor stand and support the motion today. We know that at the centre of energy policy, people must come first, front and centre. We know that the best way to support the environment is to take action on climate change and the best way to do that is to deliver renewable energy but this government can't make that happen. Yes, there needs to be common sense. Absolutely. Will it happen? Completely unlikely. In my mind, there needs to be common respect, common courtesy, common decency: other things that are missing from this government. We support the motion. We implore the government to take action, stop delivering reports and talking and slogans. That doesn't make a good Tasmania. That doesn't drive our economy. What drives the economy, what creates opportunity, and what sees a future in Tasmania that young people want to be part of and stay to be about is actually action - delivering for investment, securing investment, securing jobs, supporting existing jobs, and creating more. Backing in the people who have done the hard work in the recent weeks, in the recent years, in the recent decades, but like our hydro development, over 100 or more years. Tasmanian Labor are the biggest backers of renewable energy in Tasmania. We want to see a great future driven by our renewable energy. We want to always be putting people, families, communities front and centre, but this government, expecting common sense from the motion, we're going to support it, but we're not going to hold our breath.

[6.56 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Deputy Speaker, I rise to talk to this motion from Mr Garland, and I welcome that and I thank you for your words. I hear your frustration in this motion and read it in point two, 'show some common sense'. I think that speaks to the frustration that Mr Garland and many, many others, including we Greens, have been feeling about energy policy, energy strategy, the energy approach for many, many years. This motion at the heart is talking about failing, failing Tasmanians and failing our environment and to show some common sense. So, it's obviously very hard to vote against common sense and we'll certainly be supporting it.

I want to put on the record right up front that we are strong supporters of renewable energy. We must decarbonise our economy. We must make sure that we move away from fossil fuels and we are strong supporters of renewable energy as part of that mix, but it cannot be at the expense of the environment. It shouldn't be a binary choice of one or the other, and we must make sure that we protect the environment as part of the development of renewable energy projects, and that's what we've failed to see so often when it comes to the assessments and the locations and the propositions around these kinds of developments.

It's really clear that the government has had no strategy when it comes to energy policy for many, many years. It's 10 years now since the energy crisis; 10 years since Bass Link broke. Hydro got effectively caught with their pants down by cashing in on the carbon price and the carbon policy of the federal government and draining the dams got snookered by some dry

weather and we had an almighty crisis in this state, epitomised by the importation of diesel generators, and we really did just get through that period thanks to some of those generators, thanks to firing up the Tamar Valley gas-fired power station, and we just got through with the skin of our teeth.

Over the course of the journey in the last 10 years since then, we've had things like Norske Skog, who have been unable to get a 50 megawatt contract to be able to decarbonise their plant, their facility 30 kilometres up the river from here at Boyer. That is just nonsensical at a time when, as the deputy leader of the Labor Party just said, we're able to find hundreds of megawatts for data centres in the north of the state. In 2025, they were told there simply is not enough power. So, there's really, clearly, a failure of strategy and policy here, and we're seeing it play out now with Bell Bay Aluminium as well.

I'll acknowledge 355 megawatts is a hell of a lot of power, but there's a gap here between what Bell Bay Aluminium are prepared to pay and what Hydro are prepared to sell at \$60 million a year. We understand, we are told \$60 million a year over 10 years, \$600 million. We don't have the capacity in the Hydro to actually cover that and, so, we need additional support. We have heard the questions of the government about what kind of package you've been putting on the table federally; what are you asking for to help resolve this situation? Whatever that resolution looks like, there's got to be transparency when it comes to this kind of power pricing.

Saul Eslake put it on the table a few weeks ago about the inherent subsidies in these big major industrial contracts. We're not huge fans of subsidies, but, if they are going to be there, let's at least understand exactly how much it is so that people can make their own assessment about whether it's in the public interest. Saul Eslake's proposition is about putting them in the budget, actually make it as a cash subsidy to an entity and make sure it's published in the budget so it's there for all to see. Either way, however it is done, there needs to be transparency around power pricing in Tasmania because, at the moment, under the cloak of secrecy, under the cloak of commercial-in-confidence, Tasmanians do not know what's going on in their interests, and whether it's in their interests. Same goes for Marinus Link, Project Marinus - a business case and a financial investment decision that is so heavily redacted that you can't join the dots. You cannot understand what the whole thing is built on. It's built on report after report from department after department that then references each other, and it's this circular argument. I've sat together with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, sat on the Energy committee - and Mr Garland sat on the Energy committee - and had incredible access to people to be able to ask the questions and try to understand, and you just go round in circles because these reports and these decisions are being made and being based on someone else's report and someone else's report. Eventually it goes full circle and you don't know where you've ended up starting. This has led to a situation where we've got a multibillion-dollar development and then the North West Transmission Developments, which is a \$1 billion-plus project simply and purely on the books of Tasmania, where the costs are severely locked in, but the benefits are incredibly opaque. It is clear from our assessment, from reading the business case, from hearing the testimony in the Energy committee, that Marinus simply does not stack up, whether it be because of the cable and the costs, whether it be the North West Transmission Development or whether it be driving industrialisation across the northern Tasmanian landscape. This is where I 100 per cent concur with Mr Garland - we have energy policy completely back to front.

Mr Garland has eloquently talked about Pilitika/Robbins Island, but it is the absolute case in point that we need to be pointing to. He said we shouldn't have to choose between renewable

energy and protecting the environment, and that is 100 per cent. Robbins Island, a living Aboriginal cultural landscape, opposed unanimously by Aboriginal people, by the government's own statutory Aboriginal Heritage Council - and yet it's approved. It's not only approved despite the Aboriginal heritage values, but it's approved against an act that this government knows, and came into this place five to six years ago now and said was completely inadequate. If we're going to be assessing these developments, we should not be assessing them against legislation and processes that are demonstrably, and by their own admission, inadequate, ineffective and simply do not work. The environmental values on Robbins Island are extreme, be it the devils, be it the shorebirds, be it the parrots, they are extreme. In the time of bird flu, when there are additional pressures on these species, it is clear, and the science is really clear, that we need to be doing all we can to protect these species. Part of that is protecting their habitat. Part of that is removing threats and not introducing new threats. If ever there was a precautionary principle that needed to be taken, it's with a project like this.

I want to just touch on data centres in the little bit of time I have left, because this is another area where government policy is kind of just completely missing in action and we're baffled and bamboozled by different positions. We have a humongous - 25 per cent of our power - 444 megawatts are proposed by Firmus in their three data centres, and they say that 'for every one megawatt, we're going to build two'. What does that exactly mean? We know they haven't built any to this point. They've signed a three-year contract for St Leonards with Aurora and, as far as I'm aware, I haven't seen them put any level of proposition on the table about building another renewable energy project, be it wind or solar or anything else. It's really clear that policy is back to front when it comes to these issues. Matt Kean, former energy minister of the New South Wales government and current CEO of the Climate Change Authority, has said you can't have both. You can't have Marinus Link and these supposed mega profits for Hydro that are going to be delivered through Marinus Link, and still supply major industrials and data centres. You can't have both. It's just doesn't work. I concur that that's absolutely the case, unless we're going to completely industrialise northern Tasmania with transmission lines and wind farms. I want to just take up something with the Deputy Premier. He said we've got the trifecta: we've got renewable, we've got affordable and we've got reliable. I just want to challenge you on the affordable issue, because it is really clear, and we've heard repeatedly, particularly from some of the community sector, that power in Tasmania is not affordable. We have such poor housing stock and people are in energy poverty and people are having to choose between turning the heater on and feeding their children.

Time expired.

[7.06 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - When I listen to debates like this, I just wonder, what is the truth in the minds of those who criticise Tasmania's direction in terms of projects like Marinus and wind farms. I've listened to Mr Garland, the member for Braddon, a lot. Typically, his arguments around wind farms and projects like Marinus revolve around probably three things - he alleges that people don't want it, that we don't actually need it, and don't do it. That seems like the argument that Mr Garland puts up most of the time. That's probably a legitimate argument for the people he talks to, but I don't believe that that is actually the truth, especially when he says 'we' don't want it, that that is absolutely everybody, and especially when he says that we don't need it. I'll tell you why: I believe strongly, and I'm on the public record saying that Marinus is absolutely in the state's best interest. That is the real test of this place. It's not what I feel personally, it is: what is in the state's best interest?

There are some fundamentals here that get completely ignored in the debate. One is that Tasmania does not generate enough electricity to meet our own needs, and this is ongoing. The electricity demand has been growing 5 per cent per annum and our generation hasn't kept up. The only thing that's keeping the lights on, really, is Bass Link, and indeed, when Bass Link went down we saw what happened - diesel generators, all those sorts of things. Tasmania, we only meet our needs - I think we've been a net importer for eight of the last 10 years so, we've got to do something. I don't think anybody should disagree with the idea that we don't need to do anything. The idea that we don't need it, I believe, is completely false, but what do we do about it? Well, Marinus is the answer. The idea that Marinus is shady or dodgy or doesn't stack up is just complete nonsense, I'm afraid. Okay, when you put out a report and it's heavily redacted, it doesn't mean it's false. The idea that Marinus hasn't been tested financially is complete nonsense. It has been through a number of tests. Treasury has measured up Marinus and approved. The regulator has measured up Marinus and approved.

There's a regulatory investment test that is done on projects like Marinus, it goes through a cost-benefit analysis, it looks at all sorts of other alternatives, and it looks at things like preventing overcharging. These are fundamentals in determining the regulator determining whether a project like Marinus should get funded. Guess what? Tick to the boxes. Now, the idea that we can just ignore that is complete nonsense. I think we have a habit in this place, and indeed, something that's happening in politics in general is if we don't understand something or an expert gives us an opinion, we just say it's complete nonsense and argue the complete opposite. We've got to stop actually doing this.

Yes, the debate has changed over time and the reasons for the importance of Marinus have changed as well. When Marinus was first discussed, it was all about one-way traffic to the mainland. We were going to take advantage of our hydroelectric system and we were going to export masses of electricity to the mainland. However, the debate has changed and it's changed in a fundamental way. The cheapest forms of electricity now in the world, no matter where you go, are wind and solar. What comes in at number-three? Hydro.

So, if we do not connect to the mainland grid, what's going to happen over a relatively short period of time is the rest of Australia will adapt to the cheapest forms of electricity, which are wind and solar, and we will be left with number-three, which is hydro, and we won't be able to keep up. Fundamentally, the other issue is our hydro assets are ageing. They're coming up for renewal. We need income to be able to renew those assets. Just one project like Tarraleah is a billion dollars. Maybe it'll end up being even more. That's just one of these projects. We need to renew our hydro system. The idea that we can just do nothing is complete nonsense. We will become the most expensive state in Australia for electricity if we sit down and do nothing. If we listen to Mr Garland, with all respect, and we do nothing and we do not connect with Marinus, over time Tasmania will become dearer than the mainland, and our hydro advantage will be completely gone.

The fundamental point, the exciting part about Tasmania's electricity system, is we have what the mainland needs. Absolutely. We have the golden goose, and the golden goose is the ability for us to switch our generators on and off. The mainland cannot do that with the majority of their assets. They can't turn their coal-fired power stations off; they can't turn their wind farms off; they can't turn their solar panels off. The way that the regulator tries to stop people generating and overloading the system is with price. Price is the only mechanism that they have, pretty much the vast majority of the time. What that does is it drives the price into the floor at particular times and then there are other times when the price goes through the roof.

The advantage that Tasmania has is that we can shift our generation because it's potential energy stored up in our dams. We can shift our generation days, weeks, months or even years into the future. When the mainland has a problem, when the price spikes, we can turn our dams on, and we can make a hell of a lot of money.

On my social media I talked about some instances. I gave examples where in a period of one hour there was a massive price spike on the mainland and Hydro Tasmania had the ability to make about \$1.4 million in one hour. In one hour. That is what Hydro could do - can do right now. If they had Marinus, they could do this all the time. They could absolutely cream it. The other side of it is there was a period, I think, for approximately 55 hours where Tasmania was importing power from the mainland at low or even negative prices. The result was for 55 hours we imported, I think it was 12,000 megawatts hours - I can't remember the exact figure - but it was enough to power all of Tasmania's needs for 12 hours. Guess how much it cost. Only \$270. This is what Marinus does.

To say that we don't need this is to say let's have very expensive electricity in Tasmania. Let's just sit on what we've got knowing that over time all the replacement costs are going to build up; all the advantages that the mainland will have because they are going to adapt without us - or with us. They're going to adapt without us and they'll be cheaper. The businesses that have come to Tasmania to set up for cheap power will end up on the mainland. Now, there is a price to pay, and that is that electricity prices will go up in Tasmania. This is where you get to the difficult conversation. This is why the government doesn't like to have this conversation. This is why I think there hasn't been enough information getting out into the community, because the government will avoid these difficult conversations.

Power prices will go up in Tasmania but if we don't do anything, if we sit on exactly what we've got, power prices will go up more. Sitting still will cost Tasmanians more. That is why a project like Marinus is absolutely in the state's best interest. That is the picture that we need to have in our heads in this place. It's what's in the state's best interest. The advantage though of going down the Marinus route, getting that project up and building Marinus 2 and then hopefully building the Cethana pumped hydro scheme is that we are going to absolutely be able to make a killing in the electricity market - and we own the assets. Our hydro system will have the potential to really fill the gap that we need, which is own-source revenue.

We rely so heavily on GST and federal government payments and here is the one thing, the one advantage, that Tasmania has; it is to build up this massive pool of own-source revenue, and, with a portion of that own source revenue, we can compensate households and businesses that will be impacted by the higher electricity prices. That will definitely be a lever a government could pull, and I can tell you that a Labor government will be pulling that lever pretty hard. But we need that own-source revenue. What the detractors are actually saying is, 'I don't believe any of this. I don't believe all the financial modelling, I don't believe all the experts. I don't believe the national regulator. I believe that we don't need it. We don't want it so, don't do it. Well, if that's the case, we're actually leading ourselves into a far, far worse situation for the Tasmanian economy. We need projects like this. We need to be thinking about the future. What is the future of Tasmania, the future of the world - not just the future of Tasmania? The future of the world is electrification, and here we are in Tasmania with the golden asset and yet there are people in this House who are saying don't do anything about it. I don't want anything to change, we don't need it, we don't want it and I say that is absolutely not in the state's best interest.

[7.16 p.m.]

Mr VERMEY (Clark) - I rise to respond to this motion and put some very important facts on record in this House this evening. This motion before us asks the House to condemn this government for failing to put Tasmanian communities and the environment first and calls on us to show some common sense. Let me say from the outset that common sense is exactly what has guided every major energy decision this government has taken. We are a government that prides ourselves on being ambitious but sensible, and our approach to our energy policy is no different.

Speaker, we're a state that is built on clean, renewable energy. For more than a hundred years, our hydropower system has powered our households, our businesses and our industries. This is a renewable energy with low carbon emissions ensuring our industrial businesses were powered with green electric energy right from the start. Our hydropower industry has been a key driver of economic growth and community development across Tasmania since its inception.

Our clean, green credentials continue to be an asset in attracting new industry and new opportunities to Tasmania. We're not just about being a national leader in renewable energy production but an international one. We were the first state in Australia to have enough installed capacity to be 100 per cent self-sufficient in renewable electricity. We're the first Australian jurisdiction to achieve net-zero emissions and we continue to maintain that position. We also remain ahead of our legislative target of net-zero emissions or lower from 2030.

These are impressive achievements and ones that all Tasmanians should be proud of, but it's not just achieved through luck or through accident. These outcomes were achieved through practical, common sense actions and long-term strategic investments in our greatest publicly owned asset, Hydro Tasmania. It was our government that legislated Tasmania's renewables target of 200 per cent by 2040, as the deputy has already stated. This is an ambitious target and we recognise that, but we also recognise that Tasmania's renewable energy advantage is one of our greatest economic strengths and, as the national energy market continues to transition, we know that our hydropower system, with its deep storages and ability to dispatch when needed, turn it on, turn it off, will only become more valuable, and we will continue to build on this advantage, delivering long-term growth for our state.

The motion before us talks about the importance of putting Tasmania first in our energy policy. Our government has done that exactly that. I'd remind the honourable members of the Tasmanian First Energy Guarantee. It was our government that rewrote the Hydro Tasmania ministerial charter to return Hydro to its functional principles. The ministerial charter details the government's strategic expectations of Hydro Tasmania. Hydro Tasmania has been a cornerstone of Tasmania's economic growth over the past century.

It was built by Tasmanians for Tasmanians, and we know that putting Tasmanian communities first must be a core principle of Hydro Tasmania. It was our government that tore up the previous Labor-Greens Hydro charter and issued a new directive with functional principles that firmly put Tasmania first. Under the new charter, shareholder ministers have directed Hydro Tasmania to perform its functional functions to support the lowest possible power prices for Tasmania and enable economic growth and job creation in Tasmania. We have made it clear that Hydro must play an active part in increasing on-island generation, requiring them to bring on 500 megawatts of new generation by 2030. New generations will bring more jobs, more growth and more benefits to our regional communities. New generation is also key

to unlocking the full benefits of the Marinus project, one of the central elements of our long-term energy agenda. The updated charter reflects Hydro requirements under the Energy Security Risk Response Framework, ensuring management of on-island generation is maintained. Energy security is a foundational pillar of our energy policy, ensuring that regardless of broader environmental changes, Tasmanian households and businesses continue to receive safe, secure and reliable energy.

We will ensure that every decision that Hydro makes is based on delivering the lowest possible power prices for Tasmanians and enabling economic growth and job creation in Tasmania. These are all practical, common sense actions that ensure our publicly owned asset is working for the benefits of our local communities.

Tasmania has amongst the lowest regulatory electrical prices in the nation, and in real terms, regulated electrical energy prices have decreased since our government came to power. This is the proof that our government is delivering on things that matter to Tasmanian communities. Our electrical concessions are amongst the most generous in the country and across the next four years we will be providing \$234 million to support those doing it tough.

But that's not all we're doing. As we know, Hydro Tasmania was built by Tasmanians and is owned by Tasmanian people. It is our greatest asset in the Tasmanian energy space and that's why the government implemented the renewable energy dividend (RED). The RED is an innovative profit-sharing mechanism that means when Hydro makes money, Tasmanians save money.

This motion suggests that our government is not putting Tasmanians first. This is categorically incorrect. One only has to look at Project Marinus to see the benefits it will deliver to Tasmanian communities from our energy agenda. Project Marinus is the most significant energy infrastructure investment in Tasmania's history. It's expected to unlock \$4.4 billion in economic activity that supports jobs and investments across Tasmania, particularly in the north-west. It will create long term opportunities and deliver community-building incentives across our regions. It will improve energy security, more than doubling our interconnection to the mainland. It will also greatly boost Hydro Tasmania's trading opportunities, and once operational, it's expected to deliver \$470 million of additional annual returns from Hydro Tasmania to the state. These are dividends that can be used to fund essential services for Tasmanian roads, schools, and hospitals.

I would also like to remind the house that this is not a partisan Tasmanian project dreamed up in isolation. We've worked across both sides of the government, the Commonwealth, and with Victorian Government to secure this project. It is a project that provides benefits nationally - greater interconnection, better access to cheaper renewable energy, and thousands of jobs in both construction and ongoing roles. Project Marinus is now progressing and planned to deliver, and our government remains committed to seeing these benefits realised.

We know that as Tasmania grows, our energy demand grows, and more generational transmission investment will be needed. Speaker, our government is committed to doing this in a sensible and practical way. That is why establishing renewable energy approvals pathways and transforming Tasmanian major projects creates more streamlined and coordinated pathways for major renewable energy development. That is why we have a great system in place and we keep on doing what we're doing.

[7.26 p.m.]

Mr GARLAND (Braddon) - I'd like to thank the contributions from all members and for the minister's care for our environment. I thank the Greens and their wisdom on this issue. I thank Ms Finlay's passion for her community, and I wish Mr Broad had that same passion for his.

Dr Broad - Oh, come on. That's a low blow.

Mr GARLAND - If he thinks Marinus is going to take prices down, well the advice on the energy committee says under Marinus, prices will go through the roof. Without Marinus, prices are going to go up anyway but that's the advice that was coming-

Dr Broad - You didn't listen to me. You didn't listen to me.

Mr GARLAND - and this was not about Marinus, this was about common sense, putting community first and the environment first and the idea of renewables is saving the planet. To go to a place like Robbins Island and impact everything and all and sundry is sort of absurd really, because it's creating the opposite. Mr Broad completely mischaracterised my contribution and decided this motion was his chance to get behind Marinus, and we know how he feels about it, but this wasn't what the motion was about.

My motion was about the people of Braddon, which I have not seen you represent one individual since I've been in here. You've backed industry over and above community at every turn and that's the truth, and these are the people I care about, who put me here -

Dr Broad - That is just a shameful - that is bad. You seriously believe that?

DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, order.

Mr GARLAND - the wildlife and the culture, as well. It was about common sense being applied to renewable energy solutions, solutions that don't cause community division, that respect Aboriginal cultural heritage, that doesn't destroy the environment or create years of debt and putting communities first.

Time expired.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Private Health Insurance for Older Tasmanians

[7.29 p.m.]

Ms HOWLETT (Lyons) - Deputy Speaker, a vote will be required. I move-

That the House:

- (1) Notes that the Federal Government's cut to the private health insurance rebates for senior Australians will result in more older Tasmanians relying on the public health system.
- (2) Recognises that older Tasmanians are already being impacted by a lack of aged care beds and these changes will only exacerbate this issue further.
- (3) Calls on the Australian Government to reverse these changes to the private health insurance rebate for Tasmanians aged over 65.

I rise today to speak on this important motion for older Tasmanians and calling on the Australian Government to reverse its decision to remove the higher private health insurance rebate for Australians 65 years and over. Make no mistake, this is brutal and unacceptable decision by federal Labor government to put up the cost of private health insurance by making a major cut to the rebate, which has been in place for over 25 years.

The motion recognises that older Tasmanians are already being affected by a shortage of aged care places and growing pressures across our health system, and that these changes risk making those challenges even worse. This is a matter of fairness and affordability and ensuring older Tasmanians are not left carrying the burden of a bad decision made in Canberra. Tasmania is not like any other state. We have the oldest population in Australia. As of December 2025, around 22.6 per cent of Tasmania's were aged 65 years and over, compared with 17.7 per cent nationally. In simple terms, Tasmania has around 28,500 more older people than we would have if our population reflected the national average. In many of our regional communities, more than one third of residents are aged 65 and over. That means national policies aimed at older Australians often have a greater impact right here than they do anywhere else in the country. That is exactly the case with this proposal by the federal government.

The Australian Government is choosing to remove the higher private health insurance rebate currently available to Australians aged 65 years and over. Like so many of their decisions to ride roughshod over the people of Tasmania, this plan was not told to voters prior to the election. I suppose the Prime Minister will just say 'we've changed our position'. Well, that's not good enough, Prime Minister. The Commonwealth may see this as a chance to change a national program, and they may try to downplay the impact, but for Tasmania this is a change that will be felt by thousands of older Tasmanians with significant flow on affecting others due to impacts on our hospitals and Labor, Deputy Speaker, did this without any warning.

In fact, industry data indicates more than 78,000 Tasmanians aged over 65 years currently hold private health insurance and will be negatively affected by this decision. That's not a small group of people, that is tens of thousands of Tasmanians, many who have paid private health insurance premiums for decades in good faith, believing that the system would be there to honour them for their senior years. Many have done the right thing year after year because they want certainty about their healthcare, and because they want to retain choice when they need treatment. Now they are being told they will receive less support, meaning much higher insurance premiums to maintain that cover.

This is at a time when many older Tasmanians are already feeling the impacts of rising cost pressures, at a time when household budgets are under significant pressure, and at a time where every single dollar matters. This is clearly a major miscalculation from the federal government, supported by their good friends the Greens. We know that many older Tasmanians

live on fixed and lower incomes, and many are retirees, people who cannot simply work an extra shift or take on additional hours to cover these increased expenses. When costs go up for older Tasmanians, they have extremely limited options. The reality is that only a few people will be able to absorb the additional cost without any pain. Many others will not be able to. Some will downgrade their cover, some will reduce the level of protection that they have, and some may leave private health insurance altogether.

That is the concern at the heart of this motion and that is my major concern and why I put this motion forward. This is simply not about private health insurance. It's about what happens next and the flow on effects that will cascade down and the impact of all of us who need healthcare. Those who are insured, those who are not insured, everyone will be affected. This should matter to every single member of parliament in this place. If fewer older Tasmanians can afford private health cover, more people will rely on our public hospitals. That means more pressure on our emergency departments and more pressure on elective surgery waiting lists, along with more pressure on our outpatient services. Overall, it's more pressure on our public hospitals at a time when demand is already increasing and when the Commonwealth is already not taking responsibility for the areas that it should

Older Australians are far more likely to use hospital and specialist services than younger people and that's not surprising. As we age, our healthcare needs generally increase. That is why higher rebates existed in the first place. It recognised the reality that older Australians face greater healthcare costs and greater healthcare needs. Our concern - and we're certainly not alone - is that our public health system is already managing significant demand. Our hospitals work hard every single day to provide exceptional quality care, and our dedicated healthcare workers continue to do an extraordinary job. I want to thank each and everyone of them. However, we know there are pressures and we know that there are people requiring complex care and support. We also know there are older patients remaining in hospital while they wait for more appropriate care settings and support arrangements. We also know that aged care shortages continue to impact patient flow throughout our healthcare system. We know that aged care capacity is unavailable. We know that patients remain in hospital longer than necessary, and that creates a challenge for everybody. It reduces available beds, it increases pressure on services, and it can affect access for other patients waiting for care. The last thing Tasmanians need is another policy that risks pushing people away from private healthcare and into our public system. That's why we are so concerned about this proposal.

Our government has made our position very clear. Earlier this year, Tasmania wrote directly to the Australian Government outlining our concerns and formally calling for this decision to be reconsidered. We have also reiterated those concerns through our submissions to the Senate inquiry examining this legislation. In that submission, we highlighted that Tasmania stands out to be one of the hardest hit. The Commonwealth can point to national averages, but they do not tell Tasmania's story or account for our older demographic or our regional communities. National averages also do not account for the unique pressure facing a smaller health system. National averages certainly do not account for the disproportionate impact this decision will have on our state.

We also need to think about what this means for choice. Many older Tasmanians value having private health insurance because it provides certainty and it provides flexibility. It provides access to private hospitals and specialists. It allows people to make decisions about their own care. For many older Tasmanians, maintaining that choice is extremely important, particularly when managing chronic illness or ongoing health conditions. Yet this proposal

risks making that choice less affordable and less accessible. Let us remember that for older people, health and wellbeing are more about treatment alone. Health affects independence, it affects confidence, it affects connection to family and community, and overall quality of life. Policies that place additional financial pressure on older Australians can have consequences that reach far beyond healthcare costs alone.

There is another issue that deserves attention. Tasmania's private health sector is relatively small. That means it has less ability to absorb sustained reductions in activity and in revenue. If people downgrade or leave private health insurance, private hospitals and providers will certainly feel those impacts, and when private capacity is reduced, public capacity must pick up the slack. We have seen examples in recent years of reduced private health services capacity in Tasmania. Every loss of private healthcare capacity ultimately places additional pressures elsewhere in the system, and that's not good for patients, it's not good for our clinicians, and it's not good for taxpayers. A strong health system relies on both public and private healthcare working together as a health ecosystem. Weakening one part of that system affects the other. That is why these changes should concern everybody, regardless of whether they currently hold private health insurance or they don't.

This motion is not asking for any special treatment - it's simply asking the Australian Government to recognise the realities that older Tasmanians face to recognise Tasmania's unique demographic profile and to recognise the cost-of-living pressures affecting older Australians, particularly Tasmanians: to recognise the impact this decision may have on public hospitals and aged care facilities and, most importantly, to listen to the people who will be affected - the older Tasmanians who have worked hard throughout their whole lives, the older Tasmanians who have paid taxes and the older Tasmanians who have contributed enormously to our communities. They deserve certainty and respect, and this decision by the Commonwealth flies in the face of that.

This motion sends a simple, clear message: Tasmania cannot afford policies that risk driving more demand into an already pressured public health system or that increase financial pressure on our older people. Tasmania cannot afford decisions that fail to recognise the needs of the oldest population in the nation. I urge all members to support this motion and, again, I call on the Australian Government to reverse these changes to the private health insurance rebate for Australians aged 65 years and older. Older Tasmanians deserve better, and specifically, I give this message to the state opposition: you are not in this parliament to continually work against us. Tasmanians need you, they need your support, and not to support your Labor mates in Canberra. Stand up. Work for Tasmania. That is all of our jobs in this place. I commend the motion to the House.

[7.43 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - I'm pleased to be able to contribute on this motion on behalf of the Labor Party and foreshadow that I'll get some amendments during my contribution, but I have to say, here we go again. We see minister after minister, member after member of the Rockliff government just blaming Canberra - doing nothing but passing the buck and complaining about what happens in Canberra instead of actually standing up for Tasmanians. We're hearing it all the time. We heard it on Bell Bay Aluminium, we heard it on a range of different things where we need, Tasmanians need, their state government working with Canberra. Instead, we just hear these guys whingeing and asking, 'Well, what are we doing, because the Labor Party's in power there and the Labor Party is represented here in this parliament.' Well, of course we advocate to our federal colleagues. We do that each and every

day - but we are not in government. The Liberal Party is in government, and I don't recall anywhere near this much complaining about Canberra going on from that side of the Chamber when Scott Morrison was prime minister. Not a word, not a beep happened at that time, but here we are discussing this motion, and it is an important motion. I do want to recognise, of course, that there is rising cost of living, and insurance cost is one of the things that we all can agree is impacting on cost of living for Tasmanians. Health insurance is no exception to that.

Private health insurance also, in the system that we work in right now, is an important part of our healthcare system, and we have an ageing population. These are current and ongoing pressures for Tasmania's parliament and Tasmania's government to deal with. Yes, of course, we recognise those things, but let's look at the facts, Speaker. Let's look at the wording of this motion. First of all, the motion notes that the government's cut to private health insurance rebates will result in more older Tasmanians relying on the public health system. We don't know that for sure. There's a Senate inquiry that's looking in to that and I'll get to that in my amendments.

Secondly, it says that older Tasmanians are already being impacted by lack of aged care beds. Yes, that is an impact. That is a massive problem for Tasmanians, and it's something that the Morrison government and all of the Liberal predecessors failed to deliver on for year after year. For decades of Liberal government there was an under-investment in aged care, there was an under-investment in primary health and there was an under-investment in health across the board. We are still paying the price for that. You can see federal Labor trying to do the things that are needed to improve our health system.

For example, the federal Labor government is investing more into health. They invested \$25 billion into public hospitals alone - \$700 million of that came to Tasmania, to the Tasmanian budget for Tasmanian public hospitals. What did Eric Abetz, the Treasurer, do with that \$700 million from Canberra? He ripped it straight back out again, \$700 million to come out of the public health system in Tasmania.

That's what we can see from these ministers and government members. That's the kind of attitude they have to receiving federal funding from Canberra: 'Thanks very much, Canberra. We'll stick it in our back pocket and we won't put it into public hospitals. We'll rip it right back out of there'.

Let's actually look at how incongruous this motion is. It doesn't make sense for a number of reasons. I'll probably run out of time if I try to go through all of them. Let's not forget that with the changes to the rebate, which are not yet implemented, the federal government in Canberra has already said that that saving will be invested into aged care. That would be an extra \$3 billion dollars nationally being invested into aged care - that Tasmania needs, that every state and territory needs, that we need. We need our government to be saying, 'Yes, Canberra, we're ready to work with you. We want to see \$3 billion invested into aged care and we want to see it soon'.

The motion also asks for something to be reversed that hasn't yet been implemented. There's a Senate inquiry that's looking at exactly this. The Deputy Premier, who's left the Chamber now, is at pains to tell me to stop asking him to rule out changes to the workers compensation system because there's a review happening. Well, that's exactly what's happening here. We have the Liberal Party asking for the government to reverse changes that haven't yet

happened and there's a Senate inquiry looking at that. My amendment goes to that as well, honourable Speaker.

What I did want to talk about as well is some of the assurances that the Liberal Party made at the election to older Tasmanians. I'm reading now from an election media release from July of last year during the election campaign where Jeremy Rockliff, the Premier, said older Tasmanians will receive more support to live enriching and healthy lives at home in assisted living under a re-elected Tasmanian Liberal government. He said that the government would ensure Tasmanians can age in their own home in assisted living and in all aspects of our community. He said that supporting our seniors is about giving people more choice, more support and better care as they age. The announced thing out of this election commitment that he made is that he was going to be partnering with aged care providers to deliver much needed additional care options for Tasmanians who are in need of extra support. He said that he would be undertaking an EOI for aged care providers to construct and operate three assisted living facilities in the north, the north-west and the south, on greenfield government-owned land.

Well, where's that promise gone, honourable Speaker? That is absolutely supportable. We would love to see the government putting their time and energy into undertaking what they promised - an EOI on state-owned land, partnering with aged care providers to increase availability of aged care beds but they're not doing that. They're just complaining about Canberra. We would love to see Jeremy Rockliff and his members working with Canberra to increase investment into aged care from Canberra. They're always the first to criticise the federal government in not investing enough, but here there is a proposal to invest \$3 billion into aged care. What does the state Liberal Party say? They say, 'No thanks, we don't want it'. Well, that is shameful.

For those reasons I will read my amendments in to the Chamber. I move -

First amendment

In paragraph (1), leave out the word "will" and insert instead the word "may";

Second amendment

In paragraph (2):

- (a) After the words "Recognises that" insert the word "some"; and
- (b) Leave out the words 'already' and 'and these changes will only exacerbate this issue further'.

Third amendment

Leave out paragraph (3) and insert instead the following words:

- '(3) Recognises that the *Private Health Insurance Amendment (Modernising the Private Health Insurance Rebate) Bill 2026* (Commonwealth) has been referred to the Senate Community Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 7 October 2026'.

Pretty soon.

Fourth amendment

Insert new paragraph (4) as follows:

'(4) Calls on the Federal Government to consider the findings and recommendations of the inquiry.'

As they should. There may well be changes to the proposed scheme when that committee reports - in really not very much time at all, just a little over a month - and we would expect the government to do exactly that.

So, let's not forget as well that the wording of this motion as it stands - if these amendments don't pass - assumes as well that these changes will increase pressure on the public health system. That's not known for sure. That will be analysed by the Senate inquiry. What we do know is that over 13 years of Liberal government in Tasmania, the health system has been a distant, distant priority. It has not been front of mind for health minister after health minister. They are not, at their core, concerned about how our public health system operates. They are much more interested in blaming Canberra and, when Canberra comes to the table with \$700 million for Tasmanian hospitals, Eric Abetz, the Treasurer, rips it right back out again, with \$700 million coming out of the bottom line for hospitals in Tasmania. That is a shameful, shameful thing that they would reject not only the \$700 million that the federal government has invested into Tasmanian hospitals, but also reject \$3 billion of investment in to aged care.

I think Tasmanians are pretty bored of the blame game. I don't think they really admire us as local representatives when they just hear people passing the buck. They want to see people in this place, and in Canberra, working side by side in their best interests. We need better funding for healthcare and hospitals. We need better funding for primary health.

Let's not forget that the Albanese government has also invested \$3.5 billion in urgent care clinics around the country that are opening up at a rapid rate. They're only a little way into their second term and Medicare urgent care clinics are opening right across the country, and they're being added to by the mental health urgent care clinics as well, massively increasing access to healthcare, because that's what Labor governments do.

That's what Labor governments do. The minute they get in, they say, 'what's first up?' and it's going to be healthcare, it's going to be housing, it's going to be education. Not this lot: they have spent 13 years neglecting public health in this state and now they're complaining about it to Canberra and, when Canberra comes with investment, this government rips it straight back out again.

I hope that the Chamber will consider these amendments in the good faith that they are moved. People want to see us working together. They want to see us all standing up for Tasmanians and the things that matter to them. That does mean access to healthcare; that does mean access to aged care. At its core, I don't think Tasmanians really mind which layer of government is responsible for what. They just want to know that the services that they need are

there when they need them and that they can rely on them. With that, I'll conclude my comments and commend the amendments to the Chamber.

[7.54 p.m.]

Ms ROSOL (Bass) - I rise to speak to both the original motion and to the amendments. I'll begin with the amendments by saying that the Greens will support the amendments that have been moved by Labor this evening. I want to point out that this is very much about federal policy. It does have an impact on the state, but these are actions that are being taken at the federal level. In considering the Greens position on this, I note that the federal Greens have not reached a position on the cuts to the private health insurance rebate and they are very much in a position of listening to the evidence.

As the honourable member for Clark has mentioned already, there is currently a Senate inquiry being undertaken into these rebate cuts and the federal Greens have decided that they're going to listen to all the evidence that comes forward in that Senate inquiry before they make a decision about their position on these rebates. So, they are listening to the evidence, considering all the submissions that have been made, and wanting to make sure that they are taking into consideration all the information about these rebate cuts before reaching a decision. With the federal Greens having that position, we as the state Greens would also say that we don't think that there is enough information available at the moment to have a firm position on this, noting that it is a federal policy and federal action that's being taken. I will say, though, that this motion seems to be rather pre-emptive. It makes some really clear, strong statements. It notes:

- That the federal government's cut to the private health insurance rebates for senior Australians will result in more older Tasmanians relying on the public health system; and
- Recognises that older Tasmanians are already being impacted by a lack of aged care and these changes will only exacerbate this issue further.

We don't actually know that for sure yet. The Senate inquiry is in process, and will be looking at all the evidence around that. In my reading around this issue, there has been independent analysis that's been done of this policy that federal Labor have put forward that suggests that it won't have the impacts that have been written into this Liberal motion this evening.

For that reason, we will be supporting the Labor amendments to this, recognising that we don't know what the impact will be and so the change of the language around 'will' and changing that to 'may' seems to be a wise amendment to make, given that things are quite unclear at the moment. The amendment to Labor's amendment to point 3, recognising that there is a Senate inquiry happening right now - that's a statement of fact - and we would hope that the federal government will consider the findings and recommendations of the inquiry. I know that the Greens certainly will be at a federal level.

What I find really annoying about this motion is that there's an espoused care for older Tasmanians here and as if by bringing forward this motion the Liberals can say, 'We fight for older Tasmanians.' I've been working on some things in the Ageing portfolio, and, so, at the same time as the Liberals are bringing forward this motion, there are Tasmanian older, isolated people who are falling through the cracks of services that we have right now and the Liberal government have not been taking enough action to address that issue.

If they really cared about older Tasmanians, they would be listening to the terrible stories. I've spoken of them in this place on previous occasions; the terrible stories about what some older Tasmanians are experiencing. They would be doing all they could to address that but they haven't been doing all they can to address that.

Last week I held a roundtable with more than 25 people at it. They were stakeholders, service providers, advocates and peak bodies who all came together to talk about the issue with isolated older Tasmanians and what they're living through. There's deep concern amongst that group and a real sense there that the state government aren't doing enough to address the real issues that are facing older Tasmanians: not older Tasmanians who have private health insurance, but older Tasmanians who are incredibly vulnerable, who live with poverty, who are isolated and cut off and services are not meeting their needs.

I would just say to the Liberals, if they really want to do something about supporting older Tasmanians, they take action in that area rather than a motion that's really about posturing, not much more than that, but they actually do undertake action that will fully support and ensure that older Tasmanians get the services that they need.

This is obviously a real issue for people. We know that healthcare for older Tasmanians is important; we know that there are issues in aged care but it goes so much beyond these private health insurance rebate cuts to much bigger issues and that's where the work needs to be happening in those areas. Thank you to Labor for the amendments that they have put forward. We will be supporting those, and hopefully we can get this motion to a place where it sticks to the facts, doesn't jump to conclusions too quickly and too early, and will result in a motion that means that the issue is taken seriously and considered properly.

[8.01 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Thank you, honourable Speaker. I'll be very brief in my contribution on this. There's a fair bit of politics being played on both sides with these kinds of motions, I accept that. I am supportive of the amendments and so, I'll indicate that I do support the amendments. I understand that the removal of the rebate will potentially have a greater impact in Tasmania because of our older population but I suppose I approach these kinds of measures or changes to our tax system in a bit more of an unreconstructed socialist kind of way.

I think if you're 64, you don't get it, but once you're 65, you do. If you earn money, regardless of how old you are, the rebate should be the same. I actually support the income test. I think that's a far more equitable way to manage these things. I know that the federal government, every government, state and federal across the country, has budget issues they need to manage and need to have a revenue system, a tax system and a benefit system that supports certain behaviour and supports those people who desperately need it. Obviously we have universal access or an attempt to deliver universal access for healthcare across the country through our Medicare system.

When I think of the history of this, in the late 1990s, this was a Howard government initiative. Heading into an election cycle, there were some changes in 2005, heading into the 2007 election cycle. I think the latest approach was the Gillard government, brought in the means testing, I think? That shows how old I am; these things. In terms of the cycle of this, and

I know there was a pension in the late 1990s and early 2000s, for the Howard government to invest in rebates and concessions for certain groups in our community for various reasons.

I don't doubt that this will have an impact on some Tasmanians and I think that is of concern but I think, taking sort of an egalitarian perspective, if you're 50, 55, 65, 70, if you have the same income, you are treated equally regardless. So, remove the age discrimination, but in terms of the rebate and in terms of the private health return to you, it should be based on your income and it should be means tested. The more you earn and less you get, the less you earn and the more you get.

That is a redistributive model that has worked well for this country and I support that. I understand the politics, I understand the state and the federal challenge and I do believe the federal government needs to do more for Tasmania in terms of funding our healthcare services. I support the actions of the state health minister in advocating for greater funds, particularly when it comes to general practice and access to that care, which, ultimately, is the responsibility of the federal government and the state government, over a number of years, have been asked to take up the slack and to intervene when there's been a failure of GP services for communities and the state government has been asked to step up.

It's a complex mix of funding, I accept that, and the funding to our public hospital is based on certain procedures and various buckets of money that are allocated to try to resolve waiting lists, et cetera. I believe the federal government should do more. It just gets me upset when I listen to Western Australia complain about being treated unfairly under the GST system, but that's a debate that, no doubt, we'll probably have tomorrow. I don't want to pre-empt the orders of tomorrow's day.

Having said that, this will have an impact. I've got no doubt about it. There is a Senate inquiry and we'll find out more once that report reports but at the end of the day, it is a rebate based on age. I think a means testing based on salary or your income, however derived and recognised by the ATO, should be the determinant. If you're 64, you miss out, but you're effectively getting the same income. I think, despite the wrinkles that this has created in public health debate, I do support the changes by the federal government. I'm sure people will disagree with me in some areas on that, but I think based on income is a far better way than on age.

[8.06 p.m.]

Prof RAZAY (Bass) - Honourable Speaker, I rise to speak to the motion. We have heard from the federal government that they understand the cost-of-living crisis so many are living in, particularly our seniors, and yet we are discussing the impact of what will be a major blow to some of our most vulnerable Australians above the age of 65. From 1 April 2027, 65 to 69-year-olds will have their rebate cut from 28 per cent to 24 per cent. Those 70 and over will have their rebate cut from 28 per cent to 24 per cent. This represents quite a difference, especially for someone on a pension or part pension, and self-funded retirees. These are people who, despite their age and in many instances their financial situation, continue to fund their own private health insurance. If they can't afford private health cover with the current assistance of the rebate from federal government, where will they end up? In the already struggling public sector.

Tasmania will have a big impact from these policies because we have the largest proportion of elderly people. Nearly a quarter of our population is over 65, which will have a major impact on seeing a specialist, general practitioner, or being admitted to hospital. Private

Healthcare Australia, the insurers' peak body, states that the federal government's own modelling, that predicts about 44,000 older Australians will drop their private health coverage, is actually an underestimate. It expects more than 400,000 pensioners with private health insurance will need to pay hundreds of dollars more annually to keep their cover. Medibank predict it will be 91,000 people.

Of course, the move to the public system will also possibly be instantaneous when the rebate shifts in April 2027. As noted in the motion, more elderly people will be forced to rely on our public health system. We already have a system that is struggling with current levels - through no faults of the wonderful health professionals trying to make the systems viable. I have spoken often in this Chamber about the bed blocking situation that we already have. We have had it for many years. On average we still have more than 100 people every day occupying acute care beds. That's equivalent to three wards, costing around \$100 million a year. These people should be either in the nursing home or receiving NDIS assistance. It's not only a tremendous financial cost but a real burden for patients, their loved ones, and our Tasmanian health professionals. This, of course is because the federal government is not coming to the party on aged care commitment. This will not only impact aged care beds but make bed blocking worse.

We have heard since last October, since the negotiation between federal and state government, they continue to argue about allocation of funding, but we don't feel that we are reaching a compromise to address the real situation. Further, our seniors, and indeed anyone who relies on the healthcare system, are already a little nervous about requiring assistance. This will create a great deal of undue stress and pressure for sick or injured people.

So I agree that older Tasmanians will be forced to abandon their private health care at a time when they need it most. I agree that this, in turn, will impact the current number of aged care beds and hospital beds to the detriment of those requiring them. Therefore, I support the motion.

[8.11 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass) - Well, I and the government members on this side of the House do not, repeat, do not support Labor's apologetic, Canberra-oriented amendment before the House. That should cause no surprise to the Labor opposition that we won't be playing their game to try to excuse the federal Labor Albanese government for what they are trying to do to Tasmanian seniors who are currently using their hard-earned, often low and fixed incomes to pay for private health insurance. If this law proposed by Canberra were to pass - yes, it's subject to an inquiry - it will be a direct increase in the cost of living for those Tasmanians, I repeat, most of whom are on low and fixed incomes, and it will let Canberra off the hook.

As people are forced, through the increased cost of their private health insurance, to make the very difficult decision to let go of their private health insurance - which they don't have to pay for, they don't have to buy it, they've chosen to - in a mixed-use health system in Australia, they've chosen this path - and by the way, for the last best part of 30 years, at least 25, those people have accepted at face value Canberra's promise that if they choose to invest in their private health care, it will be with them through their life. They've assumed wrongly that Canberra will honour that commitment as they age. As they leave their private health insurance, they're going to become public hospital patients in an already-stretched system nationwide.

Why would the House agree to an amendment from the Labor Party, a state Labor Party which doesn't have enough self-respect for itself, as representatives of the Tasmanian people, to stand up for Tasmanians? It's our job - and I'll let the member opposite know, Ms Haddad, the honourable member for Clark, that when the previous Liberal government made decisions we didn't agree with, we said so.

Mr Pearce - We did.

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Pearce knows well because he was the federal member for Braddon, and he was in the meeting that I called about the freight equalisation scheme. He was in the meeting, so he well knows my conduct, my public and my private advocacy for the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme (TFES).

Ms Haddad - But you've forgotten how to pick up the phone to Canberra now?

Mr FERGUSON - This is what happens. They get exposed, so their trigger reaction is to interject, though they were listened to in silence.

Ms Haddad - You worked us out. What a burn.

The SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - When the federal Liberal government tried to drop the Mersey Hospital on the state without an adjustment payment, I said no. The Hodgman government said no. We said, publicly and privately, no, you're not going to be doing that. When there was a proposal for a co-payment at an emergency department at public hospitals, as Health minister, I said no, we're not going to be supporting that. So don't give us this tripe that somehow we've been cute and cuddly with our Canberra party colleagues on matters where we knew we had to stand up for our state, for the people of Tasmania. We're actually not like you.

Speaker, through you, I say to the opposition: we are actually not like you on the other side. We do have some self-respect as politicians representing Tasmanians, and we've stood up time and again. No doubt there are plenty of other examples where we have done so.

Let's have a look at this amendment.

Ms Haddad - Look at the amendment. It's factual. There is a Senate inquiry going on.

The SPEAKER - Order. Honourable member for Clark, Ms Haddad, you can sum up soon.

Mr FERGUSON - Every single substantive change that Ms Haddad has moved, they all go in the same direction. Soften the criticism. By the way, have a look at motion No. 149. Gee, it's actually pretty soft in respect of the idea of criticism. I mean it is almost a love letter of respect. It is so polite. There is no free political advice in there. There's no brutal language that would offend a thin-skinned Labor politician. It's the model of respectability. Congratulations, Ms Howlett. I'll tell the House, by the way, Ms Howlett advised me that she wanted to put forward a motion that the Labor Party could support and that others wouldn't feel the need to amend. How interesting.

Every move here in the amendments water down the language. They remove the call for action and they protect the Australian Labor party in Canberra. The original motion says that the Commonwealth's changes will put additional pressure on Tasmania's public health system. Labor want to change 'will' to 'may'. That's a gift for the Albanese Labor government.

The motion already recognises that older Tasmanians are already being affected by a lack of aged care beds. Labor wants to delete that already. Can't imagine why. Instead, they want to insert 'some' before the words 'older Tasmanians'. Give me a break.

The motion says that the Commonwealth changes will only exacerbate this issue further and Labor wants to delete that statement entirely. Most tellingly, and this is really what gives me the irrits more than any of the other amendments - the final one, in the original motion, calls on the Australian Government to reverse the changes. Labor wants to delete that entirely.

Ms Haddad - How can you reverse changes that haven't been made yet?

Mr FERGUSON - Oh. Thank you for that interjection. Well, you shouldn't worry about it then. You see, the issue here is that this is the policy -

Ms Haddad - Then why move the motion?

The SPEAKER - Order. Honourable member for Clark, Ms Haddad, you can sum up in a few minutes.

Mr FERGUSON - This is the policy position of the Australian Labor government in Canberra. It's gone to a Senate inquiry. I had a quick look at that website - there are five members of that inquiry: two Labor, two Liberal and one Green. So, the government with the Green friends have a majority of that committee. I look forward to their findings, I really do, and then we'll all know what the Greens' position is. I suspect many will be able to guess what it is, Canberra-wise, but regardless of what the Senate inquiry finds, they're not going to make findings of fact that we can't make tonight. It's self-evident that as you push older people who are already on a fixed- and low-income basis to a more expensive private health insurance, which I've read is around \$1000 for a couple, they're going to drop their insurance in some numbers. Maybe that number is uncertain. It's certainly not going to increase uptake of private health insurance, and I don't believe for a moment that the use of the word 'may' is acceptable at all.

Why protect Canberra in these circumstances? The motion doesn't have a red-hot go at the Labor Party; I don't even think it gets mentioned. It talks about the federal government. It's a very reasonable motion. We've seen it in this House time and again. I think it was only last November I moved a private members' motion in this place around Bell Bay Aluminium. In fact, specifically it was calling on the federal government to honour its commitment around the green aluminium production credits, and do you know what, Speaker? That motion passed that evening with the support of the crossbench, because Labor and the Greens opposed it. On that night, Labor and the Greens couldn't even vote for a motion to hold Canberra to its original promise on supporting aluminium smelting at Bell Bay. Their own words, not mine. Their words - and guess what? You helped Labor, federally, get rid of that scheme. You helped Labor, federally, walk away from that promise. Then you come in here demanding that the Tasmanian taxpayer carry all of the heavy lifting to support that important smelting business at Bell Bay. You spent two weeks prosecuting the Tasmanian Government, this level of government, to do

all the heavy lifting, because you felt it was more important to support your mates in Canberra. Not good enough. Not good at all. You gave up.

What about Rushy Lagoon? We know that some of your members on the other side have privately been telling people in the community they don't support the Rushy Lagoon - what, \$7 million-subsidised advantage for one bidder for that property. Yet, what must we suffer? Not only do federal Labor back it in, we got state Labor, we got video after infernal video, telling everybody how rubbish the ground is at Rushy Lagoon, backing in that decision, because it's more important to the state opposition to be seen to supporting their Australian Labor Party colleagues in Canberra than the people that they've been voted to represent. So, no, we don't support the amendments and, if we go down losing on the amendments, we'll go down honourably on that. Then we'll keep going because we've taken a position, which is a responsible one, because we do care about the impact that this adverse decision will have on our community and we equally care about the impact that it will have - not may - will have on our Tasmanian public hospitals.

[8.21 p.m.]

Mr SHELTON (Lyons) - I rise this evening to support this motion. I do in declaring an interest in it - over 65s, of course, and older Tasmanians are very concerned about what the Australian Government is doing to the changes in private health insurance for people over 65. There are more than 78,000 Tasmanians over the age of 65 currently holding private health insurance and will be affected by this proposal. No 'might'. They will be affected, there's no doubt about that and any logical person could come up with that scenario.

We know that Tasmania also has the oldest population - that's already been mentioned - with more than 22 per cent of Tasmanians over the age of 65. So, a considerable amount. Tasmania is more affected, therefore, than any other state. This motion isn't about numbers, it's about the people. It's about older Tasmanians who have worked hard, paid their taxes, raised families, contributed to their communities, and in many cases paid private health insurance premiums for decades because they wanted to be secure in their ageing years, knowing that they could access the care that they wanted when they needed it.

The people who will be impacted are not wealthy individuals looking for tax breaks. They are retirees living on fixed incomes. They are pensioners already making difficult decisions as household bills continue to rise. They are older Tasmanians who are trying to manage chronic illness, maintain their independence and enjoy their retirement with dignity; older Tasmanians like Russell, John, and Chris - who shared a cuppa with the Premier and minister Archer on the weekend - and like so many others across Tasmania whose stories have been highlighted - the very real consequences of these proposed changes. Russell told them about how he has worked for -

The SPEAKER (Mrs Petrusma) - The question is that the amendments be agreed to.

The House divided -

AYES 17

Ms Badger
Mr Bayley
Dr Broad

NOES 13

Mr Abetz
Mr Barnett
Mr Di Falco

Ms Brown
Ms Burnet
Ms Dow
Ms Finlay
Mr Garland
Mr George
Mrs Greene
Ms Haddad
Ms Johnston
Mr Mitchell
Mr O'Byrne
Ms Rosol
Dr Woodruff
Ms Butler (Teller)

Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Ms Howlett
Mr Jaensch
Mr Pearce
Prof Razay
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Mr Vermey
Ms Ogilvie (Teller)

PAIRS

Mr Willie
Mr Winter

Mrs Archer
Mr Fairs

Amendments agreed to.

[8.32 p.m.]

Ms HOWLETT (Lyons) - Thank you very much, Speaker, and I thank all members for their contribution to this motion tonight, but I am left feeling deeply disappointed by the selling out of our fellow Tasmanians by some members. Across the health system, we're still spending too much state money, propping up areas of Commonwealth responsibility, such as primary care. To put it simply, the federal government's lack of investment into areas they are responsible for is simply not sustainable for our budget, and now the Commonwealth is also slugging older Tasmanians with higher private health insurance fees, which will only drive them into the public system and make the problem worse.

I thank the honourable member for Clark for raising our election commitments. Despite aged care being a federal government responsibility, our government is working to increase the number of aged care homes right across our state. That is why in the 2025 election the government committed to undertaking an expression of interest process for aged care providers to construct and operate three assisted living facilities in the north, north-west and south on greenfield government-owned land.

Not working with the federal government, on 6 December 2023 at national cabinet, there was a commitment from the Commonwealth to lift their contribution to health funding to 45 per cent of activity in public hospitals across the country. While those opposite were too scared to say anything, our government actively fought to secure an additional \$700 million through the NHRA (National Rural Health Alliance), but what is the percentage of Tasmania's health care funding paid by the Commonwealth now? Let's have a look at that. In 2024-25, it was 38.73 per cent. Next year, that goes down to 36.75 per cent, and can I tell you that, over the life of the new NRHA, it is 36.8 per cent. That's a long way short of what was promised. It's a long way short of what is needed, and now the Commonwealth is also slugging older Tasmanians with higher private health insurance fees, which will only drive them into the public system, which makes the problem worse.

If this was a Coalition government, state Labor would be shouting it from the rooftops but you are not prepared, on that side of the House, to stand up for older Tasmanians. All we get is silence. Shameful.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER - Order, order.

Ms HOWLETT - It is time for those opposite to show some backbone, stand up for our state, stop apologising for Canberra and start demanding more action from the federal Labor government. The honourable member for Bass, we do acknowledge the issues that you raised at the ageing roundtable, which were also discussed at estimates and in subsequent conversations with minister Archer and with Ms Rosol. While the minister could not attend due to existing commitments, our government was represented at the roundtable by departmental officers. Minister Archer has asked for a briefing and advice on the issues raised, and the minister will be responding directly once that advice has been received. However, while we always welcome constructive discussion on the challenges facing older Tasmanians, we are disappointed that the Greens made the decision to politicise this issue.

We have made it clear on multiple occasions that we can work together to deliver outcomes for the Greens. To effectively cheapen the roundtable discussion by issuing childish, overly political media releases reflects badly on you. Older people and their families deliver a genuine focus on addressing these issues, not political points scoring, and that will remain our focus. We do not support this motion, because we support older Tasmanians and are disappointed with the position of the opposition and the Greens - an affront to all fellow Tasmanians.

Time expired.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

[8.37 p.m.]

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

That the House do now adjourn.

Answer to Question - Risdon Prison Kitchen Floor Slip Rating

Answer to Question - Urban Transit Solutions - Outsourced Jobs

[8.38 p.m.]

Mr ABETZ (Franklin - Leader of the House) - In response to a question taken on notice by the Attorney-General, Minister for Justice, Corrections and Rehabilitation to the question from the Leader of the Opposition, I am advised that the contractor has accepted fault for the flooring not achieving the required slip rating. I'm further advised that the contractor is required

to rectify that issue with their expense. The department advises that additional costs of food and related issues caused by the contractors error should be reimbursed by the contractor.

I'm further advised that following the closure of the kitchen to enable rectification, that department has needed to establish three new catering contracts to the value of \$1,035,072. Once the rectification is complete and the kitchen operational, the department will establish the final total of additional costs incurred as a result of the fault and seek reimbursement in line with the contract.

Further, in response to a question from Ms Butler taken on notice by minister Vincent this morning, I'm advised that the matter raised is an individual employment matter and it would be highly inappropriate to discuss it in this forum. However, the minister clarifies the nature of the engagement with Urban Transit Solutions (UTS). UTS was engaged by the department in January 2025 to provide specific specialist public transport network planning services, including training Building Tasmania - then Department of State Growth - staff with a new network planning software system called HASTUS. This is not - stress - not an engagement to replace departmental employees, nor to outsource the role of the departmental staff member, as inappropriately suggested by Ms Butler. The engagement has a defined scope covering several specialist network planning and capability building services. This is not an engagement to take over the position or duties of departmental employees. To suggest otherwise is false.

Legacy Week

[8.40 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Deputy Premier) - Tonight I'd like to pay a tribute to Legacy. Legacy Hobart, Legacy Launceston and the work of Legacy. This is Legacy Week, and I know many honourable members in this place have already recognised that through wearing the badge and no doubt providing support and financial donations to those in the street. I was there in Hobart today and was able to visit Legacy House and pay my respects and honour those working behind the scenes, the volunteers and those on staff as well. It is a wonderful organisation in Hobart, likewise in Launceston. Legacy Week runs from 30 August to 5 September this year and it's an opportunity to support the work of Legacy. Of course, we've now hit more than 100 years of Legacy. Legacy celebrated 100 years in 2023.

I've had the honour of being a minister for Veterans Affairs for six-and-a-half years, but also a grandson of my dear late grandfather who served in World War One with the Royal Flying Corps. He flew a biplane, survived, got in at the end of the war and survived. He came back to Hobart and was involved in Legacy, but it was known at the time as the Remembrance Club. It was established by the Tasmanian-born Major General Sir John Gellibrand. He was born and raised in Ouse and part of my electorate following the First World War and then Legacy came out of the Remembrance Club and then had a fantastic amount of work all across Australia and across the world.

I was able to hold the Legacy flame, which went all around Australia or much of Australia and then including at Ouse, and it was great to be there with the local community and to commemorate the wonderful work of Major General Sir John Gellibrand. Tonight I want to recognise Sir John Gellibrand, recognise my grandfather, H.S. Barnett and all those who've served, but also all those who've involved themselves in Legacy. They provide support to

widows, to families, to the kids of those who've been left behind, those who've served, paid the ultimate sacrifice and then the families that are left behind. Their wonderful work continues.

In Hobart, for example, there are 400 beneficiaries to Hobart Legacy; some 30 children they continue to support. In Launceston, the numbers are a little bit less, but there is still wonderful work that they do. I remember being in Fromelle in northern France with the Mayor of Fromelle and the Tasmanian students on the Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize group trip and holding the Legacy flame again in France - that 100-year anniversary was recognised in Fromelle in northern France.

The work of Legacy is absolutely brilliant and today is a wonderful day to be able to pay recognition, to commemorate and thank all those involved. To the president in Hobart, the president in Launceston, the committee and all the volunteers, to those on street corners who are raising much needed funds, thank you for the work that you do. Thank you for the service and the support that you provide families who are doing it tough.

It continues - to the work of Legacy and in memory of that wonderful Tasmanian, Major General Sir John Gellibrand, and my dear late grandfather, who was very involved. He was actually a president of Hobart Legacy as well for a number of years, as well as helping get it established all those years ago. It's great to be able to recognise those involved in Legacy Week and pay a tribute to them.

Sandy Bay-Battery Point Walk and Cycleway

[8.44 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Since the 1990s, a vision for a walkway that connects Sandy Bay to the city at Salamanca has been a tantalising concept for local walkers, runners, cyclists and supporters of a connected, livable and healthy capital city. This is part of the world that I know well, having lived in Battery Point for a few years in the early 2000s, being a periodic paddler around the Battery Point coastline and now a regular cyclist from the south into the city. I love this last little bit of the coastline before turning west into the concrete walls and warehouses of the Port of Hobart.

So, I declare an interest; I'm a strong and long supporter of the walkway, as are the Greens, on record since day dot, with support for public access from the public parks at either end of Battery Point, Errol Flynn Reserve to AJ White Park - and I would benefit. Whether it's cycling to or from work or walking to access waterfront parks, a shared walkway would be a significant asset for both me, personally, and for all Hobartians. A walkway has been repeatedly recommended as important public infrastructure and has popped up in numerous reports and plans for the city. With UTAS anchoring back to STEM facilities at the Sandy Bay campus, active transport routes between the city and Sandy Bay facilities have become even more important.

On Monday, in a welcome move to preserve the opportunity for a Battery Point walkway, the Hobart City Council voted against abandoning the project and instead called on minister Duigan, the minister responsible for issuing licences and leases on Crown land to be transparent about the terms of licences for marine facilities that cross Crown land, the subject of the current proposal for this public infrastructure. There are 15 licences for marine facilities, mainly private jetties attached to foreshore residences above the route of the walkway. The

complications these licences create - a private right of way over public land between the low- and high-tide lines - has long been held up as an insurmountable barrier that renders the walkway concept redundant.

Why should they? Why should a temporary licence affording private rights over public land preclude the delivery of public infrastructure on public land? Why should it, when the latest walkway design, developed by renowned engineer Jim Gandy, provides for ongoing access to the private jetties, crossing the walkway and providing a win-win for all involved? To be clear, the latest proposal is an onshore plan for the public walkway to be built almost entirely on the inter-tidal zone on public land. This is not the offshore proposal rejected by the Resource Management and Planning Appeal Tribunal in 2015. That proposal sought to establish the walkway outside of the end of the jetties, creating visual impact and vessel accessibility issues that the tribunal was not prepared to accept.

The current proposal advanced by Friends of Battery Point Walkway is supported by the majority of the council and widely endorsed by the broader community. A walkway full stop is a popular proposition. The 2015 rejected proposal received 434 representations, a record at the time, and 77 per cent were supportive. In 2025, the current proposal was polled as enjoying 89 per cent community support.

So, what's the way through so public amenity can be enhanced and private access can be considered? Clearly the ball is in minister Duigan's court. The Leader of Government Business last night updated the House on the status of marine facility licences interacting with the proposed walkway in response to a question from the Member for Clark: fifteen licences with commencement dates ranging from 2013 to 2026, and they're for 25 year terms. Licence templates are updated by Crown Land Services from time to time.

That's some information, but not all that the Hobart City Council voted to seek. It's looking for the terms of the licences themselves to confirm the inclusion of break clauses and understand the ability of the government to play an active role in facilitating the walkway by negotiating access across the licensed areas with licence holders. It's widely understood that each licence includes a break clause allowing the minister with three months notice to amend or end the terms.

Clearly, this is an important power yet to be exercised to address the long-standing hurdles presented as a blockage to progressing the walkway. Given the popularity of the project, its demonstrable public good, its proposal on public land, and a solution that can deliver for all, it would be a perverse outcome if 15 individual licences precluded a public walkway delivering for the people in perpetuity. This is too good an opportunity to miss. We Greens call on minister Duigan to work with the Hobart City Council and residents to find a way through and finally deliver this city-changing project.

Correction to Answer - Penguin Breeding Pairs

[8.50 p.m.]

Mr PEARCE (Braddon - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Just a quick one, Speaker. A correction to a previous transmission during question time. I seek to correct the record in relation to an answer earlier today to a question from the Independent member for

Franklin, Mr Peter George. Previous estimates of the Tasmanian breeding population were in the order of between 110,000 and 190,000 breeding pairs of penguins.

AI Data Centres - Community Opposition

Ms ROSOL (Bass) - I rise to speak this evening about the petition that I was able to table this morning on behalf of more than 10,000 people who signed it. This was an incredibly significant petition, one of the largest e-petitions in the history of Tasmania with the e-petitions that are up on the website, and it was a real honour to be able to present that on behalf of all the people who signed and I want to pay tribute to the many people in the community who helped make this petition so big and, in particular, I want to thank the principal petitioner, Jamie Melvin, who brought the petition originally.

There's been a huge community action that has happened across the state, but particularly in the north of the state, where AI factories have been approved by councils and where there is some of the greatest concern about the impact of AI factories on the state.

I'd like to mention here also some of the other people who've been involved in that campaign, and particularly Anne Marie Bastian and her partner, Joe Zadravek. They were some of the earliest people to become aware of what was happening at Bell Bay and in their community and become concerned and they started a petition on Change.org also, which is currently sitting at 6000 signatures.

I think the fact that there are two huge petitions that have been running and have gathered so many signatures is an indication of the level of concern in the community. Members of the community have every right to be concerned, because what's happened is that an AI factory has been approved in St Leonards without people being aware of it and then, in Bell Bay, the George Town Council approved the development application from Firmus for the AI factory at Bell Bay and so many people in the community wanted to have a say in that or they wanted to know that there was a way of their concerns being heard.

Unfortunately, the way the planning processes work in this state meant that their submissions couldn't really be taken into consideration, which is a huge shame, unfortunate, and it means that many of the community's voices have not been heard. Because of the lack of opportunity for people to have a say in planning processes, there have been a number of AI factory and facility forums that have been held in northern Tasmania and I've attended four forums and community meetings.

The first was in Exeter with the Tamar Valley Business Association running a meeting, and that was attended by close to 200 people. There was a George Town community forum that had close to 100 people in it. The Greens, Ms Badger and I ran a community town hall that had 150 people at it and then there was a community event recently in Exeter that had around 100 people at it also.

There have been ongoing concerns that have been raised. What struck me is that people who are concerned about the AI factories are really well informed. They have local concerns, but they understand what this is about and they're not just running on conspiracy theories, but they have really well informed concerns that get to the detail of data facilities of AI factories and the impact that they might have.

They care deeply about their communities. Some of them are considering selling their homes. I know around Rowella, where the Bell Bay facility will be less than two kilometres away from them across the river, they're so concerned that many of them will sell their farms or think they will need to sell their farms. They don't just care about their own property, they also care about what this means for the state with our water and with our power use.

What the community are asking for is that they be heard, that they be respected. They want information, they want protections, they want to know the government is looking out for them but that's not what is happening. What we have is a government who are ignoring the voice of the people and, as it turns out, today Labor haven't listened either. They voted against the moratorium that over 10,000 people asked for in that position.

The draft expectations that the minister has talked about today, they're too little too late for those communities who already have AI facilities approved in their area. That's a terrible situation for them to be in, and the Greens will continue to back the community's calls for transparency, their calls for information. We'll continue to back them being included in decision-making and ensuring that protection of their interests is central to the state's assessments of AI factories. That's what people want. They want to know that they are being looked out for.

Time expired.

AI Data Centres - Response to Member for Bass, Ms Rosol

[8.55 p.m.]

Mr MITCHELL (Lyons) - Thank you. I won't be long. I just want to respond to the honourable member for Bass Ms Rosol. Labor understands the concerns about AI centres and the rapidly evolving nature of how they're coming on board. We have the committee inquiry coming up soon, of which I'm the Chair. I'm looking forward to taking evidence for that. It will very much be an evidence-based inquiry.

We didn't vote for the moratorium today because there is a currently a planning regime, as inadequate as the Greens may believe it is. There are laws in this state that applicants have a right to abide by in their applications. If the Greens' moratorium had gone forward, then frankly, development would have come to a screeching halt for who knows how long. I mean, it's hoped that this inquiry will be over by mid next year, but the last inquiry I chaired, which I inherited from the previous parliament took, I think, two years. It would be totally unreasonable to expect applicants to have a moratorium on applications before planning authorities when there is a set of laws currently in the state which can be used to assess whether the centre should go ahead.

I certainly think it's good that the parliament is now going to be examining how those processes can be improved, to be looking at things like power, water, planning requirements, all those sorts of things and look at what the best regime you could possibly have is. I think this narrative that the Greens are peddling that somehow the Labor opposition is not alive to the issues of AI centres and data centres is just plain wrong. I ask them to desist and perhaps just be a little bit more constructive.

City Mission Spring Food Drive

[8.58 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Community and Multicultural Affairs) - Honourable Speaker, people struggling through hard times in the north of our state have been turning to Launceston City Mission since 1854. That's more than 170 years of providing support where it's most needed in our community. It's the second oldest mission in Australia.

City Mission extended its reach to the north-west coast in 2006 when it opened its Devonport store, which will celebrate its 20th anniversary this month. Burnie's Mission Shop will celebrate its 10th birthday this December. City Mission also operates a resale tip shop on behalf of the Burnie City Council at its waste management centre. All City Mission retail outlets give the public a place to buy affordable pre-loved clothing and household goods, which makes people's money go further when budgets are tight. The funds raised are used by City Mission to support families and individuals experiencing significant hardship with bills they cannot afford to pay and life essentials they cannot afford to buy.

This is where City Mission's Spring food drive comes in. The Mission stocks of food and other household items are depleted each winter, so to restock before the busy Christmas/New Year period arrives, City Mission stages a food drive in September to refill the pantry. This week is a great time to do your bit by putting an extra item or two in your basket or trolley if you can, and leaving it at a collection point in a participating supermarket somewhere on the north-west coast. Tomorrow and on Friday, 3 and 4 September, shoppers in my electorate can donate non-perishable food or toiletry items at IGA shops in Wynyard, Woolworths in Devonport, Burnie and Wynyard, and Coles in Burnie.

Volunteers from City Mission and the Wynyard and Burnie Emu Bay Lions Club will be on site from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. on both days to accept donations. The spring food drive will continue through September with drop off points at City Mission op shops and tip shops, Devonport High School, Ulverstone, Burnie and Cooee primary schools, the Australian Christian College at Somerset, and Milpara Early Learning Centre in Burnie.

Each donation, big or small, will help in a practical way, but just as importantly, it'll show recipients that their fellow community members think of them and care for them. However, money or a hamper of groceries is not the answer to every problem, and some people will have complex needs beyond an overdue bill or putting a meal on the table. Social disconnection and homelessness often go hand in hand with financial insecurity. City Mission opened Burnie City Kitchen in 2015 as a drop-in centre to provide low-cost meals and a friendly chat. It was my pleasure last December to join City Kitchen manager Gail French and her team of volunteers to serve up a pre-Christmas celebration lunch of roast meat and vegetables.

Walking through the door of a place like City Kitchen can be a life-changing moment and I'd like to share the story of one young man as a perfect example. When Jordan first visited City Kitchen, he said very little and was not very confident. Five months later, Jordan had become a regular and City Kitchen manager Gail struck up conversations with him. He began to open up and told Gail he'd been a victim of domestic violence and left his situation with very little except his car.

Jordan was unsure about what his next steps should be, so, Gail asked him about the things he enjoyed doing most. He spoke about the pride he took in keeping his car clean and said he could imagine doing that for other people. Gail suggested he could start a little business and assured him there would be support available. The first step could be something as simple as having a business card made-up.

Jordan didn't visit City Kitchen for some time after that, and Gail and the team wondered what had become of him but he eventually returned to City Kitchen to tell Gail with great pride that he started his own car cleaning business, complete with getting his own business cards. After a listening ear and some words of encouragement, Jordan's sense of self worth had flourished and he now had a spring in his step.

As City Mission asks us to contribute towards its continued outreach programs, I encourage people to pop an extra something into their family shopping trolley and then imagine what comfort or life changing opportunity it might represent for someone else.

The House adjourned at 9.02 p.m.