



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

House of Assembly Select Committee on

CARETAKER CONVENTIONS

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Ms Badger (Chair)
Mr Garland
Mr Vermey
Mr Winter (Deputy Chair)

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CHAIR'S FOREWORD

On behalf of the House of Assembly Select Committee on Caretaker Conventions, I am pleased to present this report.

Caretaker Conventions are a fundamental part of the Westminster system. Intended as a guide for Ministers, Departments, Government Businesses, and public servants, the Conventions are in place to democratically moderate Government functions during an election period. They ensure the necessary administrative mechanisms of Government continue operating and the apolitical nature of the public service is maintained. Caretaker Conventions also seek to mitigate political incumbency advantages by means of major project decision making, significant financial and other commitments of public funds or resources, which may bind or limit the freedoms of the incoming Government. In the instance that a major decision or commitment is deemed an absolute necessity, the Convention provides the framework for progressing such a determination with the Opposition, or other Members who may form the incoming Government.

As a set of guidelines, the Convention has no legislative or regulatory consequences for breaches. So, while the repercussions are generally reputational, moral, and political, more broadly breaches of the Convention can be an erosion or weakening of good democracy by undermining the fundamental pillars of executive accountability and electoral fairness.

Whilst in Caretaker mode for the 2025 Tasmanian state election, and prior to the official formation of Government, the incumbent Liberal Government made both major project and financial decisions raising questions from the public, media, and Members of Parliament. In the months preceding the declaration of Tasmania's 52nd Parliament, further concerns were raised about other matters potentially not compliant with the Caretaker Conventions.

These major decisions included the state's commitment to the Marinus Link project and \$410 million of financial assistance provided to TT-Line. Given the no confidence motion in the Tasmanian Parliament, there was no reasonable prospect of the state budget being approved, but nonetheless public funds were used to advertise it in the context of an imminent election.

Concerns were also raised over Government Business Enterprise, Tasracing, publicly sharing the Liberals' TasInsure election policy.

In order to scrutinise these matters of the 2025 Caretaker Period this Select Committee was formed, following the Member for Clark, the Hon. Josh Willie MP's successful motion passing the House of Assembly on 18 March 2026. In addition to

Caretaker Convention compliance the Committee was empowered to inquire on any other relevant codes, regulations or laws.

During the inquiry the committee was provided with evidence in the form of seven written submissions and 18 witnesses in six public hearings, a variety of questions on notice and numerous pieces of follow-up correspondence.

Later in the Inquiry the Committee heard from a former Ministerial and Parliamentary Services (MPS) employee. The witness stated they were instructed to work on a Liberal candidate's 2024 state election campaign, and another candidate's 2024 Prosser election campaign whilst employed by the State to work for sitting Members, who were not the candidates. This evidence, seemingly demonstrating a misuse of public resources during an election period, solicited further investigation. On 12 August 2025 the House agreed to expand the committee's Terms of Reference to include 'all elections after 1 January 2024', so further information could be sought by the Committee.

Among the Committee's findings are multiple breaches of the *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025*.

The Liberal Government breached Convention in extending advertising of their draft budget whilst a no confidence motion was being debated, and an election imminent.

There were two breaches by Tasracing, first in the promotion of the Liberals' TasInsure election pitch, and second by providing politically biased advice to the Launceston Greyhound Racing Club regarding proposed advertising during the election period. It is notable that neither breach was initially detected through oversight or review by Government, and they were instead identified by Members of Parliament. It is also significant that key details of each matter were only revealed by documents released under Right To Information laws.

With regards to Tasracing's public promotion of TasInsure, through this Committee process and parallel parliamentary debate, representatives of the government have presented conflicting and changeable evidence regarding the Office of the then-Minister for Racing's involvement in this matter. Based on sworn testimony from multiple witnesses that is supported by documentary evidence, the Committee finds that the Office of the then-Minister for Racing was aware of plans for public promotion of the Liberals TasInsure policy by Tasracing.

Compliance with the Caretaker Conventions was concluded in the case of TT-Line financing and the decision on Marinus Link. However, inadequate components of the consultation process for the latter have led to recommendations which can improve

the Caretaker guidelines into the future, and formally contemporise them to be fairly and democratically inclusive of a minority composition of the modern Parliament.

As outlined in evidence provided to the Committee, the Head of the State Service has been requested to undertake their own review into the 2025 Caretaker Conventions, and an investigation into the evidence provided by the former MPS employee. Given the public interest in these matters, it is important that the outcomes of this work are made public, as soon as they are completed. The Committee has recommended such.

We also note the potential, and serious nature of the circumstances relating to either the employment or voluntary work undertaken by the former MPS employee, particularly on the day they sustained a workplace injury and subsequently received workers compensation – for they could not have been both an employee and a volunteer when this incident occurred. As the Committee has outlined that, this means that either the MPS employee’s time should have been recorded in the relevant Tasmanian Electoral Commission return for the Legislative Council election, which has a cap on expenditure, or if the individual was volunteering they likely would not have been eligible for Workers’ Compensation. It is important, and in the public interest, that this matter is resolved, and the outcome is made public.

On behalf of the Committee Members, Deputy Chair Dean Winter MP, Craig Garland MP and Marcus Vermey MP, we sincerely thank all who made submissions and gave evidence in hearings. And our gratitude is extended to the Committee secretariat, in particular Ms Mary de Groot, as well as the Hansard and broadcasting teams, who supported this Inquiry.



Tabatha Badger MP
CHAIR

26 October 2026

FINDINGS

1. The Project Marinus Final Investment Decision was appropriately advised to be a Major Project and a Major Policy decision under the *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025* by the Department of Premier and Cabinet.
2. The Government consulted with the Opposition, the Tasmanian Greens and Members of the crossbench from both Houses of the Parliament of Tasmania in relation to the Project Marinus Whole-of-State Business Case and the Final Investment Decision, during the 2025 Caretaker Period. This consultation was wider than the requirement for discussion with the relevant Opposition spokesperson only, as per Clause 2.5 of the *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025*.
3. The wider consultation, outside of the relevant Opposition spokesperson, on the Project Marinus Whole-of-State Business Case (WoSBC) and the Final Investment Decision (FID), provided an opportunity for more Members and Members-elect to have a chance to better understand the WoSBC and the FID.
4. The volume of technical information and documentation made available during consultation in the 2025 Caretaker Period regarding the Project Marinus Whole-of-State Business Case and the Final Investment Decision was considerable and the initial 2-hour period, with less than 24-hours' notice, to view this was inadequate. While of some assistance, the provision of access to the documents around the state, and ongoing opportunities to seek verbal advice, also did not enable fulsome consultation.
5. Clause 2.5 of the *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025* requires consultation with the Opposition on Major Policy Decisions during the Caretaker Period. It does not require the Opposition endorse a Major Policy Decision.
6. The Premier, the Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, publicly mischaracterised obligations under the *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025*, in regard to his request to the then-Leader of the Opposition, Mr Dean Winter MP, to endorse a positive Project Marinus Final Investment Decision by 31 July 2025.

7. The Project Marinus Whole-of-State Business Case was not publicly released during the Final Investment Decision process, due to the Tasmanian Government's concerns it would negatively impact Tasmania's negotiations with the Federal Government.
8. Tasracing breached the *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025* through the release of the TasInsure communication on 2 July 2025.
9. The Department of Premier and Cabinet undertook an investigation of the Tasracing communication regarding TasInsure which found it was a breach of the *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025*.
10. The drafting and release of the TasInsure communication was requested by Tasracing CEO, Mr Andrew Jenkins.
11. The Tasracing TasInsure communication was drafted by Mr Nick Turner from CorComms, edited by Mr Andrew Jenkins, CEO of Tasracing, and emailed to a former-Senior Adviser of the former-Minister for Racing, Ms Jane Howlett MP. Mr Turner replied back to Mr Jenkins that 'Luke says ok for tonight now.'
12. A former-Senior Adviser of the former-Minister for Racing, Ms Jane Howlett MP, received an email from Mr Nick Turner of CorComms at 4.52 p.m. on 2 July 2025 with the subject line 'FW: Message to industry.'
13. The Office of the former-Minister for Racing, Ms Jane Howlett MP, was informed that Tasracing planned to issue public communications about the TasInsure policy.
14. The statutory declarations of the former-Senior Adviser to Jane Howlett MP, drafted with administrative support provided by the Office of the Premier and tabled in the Parliament of Tasmania, are inconsistent with the evidence received regarding the drafting of the Tasracing public industry communication addressing TasInsure.
15. Given the conflicting evidence provided by the Premier and other witnesses, the matter as to the extent of the involvement of the office of the former-Minister for Racing in the Tasracing communication on TasInsure cannot be definitively closed. This includes how the two statutory declarations tabled in Parliament align with evidence received by this Committee.

16. Tasracing breached Clauses 7.5 and 7.10 of the *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025* in its communication with the Launceston Greyhound Racing Club.
17. The Department of Treasury and Finance appropriately defined any changes to the borrowing limit of TT-Line to occur during the 2025 Caretaker Period as being applicable to the Caretaker Conventions.
18. The then-Treasurer, the Hon. Guy Barnett MP, followed Caretaker Conventions and consulted with the then-Shadow Treasurer, Mr Josh Willie MP, on 26 July 2025, regarding the temporary borrowing increase for TT-Line.
19. The Caretaker Guidelines do not define what consultation should entail. There can be conflicting interpretations of if consultation did occur and whether or not to an adequate level. In this case, then-Treasurer, the Hon. Guy Barnett MP consulted with the then-Shadow Treasurer, Mr Josh Willie MP, in regard to the temporary borrowing increase for TT-Line, however Mr Willie did not consider it adequate.
20. The Government Media Office procured the Full Digital Takeover and the Social Advertorial for the 2025-2026 Budget from Pulse Media Group prior to the commencement of the 2025 Caretaker Period. A 48-hour extension to the Full Digital Takeover was requested, as well as a final 24-hour extension.
21. The final 24-hour extension of the Pulse Media Group Full Digital Takeover regarding the 2025-2026 Budget went live at 12.01 a.m. on 11 June 2025. At 6.59 p.m., following the proclamations from the Governor, the 2025-2026 Budget Takeover was removed from all Pulse Tasmania media pages at the initiative of its Managing Director. No Takeovers were active at the commencement of the Caretaker Period.
22. The Government breached Caretaker Conventions when it made the decision to extend advertising of its proposed 2025-2026 Budget, whilst there was a motion of no-confidence before the House. This is contrary to the operational notes in Section 7 of the Guidelines.
23. Evidence provided by Sharee Minnikin-Smith raised serious questions about the potential inappropriate allocation of public resources and potential breaches of the responsibility of Ministerial and Parliamentary Service staff in the 2024 General and Prosser election periods.
24. The role of Sharee Minnikin-Smith while employed by Ministerial and Parliamentary Services was unclear and may have led to breaches of Caretaker

- Conventions during the 2024 General Election campaign and the inappropriate use of Government resources during the 2024 Prosser Election.
25. Sharee Minnikin-Smith's email mistakenly sent from her Government email address promoting a Government candidate was a breach of Caretaker Conventions and a potential further misuse of Government resources.
 26. The candidate election expenditure return lodged by the Hon. Kerry Vincent MLC for the 2024 Legislative Council election in Prosser omitted the financial value of taxpayer-funded staff and state resources Sharee Minnikin-Smith states she provided. If Ms Minnikin-Smith's salary was declarable, the Hon. Mr Vincent MLC would have exceeded the 2024 statutory spending limit of \$19,500 set under Section 161 of the *Electoral Act 2004*.
 27. Information received regarding Sharee Minnikin-Smith's Workers' Compensation Claim for an injury sustained while campaigning for the Hon. Kerry Vincent MLC during the 2024 Prosser election suggests she was undertaking these duties as a Government employee. In which case this activity should have been declared by the Hon. Mr Vincent MLC in his candidate election expenditure return.
 28. Adherence to Workers' Compensation requirements and electoral expenditure law appears mutually exclusive. If Sharee Minnikin-Smith was supporting the Hon. Kerry Vincent MLC's 2024 Prosser election campaign as a volunteer, she was likely ineligible for Workers' Compensation through the Department of Premier and Cabinet. However, if Ms Minnikin-Smith was working in her capacity with Ministerial and Parliamentary Services, that paid work likely should have been included as part of Mr Vincent MLC's candidate election expenditure return to the Tasmanian Electoral Commission.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Committee recommends consideration of the expansion of requirements under Caretaker Conventions for consultation on Major Projects and Major Policy Decisions with all relevant Members and Members-elect.
2. The Committee recommends guidance for appropriate requirements and criteria for adequate consultation be included in the Guidelines on Caretaker Conventions for future elections.
3. The Department of Premier and Cabinet enhance the existing provision of the relevant Caretaker Conventions Guidelines to Government Business Enterprises and State-Owned Companies by the provision of compulsory training for the Board Chairs and Chief Executive Officers.
4. The Premier of the day order a compulsory review of any instances in which Ministers, or their Ministerial Office, may have had involvement in a breach, or alleged breach, of the relevant Caretaker Conventions Guidelines, including by a Government Business Enterprise or State-Owned Company.
5. Guidelines on Caretaker Conventions be broadly disturbed and made easily accessible, including for employees in communication roles across the State Service, or contractors employed to fill such roles, to ensure compliance in the lead up to, and during, the Caretaker Period.
6. The Head of the State Service ensures the ongoing review of matters raised by Sharee Minnikin-Smith be publicly released upon completion and includes, but is not limited to, the following matters:
 - a. How it is Ms Minnikin-Smith's activities during the 2024 Prosser election campaign could be labelled 'voluntary' when she was a Government employee and received a Workers' Compensation Claim;
 - b. How Ms Minnikin-Smith was both a volunteer and engaged to campaign for then-candidate for Lyons Ms Jane Howlett MP for 100% of her work hours, while employed under then-MLC Ms Leonie Hiscutt; and
 - c. Whether the Hon. Kerry Vincent MLC complied with the 2024 Prosser candidate election expenditure limit, as then prescribed under the *Electoral Act 2004*.

1 BACKGROUND, APPOINTMENT, TERMS OF REFERENCE AND CONDUCT OF THE INQUIRY

Background

- 1.1 On 11 June 2025, at 7.00 p.m. and 7.11 p.m. respectively, the then-Governor of Tasmania, Her Excellency the Honourable Barbara Baker AO, prorogued the Fifty-First Parliament of Tasmania (the Parliament) and dissolved the House of Assembly via proclamation. The serving of the proclamation was the first formal step leading to the 2025 Tasmanian General Election.
- 1.2 From the proclamation by the then-Governor, leading to the election, until the appointment of government after the election, the Tasmanian Government and Tasmanian State Service entered what is known as the ‘Caretaker Period.’ The Caretaker Period refers to the undertaking and implementation of Caretaker Conventions, which ensure that ‘the business of government and ordinary administration continue’¹ in an apolitical environment during the election. While Caretaker Conventions are not legally binding, it is expected that all state servants and Cabinet Ministers adhere to them.²
- 1.3 In Tasmania, the Caretaker Conventions are created, released and administered by the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC). Consequentially, on 12 June 2025, the day after the dissolution of the Parliament, Kathrine Morgan-Wicks Head of the State Service and Secretary of DPAC, alerted state servants to the commencement of the Caretaker Period. She also provided all state servants with the explanatory *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025 (the Guidelines)*.³
- 1.4 The Premier, the Honourable Jeremy Rockliff MP, wrote to all Ministers on 13 June 2025 advising them of the commencement of the Caretaker Period and providing a copy of the *Guidelines*.⁴
- 1.5 Polling day for the 2025 General Election was held on 19 July 2025.

¹ *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025*, p. 5, <https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/government-information/governance-ministerial/caretaker-conventions>.

² *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025*, p. 5, <https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/government-information/governance-ministerial/caretaker-conventions>.

³ *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025*, <https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/government-information/governance-ministerial/caretaker-conventions>.

⁴ Transcript of Evidence, 3 July 2026, the Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, Premier, and the Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 2.

- 1.6 The election count was completed on 2 August 2025, seeing the Rockliff Liberal Government retain power and the 35 seats of the House declared as follows: 14 Liberal Party Members, 10 Labor Party Members, five Tasmanian Greens Members, one Shooters, Fishers, Farmers Members and five independent Members.
- 1.7 Conversations between parties regarding the formation, or possibility of, government continued until Parliament resumed on 19 August 2025.
- 1.8 Ms Morgan-Wicks contacted state servants on 19 August 2025, following the opening of the Fifty-Second Parliament, confirming that the Caretaker Period had concluded.⁵
- 1.9 Throughout the Caretaker Period, a number of matters occurred which raised some concern regarding potential contraventions of the Caretaker Conventions. These were varied in nature and timing, with some occurring prior to the election and others in the post-election Caretaker Period. Furthermore, some instances were publicly known at the time of their occurrence, whilst others have only been brought to public attention in the intervening months.
- 1.10 Four matters raise particular questions of adherence, or not, to Caretaker Conventions by the Government, state servants and related entities, including Government Business Enterprises (GBEs) during the 2025 Caretaker Period. These matters include the:
- Release of a public communication from Tasracing, a GBE, to racing industry participants regarding TasInsure, a Liberal Party policy, on 2 July 2025;
 - Public announcement on 26 July 2025 that TT-Line's borrowing capacity had been increased;
 - The management of the Project Marinus Final Investment Decision (FID) and Whole-of-State- Business Case (WoSBC), especially from 28 July 2025 – 1 August 2025; and
 - The payment of advertising with Pulse Media Group by DPAC during the 2025-2026 Budget campaign in May and June 2025, which became publicly known on 18 December 2025.
- 1.11 These matters were raised across public forums, including in the Parliament, from August 2025. Discussion of, and questions regarding, these matters led to the formation of the Committee.

⁵ 'Conclusion of the caretaker period 2025,' Message from the Head of the State Service, dated 19 August 2025, <https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/working-in-the-state-service/messages-from-the-head-of-the-state-service/conclusion-of-the-caretaker-period-2025>.

Appointment and terms of reference

- 1.12 On 18 March 2026, the House of Assembly (the House) ordered that the House of Assembly Select Committee on Caretaker Conventions be created. The Terms of Reference provided by the House were as follows:

(1) A select committee be appointed with power to send for persons, papers and records to inquire into, consider and report on the Tasmanian Government's adherence to Caretaker Conventions along with any other relevant codes, regulations or laws during the 2025 State Election, including but not limited to the following decisions and activities:-

(a) intergovernmental agreement to progress Project Marinus;

(b) Tasracing's promotion of the Liberal Party election commitment 'TasInsure';

(c) TT-Line financial assistance;

(d) the decision for Government funds to be spent advertising with Pulse Tasmania; and

(e) any other matters incidental thereto.⁶

- 1.13 On 10 August 2026, the Committee resolved to request the House consider the expansion of its Terms of Reference to include elections held since 1 January 2024 in Tasmania. This resolution was made in light of evidence provided to the Committee throughout the Inquiry.

- 1.14 On 12 August 2026 the House ordered that the Terms of Reference of the Committee be amended to expand the scope, thus reading as follows:

(1) A select committee be appointed with power to send for persons, papers and records to inquire into, consider and report on the Tasmanian Government's adherence to Caretaker Conventions along with any other relevant codes, regulations or laws during Tasmanian elections held since 1 January 2024 including but not limited to the following decisions and activities:-

(a) intergovernmental agreement to progress Project Marinus;

(b) Tasracing's promotion of the Liberal Party election commitment 'TasInsure';

(c) TT-Line financial assistance;

(d) the decision for Government funds to be spent advertising with Pulse Tasmania; and

(e) any other matters incidental thereto.⁷

⁶ Parliament of Tasmania, House of Assembly Select Committee on Caretaker Conventions, Resolution, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/104202/Resolution_SC-on-Caretaker-Conventions18032026.pdf.

⁷ Parliament of Tasmania, House of Assembly Select Committee on Caretaker Conventions, Resolution, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/104202/Resolution_SC-on-Caretaker-Conventions18032026.pdf.

- 1.15 This Report should be read in conjunction with the attached documents:
- Appendix A lists the submissions received;
 - Appendix B lists the public hearing witnesses;
 - Appendix C provides a copy of the minutes of the Committee; and
 - Appendix D provides the Transcripts of Evidence from public hearings of the Committee.

Conduct of the Inquiry

- 1.16 At its first meeting the Committee resolved to hold a targeted inquiry, inviting a selected number of potential participants to provide a submission to the Inquiry. In total, the Committee provided 20 invitations to submit to persons and organisations, drawing the work of the Committee to their attention and inviting them to submit any information they deemed relevant to the Inquiry. After the initial invitations, the Committee also extended further formal invitations to provide a submission to a number of additional individuals or organisations, as well as providing specific written questions to some individuals.
- 1.17 Of note for the Committee at the commencement of its work was the nature of other parliamentary committees, notably the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Accounts' (PAC) *Inquiry into the TT-Line's Spirits Project*⁸ and the Joint Select Committee on Energy Matters consideration of Project Marinus.⁹ The Committee determined not to duplicate investigations where possible.
- 1.18 The Committee received seven submissions, as well as one supplementary submission, and held six public hearings in Hobart, with 18 witnesses.
- 1.19 Ms Jane Howlett MP, held the position of Minister for Racing prior to, during and after the 2025 Caretaker Period, until she resigned from the role on 16 June 2026. From 16 June 2026, the Honourable Roger Jaensch MP held the position of Minister for Racing. Given the occurrence of the Tasracing matter during the 2025 Caretaker Period, the Committee has invited the participation of Ms Howlett MP at all stages of the Inquiry.
- 1.20 As of 2 July 2026, a transition commenced from the former Department of State Growth (State Growth) to the new entities of Building Tasmania and Tourism, Events and Creative Tasmania. As State Growth was the department

⁸ Parliament of Tasmania, Public Accounts Committee, *TT-Lines Spirits Project*, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/committees/joint-committees/standing-committees/public-accounts-committee/inquiries/tt-lines-spirits-project>

⁹ Parliament of Tasmania, Joint Select Committee on Energy Matters, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/committees/joint-committees/select-committees/joint-select-committee-on-energy-matters-52nd-parliament>

operational during the 2025 Caretaker Period, as well as for a significant length of this Inquiry, it will be remain referred to as State Growth throughout this Report.

Structure of this Report

1.21 This Report consists of the following Chapters:

- Chapter 1 provides the background to the Inquiry;
- Chapter 2 provides background on Caretaker Conventions, which will then further be explored in relation to each of the matters raised in the Terms of Reference;
- Chapter 3 focuses on the first Term of Reference, being the intergovernmental agreement to progress Marinus Link;
- Chapter 4 discusses Tasracing's promotion of the Liberal Party election commitment 'TasInsure';
- Chapter 5 provides evidence on additional financial assistance provided to TT-Line by the Government;
- Chapter 6 details the Government's decision to use public funds for advertising with Pulse Media Group; and
- Chapter 7 notes other matters which have arisen in the course of the Inquiry.

2 CARETAKER CONVENTIONS

2.1 Caretaker Conventions are those which guide the conduct of a government, including its departments and state servants, during the time of a General Election. In Tasmania the period in which the Conventions apply is known as the Caretaker Period and is defined as beginning ‘with the dissolution of the House of Assembly and continues until the election result is clear or, if there is a change of government, until the new government is appointed.’¹⁰ This Chapter will examine the Tasmanian Caretaker Conventions and the basis for them.

2.2 In its submission to the Inquiry, DPAC defined that the objective of Caretaker Conventions is to:

ensure that the actions of government do not bind an incoming government and limit its freedom of action. The conventions aren’t legally binding, and its application is based on judgement and common sense. Broadly, government avoids:

- *making major policy decisions that are likely to commit an incoming government or limit its freedom to act;*
- *making significant appointments; and*
- *entering into major contracts or agreements.*

There are also established conventions and practices associated with the caretaker period that are directed at:

- *protecting the apolitical nature of the State Service;*
- *outlining the role and work of the State Service during an election campaign; and*
- *avoiding the use of government resources in a manner to advantage a particular party.*¹¹

2.3 Professor Emerita Anne Twomey, a constitutional law academic, explained that Caretaker Conventions are not, to her knowledge legislated in any jurisdiction, but are provided for in manuals, handbooks, or the like.¹² Professor Twomey further noted that Caretaker Conventions typically provide for consultation with, not agreement by, opposition parties:

Prof TWOMEY - *Normally it is a matter of consultation, and that is because you have to have someone in government who can make decisions and you can’t paralyse yourself by not being able to make a decision.*¹³

¹⁰ Submission No. 5, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 1.

¹¹ Submission No. 5, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 1.

¹² Transcript of Evidence, 15 June 2026, Professor Emerita Anne Twomey, p. 21.

¹³ Transcript of Evidence, 15 June 2026, Professor Emerita Anne Twomey, p. 21.

- 2.4 Potential breaches of Caretaker Conventions, and the ramifications of this, were also discussed by Professor Twomey. She stated:

Prof TWOMEY - The accountability is, essential[ly], political. So, if publicly the people think that the government has been behaving in an appropriate way, that may reflect how they vote in an election, for example. That's a bit more difficulty, where the breach of the caretaker convention, of course, happens after the election has been held, but you're in a period of caretaker governance after the election.¹⁴

- 2.5 In Tasmania, Caretaker Conventions are made public in the *Guidelines*, which are drafted and administered by DPAC. DPAC circulates the *Guidelines* to all state servants and publishes them on the DPAC website. The 2025 *Guidelines* consisted of 14 sections, which offered advice on matters which could be expected to arise during the Caretaker Period. The *Guidelines* cover a number of areas, but those most relevant to the Committee's Terms of Reference are:

- Section 2 – Major Policy Decisions;
- Section 4 – Major Contracts and Agreements; and
- Section 7 – Avoiding Involvement of Agencies in Election Activities.

- 2.6 Section 2 of the *Guidelines*, 'Major Policy Decisions,' prescribes that during a Caretaker Period, the Government should avoid making major decisions which could be deemed to commit an incoming government to the outcome of a decision. The *Guidelines* further note that the assessment of 'major' is a matter of judgement and these considerations are applicable to new commitments, not announcements of previously agreed matters. Clause 2.5 provides the conduct which should be followed if policies do need to be decided or announced during the Caretaker Period.¹⁵

- 2.7 Section 4 of the *Guidelines*, 'Major Contracts and Agreements,' provides similar scope for the consideration and determination of what contracts or agreements may be deemed as major. The *Guidelines* here provide considerations to be made as to if a commitment cannot be deferred beyond the Caretaker Period, including how to manage these negotiations across other political parties and members-elect, including in instances of intergovernmental negotiations.

- 2.8 Section 7 of the *Guidelines*, 'Avoiding Involvement of Agencies in Election Activities,' emphasises the apolitical nature of the State Service and its employees during the Caretaker Period.

¹⁴ Transcript of Evidence, 15 June 2026, Professor Emerita Anne Twomey, p. 20.

¹⁵ *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025*, p. 7, <https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/government-information/governance-ministerial/caretaker-conventions>.

Role of DPAC

- 2.9 In Tasmania Caretaker Conventions are administered by DPAC, including their creation and circulation, as well as that of the *Guidelines*. DPAC also provides notation to all state servants of the commencement of the Caretaker Period, as well as GBEs, State-Owned Companies (SOCs) and statutory authorities.¹⁶
- 2.10 As previously noted in this Report, Ms Morgan-Wicks, Secretary of DPAC, circulated the updated *Guidelines* on 12 June 2025.¹⁷ The *Guidelines* were also ‘released by letter to all major party leaders, all independent Members of Parliament, all State Service departments and agencies, Ministers, Chief Executive Officers and Chairs of the Boards of State-owned Companies, Government Business Enterprises and statutory authorities.’¹⁸ The DPAC submission noted the status and application of the *Guidelines* to GBEs and SOCs:
- responsibility for observing the conventions rests with the Heads of Agency, Chief Executive Officers, Chairs of the Boards of State-owned Companies, Government Business Enterprises, and in matters where they are involved, with the relevant Ministers...*
- I [Ms Morgan-Wicks] also note that that the relationship between Ministers and bodies that are not agencies under the State Service Act 2000, such as Government Business Enterprises and State-owned Companies, varies from body to body. However, those bodies should observe the caretaker conventions and practices unless doing so would conflict with their legal obligations or compelling commercial/organisational requirements.*¹⁹
- 2.11 A document titled ‘Understanding the Caretake Conventions – Tasmanian State Election 2025 for Tasmanian State Service agencies’ was also made available by DPAC.²⁰ This document provides a simplified explanation of the *Guidelines*, including in noting that Caretaker Conventions ‘require judgement, discretion and common sense’ in their application, including in interactions with Ministers or Ministerial staff and in outgoing public communication.²¹ The document concludes with a check list of actions which can or cannot be undertaken, or do or do not occur, under Caretaker Conventions.²²
- 2.12 In the 2025 Caretaker Period, DPAC also provided all Tasmanian Government communication managers within departments with specific resources providing information on the management of content, promotional

¹⁶ Submission No. 5 Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 2.

¹⁷ ‘State Election 2025 and Caretaker Conventions,’ Message from the Head of the State Service, dated 12 June 2025, https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/ssmo/about/ssmo/message_from_the_head_of_the_state_service/all-staff-kathrine/state-election-2025-and-caretaker-conventions.

¹⁸ Submission No. 5, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 3.

¹⁹ Submission No. 5, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 3.

²⁰ See attachment in Submission No. 5, Department of Premier and Cabinet, pp. 49-59.

²¹ See attachment in Submission No. 5, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 55.

²² See attachment in Submission No. 5, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 58.

communications and the management of day-to-day business during the Caretaker Period.²³

- 2.13 The document provided to communication managers was titled ‘Tasmanian Government online and electronic communications: Preparing for the caretaker period.’²⁴ The six-page document contains, amongst other matters, advice regarding actions before, at the commencement of and during the Caretaker Period. This advice is provided in relation to Section 7.16 of the *Guidelines*.

Management of potential breaches of caretaker conventions

- 2.14 The adherence to Caretaker Conventions within agencies is the responsibility of ‘Heads of Agencies, Chief Executive Officers and Board Chairs of Government Business Enterprises and State-owned Companies and, in matters where they are involved, with the relevant Ministers’.²⁵ However, the Secretary of DPAC is available to provide information and advice regarding the Caretaker Conventions and can investigate potential breaches of them.²⁶
- 2.15 Ms Morgan-Wicks, Secretary of DPAC and Head of the State Service, was invited to explain the investigative processes for potential breaches of Caretaker Conventions:

CHAIR - *Can you please outline for us the protocols and processes that you have in place for investigating any potential breaches of caretaker, and whether those are something that you have in the background that runs for each caretaker period? Or is it something that's very specific to the individual caretaker mode?*

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - *Yes, happy to. In relation to the caretaker guidelines and why it is critical that we immediately communicate any update to the caretaker guidelines to all state servants, as head of the State Service, I communicate that to all state servants. We provide it through to our statutory entities, including our Government Business Enterprises or statutory authorities. But we have certainly, in the main, in terms of allegations of breach or other, or seeking advice about the best way in which to manage a transaction or the making of a decision, it is usually in relation to the potential for a state servant to be in breach of the caretaker guidelines. And we have very detailed processes by which, if a state servant is alleged to have breached the Code of Conduct of the State Service Act that we would undertake an investigation or assessment under Employment Direction 5.*

²³ Submission No. 5, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 3.

²⁴ See attachment in Submission No. 5, Department of Premier and Cabinet, pp. 60-65.

²⁵ *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025*, p. 6, <https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/government-information/governance-ministerial/caretaker-conventions>

²⁶ *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025*, p. 6, <https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/government-information/governance-ministerial/caretaker-conventions>

CHAIR - If you feel or hear that there has been a potential breach of caretaker conventions, do you have set protocols and a set process to investigate that? Or is it something that's managed on a case-by-case circumstance?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - I should note that this is a matter that, for example, it depends on the type of individual - so whether they are a state servant or not, as to the protocol that would apply to an investigation of potential misconduct. That is a matter for, if it's a state servant, the head of agency that that state servant works in. If it's a Government Business Enterprise, it is a matter for the Chair of the Board of that GBE or other statutory authority, et cetera.

But as the head of the State Service, I take a coordinating role and can provide advice in relation to caretaker guidelines to those Chairs should they seek it or if I request their response in relation to the potential breach that's been identified.

CHAIR - Correct me if I'm misinterpreting what you've provided, but it's predominantly based on an individual employee who may have made the breach and you investigate that based on their employment circumstances? Is that accurate?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Yes, Chair. For example, we could receive a complaint about a paramedic standing with a particular political party or being asked to stand at a media conference in uniform. I may receive information and I would request then a response from the head of the Department of Health in relation to that employee. We would look at, too, the caretaker guidelines for that guidance. But depending on that type of employee, we would look at what potential disciplinary matter would apply to them.²⁷

- 2.16 As to the specific 2025 Caretaker Period, Ms Morgan-Wicks provided evidence that the Tasracing TasInsure communication, as to be discussed in Chapter 4, is the only breach that was identified:

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - This is the only one that I identified. We certainly received many, many requests for advice. We certainly provided advice, in terms of attempting to stop or ameliorate or advise against particular things occurring during the caretaker period, but this is the only breach that we identified during that time.²⁸

- 2.17 Ms Morgan-Wicks was also invited to reflect on any potential changes which may be made to the Caretaker Conventions or their interpretation, as a result of the 2025 Caretaker Period:

CHAIR - You spoke before about considering some changes to the caretaker conventions, the policy or procedure. Are you able to share any immediate interim learnings that you have with the Committee today?

²⁷ Transcript of Evidence, 3 July 2026, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 19.

²⁸ Transcript of Evidence, 3 July 2026, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 24.

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Probably, Chair, in just reflecting on the many items of advice, I'd say, in relation to the caretaker guidelines, the various modes of social media and the way in which information is reaching, for example, our State Service, and how rapidly people can actually share and distribute information is something that the caretaker guidelines are trying to stay up with. Certainly, it's a continuing education piece that needs to be undertaken.

...

It's a very heightened time during the conduct of a political election campaign. We try to provide this guidance to staff to recognise that it needs to be an even playing field, and we need to make sure that we continue to run and provide the Tasmanian community with the public service that we are here as a job to do. But not to get in on anyone's side or provide anyone with any advantage in terms of that information and distribution.

*It is educative. We need to keep reminding people of that and we will continue to do so.*²⁹

Other legal and policy settings

2.18 DPAC also noted that during the Caretaker Period, general policy, legal and service delivery parameters remain applicable to the conduct of state servants, particularly the following:³⁰

- State Service Act 2000;
- State Service Code of Conduct;
- Handbook for Elected Members of the House of Assembly and Prescribed Parliamentary Office Holders;
- Code of Conduct for Ministers; and
- Tasmanian Government Corporate Brand Identity and Communication Policy.

²⁹ Transcript of Evidence, 3 July 2026, Department of Premier and Cabinet, pp. 27-28.

³⁰ Submission No. 5, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 2.

3 INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT TO PROGRESS PROJECT MARINUS

- 3.1 This Chapter considers the management of the intergovernmental agreement to progress Project Marinus leading up to, and during, the Caretaker Period for the 2025 General Election.
- 3.2 Marinus Link, also referred to as Project Marinus, is the proposed two-way undersea and underground electricity and data interconnector projected to improve the connection between Tasmania and the national energy grid. Once built, Marinus Link will run for a cable span of 345 kilometres between the North West of Tasmania and the Latrobe Valley in Victoria.³¹ Project Marinus required an intergovernmental agreement between the Tasmanian, Victorian and Federal Governments.
- 3.3 A number of matters relating to the Government's management of the intergovernmental agreement to progress Project Marinus were publicly known as they progressed during the Caretaker Period. Project Marinus had been developing since 2017, but it was largely understood that the Government was finalising the Whole-of-State Business Case (WoSBC), in preparation for the Marinus Final Investment Decision (FID) to be signed in mid-2025. The Government had pledged to publicly release the WoSBC at least a month prior to the FID being signed.
- 3.4 On Saturday, 26 July 2025 the Honourable Nick *Duigan* MLC, Minister for Energy and Renewables, via media release, stated that the Government continued to work towards the finalisation of the Project Marinus FID. To aid this, he stated that the Opposition would be 'briefed in line with caretaker conventions,' and information, including the WoSBC, would later be publicly released.³² The intergovernmental agreement on Project Marinus was, at that time, due to be signed by 31 July 2025.
- 3.5 On the following day, Ms Janie *Finlay* MP, Labor Member for Bass, told the *Sunday Tasmanian* that Labor had requested a briefing on the WoSBC and stated, in light of Minister *Duigan*'s media release, that 'it is incumbent upon the Liberals to make sure nongovernment Members are briefed on critical decisions that might impact a future Government.'³³

³¹ Marinus Link Pty Ltd., 'Overview,' <https://www.marinuslink.com.au/overview/>.

³² Hon. Nick Duigan MLC, Minister for Energy and Renewables, Media Release, 'Working through Marinus sensibly and methodically,' 26 July 2025, <https://www.premier.tas.gov.au/latest-news/2025/july/working-through-marinus-sensibly-and-methodically>.

³³ Foletta, Alison, 'Claims Libs blocking Marinus facts,' *Sunday Tasmanian*, 27 July 2025.

- 3.6 On 28 July 2025 the Premier wrote to Mr Dean Winter MP, then-Leader of the Opposition, and Dr Rosalie Woodruff MP, Leader of the Tasmanian Greens, stating that the Government was unable to delay the decision on Project Marinus and that, due to Caretaker Conventions, their respective parties would be briefed on the matter.³⁴
- 3.7 On 29 July 2025 Members of these parties, as well as a number of Independent Members of Parliament and Members-elect, were provided a private briefing on the WoSBC and the FID, with the understanding that, at that point in time, the FID was still to be signed by 31 July 2025.
- 3.8 On 30 July 2025 the Premier again wrote to Mr Winter MP requesting that, pursuant to Caretaker Conventions, Mr Winter MP provide agreement for a positive FID for Project Marinus by 9 a.m. on 31 July 2025. In this letter, the Premier raised that the FID now had to be signed by 2 August 2025.
- 3.9 In return correspondence on 30 July 2025, Mr Winter MP noted that while Labor supported Project Marinus, under Caretaker Conventions the Government did not require his support, as Leader of the Opposition, for the project.³⁵ Mr Winter MP confirmed that Labor would not be endorsing the project:
- While Tasmania Labor supports Project Marinus, it is critical that we get this right. Due to your appalling breach of Caretaker Conventions, inadequate consultation, and a lack of transparency I cannot reasonably endorse your decision by your deadline of 9am tomorrow morning.*³⁶
- 3.10 After this letter, the Premier stated that he would seek further legal advice regarding the requirements of Caretaker Conventions.³⁷
- 3.11 It was announced on 1 August 2025 that the Government had signed the Project Marinus agreement.³⁸

³⁴ Parliament of Tasmania, House of Assembly, Parliamentary Debates, 18 March 2026, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/chamber-proceedings/proceedings/2026/january/house-of-assembly-18-march>.

³⁵ Letter, Hon. Dean Winter MP to the Premier, the Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, dated 30 July 2025, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/107144/Dean-Winter-MP-to-Jeremy-Rockliff-MP-30-July-2025_Redacted.pdf.

³⁶ Letter, Hon. Dean Winter MP to the Premier, the Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, dated 30 July 2025, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/107144/Dean-Winter-MP-to-Jeremy-Rockliff-MP-30-July-2025_Redacted.pdf.

³⁷ Holmes, Adam, 'Jeremy Rockliff intends to approve Marinus Link deal without releasing business case,' ABC News, 31 July 2025, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-07-31/tasmania-marinus-link-deadline-passes-as-labor-avoids-ultimatum/105594072>.

³⁸ Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, Premier and Hon. Nick Duigan MLC, Minister for Energy and Renewables, Media Release, 'Tasmania secures significant agreement for Marinus,' 1 August 2025,

Evidence received

Departmental involvement and advice

- 3.12 The Committee is of the understanding that numerous Departments and Ministers were involved in Project Marinus, including the WoSBC and the FID, throughout its duration. In evidence received regarding the finalisation of the FID during the Caretaker Period, DPAC, State Growth and the Department of Treasury and Finance (Treasury) were all involved in different capacities.
- 3.13 Evidence to the Committee confirmed the timeline of activity relating to the WoSBC and the FID process prior to, and during, the Caretaker Period. On 17 April 2025 the then-Treasurer, the Honourable Guy Barnett MP, was provided the WoSBC by Treasury. On 29 and 30 July 2025 two-hour briefings were provided to Members of Parliament and Members-elect, with the WoSBC available, unredacted, for confidential reading. On 1 August 2025 the Project Marinus agreement was signed. On 1 August 2025 the WoSBC, with redactions, was published on the Treasury website.³⁹
- 3.14 As lead agency administering the *Guidelines*, DPAC provided State Growth and the Energy Executive Steering Committee (EESC) relevant advice in relation to considerations of Caretaker Conventions in the continuation of the FID process during the Caretaker Period:

The caretaker conventions safeguard against binding a future government and DPAC highlights that this can be by way of an active decision or, in some cases, by not making a decision. During the caretaker period, a determination was required about the Final Investment Decision (FID) and subsequently DPAC provided advice to the EESC and to the Department of State Growth (State Growth). The advice provided at this time is publicly available.

DPAC also drew State Growth's attention to Section 11 of the Caretaker Guidelines (Consultation between non-government parties and agency staff). DPAC suggested that, given the financial significance of Project Marinus and the level of political and public interest, consideration should be given to engaging with a broad range of Members of Parliament, not just the leader of the largest non-government party or the Opposition Spokesperson. DPAC recommended that the consultation and briefings should balance the commercially sensitive nature of some information with the need to explain to the Opposition Parties and other interested Members of Parliament the complex range of issues related to making a FID.⁴⁰

<https://www.premier.tas.gov.au/latest-news/2025/august/tasmania-secures-significant-agreement-for-marinus>.

³⁹ Submission No. 4, Department of Treasury and Finance, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁰ Submission No. 5, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 3.

3.15 State Growth summarised the approach taken to the management of the Government’s involvement in the Project Marinus FID once Caretaker Conventions commenced:

To support critical decision-making for Project Marinus during the caretaker period, the Energy Executive Steering Committee (Heads of Agency for Treasury, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Department of State Growth and the CEO of ReCFIT) developed an approach that aligned with Caretaker Conventions⁴¹ while ensuring the project remained on its critical path.

In accordance with these conventions, any major decision or commitment during the caretaker period had to be made by the relevant portfolio Minister (the Minister for Energy and Renewables in this case) following agreement with the Premier and in consultation with the relevant Opposition spokesperson(s).

Project Marinus was a major strategic and financial decision for the State and attracted significant public interest. The decision-making approach was developed with appropriate reference to Tasmania’s Caretaker Conventions (Sections 2 and 4 of the Caretaker Guidelines), which provided guidance on major policy decisions and major contracts and agreements.

Following the caretaker period commencing, the EESC continued to progress advice to Government on the basis that a FID had to be taken within the caretaker period. In particular, it was noted that a deferral of any decision would likely be a decision not to proceed with the project, which would have significant consequences for a future Government.⁴¹

3.16 Treasury described its ‘advisory and administrative’ role throughout negotiations for Project Marius, which included involvement in the Project Marinus Executive Steering Committee and the Project Marinus Taskforce.⁴² In these groups, Treasury provided financial, economic and whole-of-state advice, much of which ‘was based on the Project Marinus Whole-of-State Business Case completed by Treasury in April 2025, ahead of the caretaker period.’⁴³ The conduct of Treasury during the Caretake Period, in relation to the Marinus FID, was described as follows:

Treasury also contributed to briefing material to support consideration by Cabinet of the Project Marinus Final Investment Decision (FID) during June and July 2025. This advice formed part of a broader body of information provided to Government including from the Project Marinus Executive Steering Committee and the decisions of the TasNetworks and Marinus Link Pty Ltd (MLPL) Boards. The Australian and Victorian Governments were also engaged in the process through intergovernmental communications during the caretaker period.

⁴¹ Submission No. 3, Department of State Growth, pp. 1-2.

⁴² Submission No. 4, Department of Treasury and Finance, p. 2.

⁴³ Submission No. 4, Department of Treasury and Finance, p. 2.

The Secretary of Treasury met with and wrote to the Chair of TasNetworks seeking advice on the potential impacts on the NWTD of any delay to the Tasmanian Government FID due to entering the caretaker period. Treasury subsequently provided advice to the Treasurer on this matter as outlined in the attached timeline.

Post the 2025 Election, but still within the caretaker period, Treasury participated in briefing processes with Members of Parliament and non-government parties during the period surrounding FID. These briefings were organised and coordinated as part of a whole-of-government approach led through ReCFIT and the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Treasury's contribution to these briefings was focussed on the Whole of State Business Case. Responsibility for the organisation, scope and conduct of the briefings, and for consultation undertaken during the caretaker period, rested with the Government and the relevant coordinating agencies.⁴⁴

Consultation and timing of the FID

- 3.17 Minister Duigan described that, during the Caretaker Period, there was 'no credible option to delay the FID, as this would have resulted in significant and adverse project impacts.'⁴⁵ Vanessa Pinto, Acting CEO of Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania (ReCFIT), described that the timeline for the FID was originally slated for mid-July 2025, but that instances and requirements of the Federal, Victorian and Tasmanian Governments pushed this to a completion date of 1 August 2025. Ms Pinto explained the collaborative intergovernmental approach given these changing circumstances:

***Ms PINTO** - ... I think the Australian Government and Victorian Government as shareholders completely appreciated the situation our jurisdiction was in and endeavoured as best as they could to support. Noting as well that Victoria had its own matters it had to deal with, which meant that the July [2025] timeframe was going to get pushed anyway. But the pushing to 1 August [2025] as being the penultimate date was it; the project could not go any later than that. If it were to go any later than that, it would have put at jeopardy the entire project and it would have significant commercial ramifications. I'm not in a position to share the quantum of those because that is a commercial in confidence matter for the Australian Government, but it would have had significant commercial ramifications.⁴⁶*

- 3.18 Consultation with the Opposition, and other Members of Parliament, was raised with the Committee. A two-hour period of examination of material related to the WoSBC and the FID was provided to relevant Members, who

⁴⁴ Submission No. 4, Department of Treasury and Finance, p. 2.

⁴⁵ Transcript of Evidence, 15 June 2025, the Hon. Nick Duigan MLC, Minister for Energy and Renewables, p. 2.

⁴⁶ Transcript of Evidence, 15 June 2025, the Hon. Nick Duigan MLC, Minister for Energy and Renewables, p. 6.

were advised at 2.41 p.m. the day prior. There was a substantial volume of material, none of which could be removed from the location of the briefing nor was it available to Members who were unable to be physically in the room for the briefing.⁴⁷ State Growth also attempted, where possible, to make available secondary opportunities for Members to access the materials at different locations around the state.⁴⁸ In his submission, the Honourable Josh Willie MP, Leader of the Opposition, summarised the timed access to materials as follows:

*The circumstances of the briefing made meaningful consideration of that material impossible. We were not permitted to retain the documents, had limited time to review them, and were expected to consider highly complex financial, legal and policy matters within an extremely compressed timeframe.*⁴⁹

- 3.19 The manner of the briefing was raised with the Minister for Energy and Renewables, who noted that while the finalisation of the FID was time sensitive and that State Growth actively worked to provide appropriate access to materials to Members, the volume of material and time available to review it presented a challenge:

*Two hours is not a long time to get your head around some of this stuff, and you know people will make assertions about various aspects of the project... I take that point, but on balance, all of the evidence, all of the recommendations, pointed to the fact that this was, on balance, a good decision for Tasmania.*⁵⁰

- 3.20 Ms Morgan-Wicks explained the consultation process as regards to the implementation of the advice provided by DPAC to the Government. She confirmed that the consultation which did occur was consistent with the advice provided:

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - ... The recommendation and the arrangements were that the material - I think it was a two- to three-hour consultation briefing with relevant experts from the departments that were involved, so, the Department of State Growth, Department of Treasury and Finance, and supporting officials - and that the material was then made available under supervision, fully unredacted material - and quite a lot of conversations were had about should this be redacted given the commercial-in-confidence nature of a lot of the material that was in there. We had to seek the approval of the Commonwealth, the approval of Hydro, of TasNetworks, of Marinus Link in terms of the actual use of that information.

⁴⁷ Submission No. 6, the Hon. Josh Willie MP, Leader of the Opposition, p. 2.

⁴⁸ Transcript of Evidence, 15 June 2026, the Hon. Nick Duigan MLC, Minister for Energy and Renewables, p. 17.

⁴⁹ Submission No. 6, the Hon. Josh Willie MP, Leader of the Opposition, p. 2.

⁵⁰ Transcript of Evidence, 15 June 2026, the Hon. Nick Duigan MLC, Minister for Energy and Renewables, p. 17.

But that material was provided in those rooms not just for a matter of hours, but for the remainder of that day and for the days following, under supervision. We acknowledge that the materials weren't able to be removed from the room and that was the advice from the Crown Solicitor in relation to the confidential nature of aspects of that documentation at that time, noting that we were yet to also execute those documents in order to make that Final Investment Decision.

We also made the material available at the offices of the DPP here in Launceston, I think, noting the location of various members to attend and inspect those documents. We made the material available in Burnie at the request of a Member of the Upper House in relation to inspecting those documents, is my recall. We also provided officials to be - basically were on pretty much 24/7 availability to answer any questions that people had in relation to those documents, noting their complexity and the technical nature of them, or should, in the days following, they wish to continue to inspect those documents.⁵¹

- 3.21 Evidence before the Committee also considered the Premier's request that the then-Leader of the Opposition, Mr Winter MP, approve Project Marinus on behalf of the Opposition. The Opposition contends that Clause 2.5 of the Caretaker Conventions Guidelines provides that the Opposition is to be consulted, but that they do not have to provide approval for major decisions during a Caretaker Period.⁵² However the Premier sought approval from then-Opposition Leader, Mr Winter MP on 30 July 2025:

I therefore write pursuant to the Caretaker Conventions to seek your agreement to proceed to make a positive Tasmanian Marinus FID.

To progress in a timely manner, I request your response by 9.00 a.m., Thursday, 31 July 2025.

...

Your support as Opposition Leader for a positive Marinus FID will demonstrate a bipartisan commitment, together with the Australian and Victorian Governments, for the benefit of Tasmania for generations to come.⁵³

- 3.22 Mr Winter MP replied on 30 July 2025 noting that only consultation, not endorsement, was required and that due to an 'appalling breach of Caretaker

⁵¹ Transcript of Evidence, 3 July 2026, Department of Premier and Cabinet, pp. 20-21.

⁵² Transcript of Evidence, 15 June 2026, the Hon. Nick Duigan MLC, Minister for Energy and Renewables, p. 11.

⁵³ Letter, the Premier to the Hon. Dean Winter MP, dated 30 July 2025, [https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0016/107143/PREMIER_OUTGOING - Dean Winter MP - Consultation Project Marinus - 30 July 2025 Redacted.pdf](https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0016/107143/PREMIER_OUTGOING_-_Dean_Winter_MP_-_Consultation_Project_Marinus_-_30_July_2025_Redacted.pdf).

Conventions, inadequate consultation, and a lack of transparency,’⁵⁴ Labor would not provide the requested endorsement. In his submission the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Josh Willie MP, reflected on his party’s understanding of the requirement for consultation under the *Guidelines*:

*Following Labor’s refusal to agree, the Premier publicly stated the he would seek legal advice before proceeding. It is unclear what legal advice would have been required. The caretaker conventions, as understood by the Opposition, do not require bipartisan agreement before a government may act. rather, they require that the opposition be appropriately consulted.*⁵⁵

3.23 Minister Duigan MLC was asked as to his understanding of Clause 2.5 of the *Guidelines*, to which he stated that his understanding was that consultation with the Opposition, not endorsement from them, was required during the Caretaker Period, as per the advice he received from State Growth, who had sought the appropriate support from DPAC.⁵⁶

3.24 The Premier was also queried on multiple occasions as to the origin of his request for the Opposition to endorse the FID during the Caretaker Period:

Mr WINTER - Do you accept that the caretaker conventions themselves don't require the Opposition to sign off on the agreement?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, what I accept - I'm well aware of the caretaker conventions, and we wanted to ensure that we were doing everything right. We went above and beyond the role of caretakers -

Mr WINTER - But do you accept that the caretaker conventions do not require the Opposition to sign off before you entered into the agreement?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, we wanted bipartisan support for this agreement.⁵⁷

3.25 The Premier was also asked to discuss his negotiations with the Federal Government regarding the FID during the Caretaker Period:

Mr WINTER - My question, Premier, is: during that period of time, during that week, did you contact the Federal Minister for Energy at all in relation to this, and in that

⁵⁴ Letter, Hon. Dean Winter MP to the Premier, the Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, dated 30 July 2025, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/107144/Dean-Winter-MP-to-Jeremy-Rockliff-MP-30-July-2025_Redacted.pdf.

⁵⁵ Submission No. 6, the Hon. Josh Willie MP, Leader of the Opposition, p. 2.

⁵⁶ Transcript of Evidence, 15 June 2026, the Hon. Nick Duigan MLC, Minister for Energy and Renewables, pp. 11, 12-13 and 15

⁵⁷ Transcript of Evidence, 3 July 2026, the Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, Premier, and the Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 11.

conversation did you express to him that it was a requirement for you that the opposition party would sign off on the deal?

Mr ROCKLIFF - My discussions were largely with the Prime Minister over the course of those weeks, and the Federal Government were very keen for the signing of the agreement. I wanted to make sure that we had briefed the Opposition, of course, and as many people as possible and to get all our ducks in a row, if I can put it that way. So, I had a conversation with the Prime Minister on a number of occasions around this matter and it was certainly put to me very strongly that the Federal Government were very keen to have the agreement signed. What was also evident from my point of view is that while caretaker conventions are important, strong bipartisanship, which I would have expected given we had indicated that the agreement is looking positive, that we would have had a Federal Labor Government and a Labor Opposition aligned when it comes to the benefits of Marinus.

Mr WINTER - At that time, publicly, Premier, you were telling the public that you required the Opposition to sign off in order for you to sign off on Marinus. You also put that in writing to myself and Dr Woodruff. Did you tell the Prime Minister or the Federal Minister for Energy that you required the Opposition to sign off in order for you to -

Mr ROCKLIFF - I wanted bipartisan endorsement for what is the -

Mr WINTER - Did you tell them that you required sign off from the Opposition under your caretaker conventions?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, I can't recall the exact nature of the conversation, except I certainly intimated that bipartisanship from the Tasmanian Government would be very helpful.

Mr WINTER - So, you threatened that if the Opposition didn't sign off on the arrangement that you wouldn't sign up to Marinus; is that correct?

Mr ROCKLIFF - No. I don't make threats.

Mr WINTER - Well, can you explain then, because I have to tell you, Premier, that I do recall what happened that week, and I recall phone calls from both the Federal Minister for Energy and the Prime Minister of Australia telling me that it was important that the opposition signed off on Marinus, and referring to our caretaker conventions. Did they make those calls because you'd asked them to?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Look, I'm not going to get into the nature of the calls with the Prime Minister, except to say that at that particular point in time, you know, we were wanting to ensure that we got the best deal for Tasmania and, the best interests I thought at the time, was to have strong bipartisan support.

...

Mr WINTER - I just want to ask the quite specific question for a third time: did you tell the Prime Minister of Australia that you required the Opposition party to sign off on Marinus before you entered into the agreement?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I certainly indicated to the Prime Minister that bipartisan support would be very good.⁵⁸

- 3.26 DPAC holds the key role of providing advice in regard to queries on the operation and implementation of the *Caretaker Convention Guidelines*. In regard to the FID decision, DPAC representatives confirmed that the Chair of the EESC sought advice as to the *Caretaker Conventions* and the Project Marinus FID, with DPAC determining 'there was no interpretation of the caretaker guidelines that wouldn't require consultation with the Opposition.'⁵⁹ However, given the significance of the Project, DPAC provided expanded advice in regard to the potential interpretation of Clause 2.5 of the *Guidelines*:

Ms MORGAN-WICKS -.. Clause 2.5 of the caretaker guidelines, which relates to the making of major policy decisions that you would usually consult the relevant Opposition spokesperson or spokespersons beforehand. Our advice was to actually go beyond that, given the significance of the Marinus transaction.

...

Mr GREGORY - ... in the advice we provided from DPAC through to the [Energy Executive] Steering Committee chair, was that given the significance of the decision, that written advice could be sought from the Opposition indicating what to proceed with the FID, we were, in fact suggesting that, not saying that there had to be written support, but suggesting, given the significance, that that could be done.⁶⁰

- 3.27 Upon further questioning, the following interpretation of Clause 2.5 was also provided:

Mr WINTER - Did DPAC consider that, under the caretaker conventions, that Marinus was a major policy decision?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Yes, we considered Marinus absolutely to be a major policy decision.

Mr WINTER - And so, 2.5, under major policy decisions, says:

⁵⁸ Transcript of Evidence, 3 July 2026, the Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, Premier, and the Department of Premier and Cabinet, pp. 15-16.

⁵⁹ Transcript of Evidence, 3 July 2026, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 17.

⁶⁰ Transcript of Evidence, 3 July 2026, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 18.

The requirement to consult does not require the Government to obtain the endorsement of non-government parties.

So, do we agree that the opposition was not required to sign off?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - *The requirement to consult does not require it, but it does not forbid a Government asking for it.*⁶¹

- 3.28 In regard to the legal advice which the Premier publicly claimed to seek on Caretaker Conventions, Ms Morgan-Wicks provided the following:

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - *Legal advice was sought in relation to various elements of the FID decision. And in terms of the timing of which, I do believe, yes, actually on that Wednesday [30 July 2025] and in fact probably each 24 hours, I was in multiple conversations with the Crown Solicitor, Mr [Stephen] Bendeich, and also in terms of seeking advice from the Solicitor-General in relation to the points in which a FID decision could be taken, and also whether the Tasmanian Government was able to make that decision and, in particular, in relation to section 69, for example.*⁶²

Public release of the Whole-of-State-Business Case

- 3.29 Minister Duigan was also asked to explore why the WoSBC for Project Marinus was not publicly released in line with the initial commitment from the Government to do so:

CHAIR - ... *The Government had previously committed to releasing the whole-of-state business case 30 days prior to a decision being made; part of caretaker conventions is not exclusively consulting with the opposition parties but ensuring there is transparency for the community. Why then did you not transparently put forward the whole-of-state business case at the time of making that decision, let alone 30 days prior to making the decision, as you had pledged to do?*

Mr DUIGAN - ... *I think what is very important to understand is that at that time and through that period of time up until, you know, the signing of the Tasmanian Government Final Investment Decision for Marinus, there were very material conversations happening with the Commonwealth Government about the Tasmanian position ... but the important part, the Whole-of-State Business Case, contained confidential information, particularly around Hydro Tasmania, and we were very keen that that information not be in the public realm and not be shared with the Commonwealth because that would seek to undermine our negotiating position. So, that was the key rationale for why we couldn't put the Whole-of-State Business Case out in the public, because it was unhelpful in the conversations that we were having with the Commonwealth.*

...

⁶¹ Transcript of Evidence, 3 July 2026, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 20.

⁶² Transcript of Evidence, 3 July 2026, Department of Premier and Cabinet, pp. 18-19.

Mr WINTER - ... given what you said about the reasons why you couldn't release the Whole-of-State Business Case, why was the commitment made initially that you would?

Mr DUIGAN - Well, I think, you know, in the normal course of events, you know, potentially that was what we would have hoped to have done. There may have been some redactions required, but, you know, as it was - and I won't speak for the Treasury, but as it turned out, there was this period of negotiation that was ongoing and did not complete until Tasmania took a FID decision. So, in the context of that we felt that the benefit of keeping that information private and not giving the Commonwealth the opportunity to look under the hood of Hydro was worth, you know, not putting that information into the public realm.

Mr WINTER - The way Ms Badger just outlined this - correctly, if I recall - is that the statement was that you would release the business case at least 30 days prior to a decision being made, which demonstrates there'd been some thought put into it; what was the change in thinking from when the Government initially said you would release the business case, until afterwards, when you wouldn't?

Mr DUIGAN - So, you know, again, I would lean on the fact that we had these ongoing negotiations with the Commonwealth, you know, they were material. We're talking about millions upon millions of dollars year on year that we were able to secure in that last piece of those negotiations, and it was agreed that we wouldn't jeopardise those negotiations by releasing information that might run counter to those aims.⁶³

3.30 The Chair also invited the Premier to discuss the delayed release of the WoSBC:

Mr ROCKLIFF - It was our intention, Chair, to release the Whole-of-State Business Case, as committed. However, due to the ongoing negotiations with the Federal Government, it would have been very disadvantageous to Tasmania to do so, again, acting in the best interest of Tasmania. So, from the beginning, we always sought to achieve the best outcome for Tasmania through the Project Marinus investment.

Of course, the detail of the Whole-of-State Business Case showed the benefits arising from Marinus to Tasmania, and I've mentioned some of that today in terms of our bottom line, but also opportunities to improve the outcomes for Tasmania by negotiating strongly with the Federal Government in relation to Marinus agreements on behalf of the Tasmanian people.

We were negotiating with the Commonwealth to cap our equity exposure in Marinus and seek financial contributions to reduce the financial impact of transmission charges on consumers through the Commonwealth funding for the North West Transmission Developments, for example. So, the Federal Government

⁶³ Transcript of Evidence, 15 June 2026, the Hon. Nick Duigan MLC, Minister for Energy and Renewables, pp. 2-3.

wanted to factor into those negotiations the underlying financial performance of Hydro, an existing Tasmanian community asset, and the upside that would've been realised through Project Marinus. As Mr Gregory's pointed out, Hydro is the product of 100 years of investment by Tasmanians for Tasmanians, and that shouldn't be leveraged by the Federal Government to limit their investment into Marinus, which is strategically important for the nation, not just for Tasmania. As a state, we did not believe this was appropriate. For this reason, we made a commercial decision to withhold the business case, as we progressed negotiations, to ensure that we did not compromise those negotiations and get the best deal for Tasmania...⁶⁴

- 3.31 The Premier was asked to provide the Committee with the advice that was given to Minister Duigan during the 2025 Caretaker Period in relation to the public release of the WoSBC in the lead up to the signing of the FID. Sighting Cabinet confidentiality, the Premier did not provide the direct advice, but again emphasised in his response that during negotiations it became evident that the release of information pertaining to Hydro Tasmania contained in the WoSBC 'may impact on negotiations' that were being had with the Australian Government.⁶⁵ The Premier's response to the Committee went on to state that:

Advice provided to Government (specifically provided to the Minister for Energy and Renewables by the Secretary of the Department of State Growth on 8 July 2025) as part of decision making on Project Marinus noted the following:

- *Advice pertaining specifically to the Project Marinus FID noted that the WoSBC modelling and the modelling referenced in the FID assessment document demonstrates a significant benefit for the state.*⁶⁶

- 3.32 Representatives from Treasury also raised the role the Department played in the release of the WoSBC, confirming that they created it as an independent piece of work for the Government, which was not released to the then-Treasurer until it was completed in April 2025.⁶⁷ They noted the sensitive nature of the content of the WoSBC and the potential impact on negotiations if it was released in full before the FID had been reached:

⁶⁴ Transcript of Evidence, 3 July 2026, the Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, Premier, and the Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 13.

⁶⁵ Response to Questions on Notice by the Premier, dated 17 August 2026, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/110320/17082026_Premier_QoN-Response_Redacted.pdf.

⁶⁶ Response to Questions on Notice by the Premier, dated 17 August 2026, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/110320/17082026_Premier_QoN-Response_Redacted.pdf.

⁶⁷ Transcript of Evidence, 27 July 2026, Hon. Eric Abetz MP, Treasurer, and the Department of Treasury and Finance, p. 6.

Mr SWAIN - Treasury gave advice through the governance process that applied that we shouldn't provide commercial data into the public arena or to the Commonwealth because it would prejudice those negotiations. I mean, there's a philosophical element to this as well, that in other states they've sold their electricity businesses, which meant that if a generator in another state was going to potentially get a benefit from an investment that was partly supported by Commonwealth involvement, the Commonwealth Government wouldn't be able to take that into account in formulating its negotiating position. So, Treasury took the view that that shouldn't really be at play in relation to the Whole-of-State Business Case. But the Commonwealth didn't agree with that point, which meant that they would very much like to see the information...⁶⁸

- 3.33 Anton Voss, Executive Director of Marinus Transition and Strategic Advisory at Treasury detailed how the redactions to the WoSBC, largely represented in the publicly accessible version of the document, were come to:

Mr VOSS - ... When we did the Whole-of-State Business Case, it was prepared as a Treasury document and Treasury advice to the Government; it wasn't prepared in the context of this will be a public document, it was primarily provided as advice on a very important decision that Government had to make. And as part of that, obviously the Government had made a commitment around public release. We had to work through what that might entail and we spoke to all the Government Businesses and the Australian Government, Victorian Government in the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) via the Australian Government as well, and asked them around areas that they would be concerned about being publicly released on the basis of commercial confidentiality.

Some of them still had, you know, processes involved with regard to tendering processes or what have you, and they came back to us through that process with suggested redactions to the Whole-of-State Business Case, which is primarily what you see in the current public version on Treasury's website. So, the Government had no involvement in the redactions. They didn't go through the document, they were not involved in it in that sense. It was all feedback that we got from the Government Businesses or the Australian Government or the Clean Energy Finance Corporation.

As Gary said, there's another overlay there with regard to the negotiation that was happening also with the Australian Government. So, as you're aware, the Tasmanian Government was discussing with the Australian Government around assistance. Part of that discussion was informed by the Whole-of-State Business Case. That discussion - my recollection is - commenced well before caretaker.

...

⁶⁸ Transcript of Evidence, 27 July 2026, Hon. Eric Abetz MP, Treasurer, and the Department of Treasury and Finance, p. 6.

The redactions more broadly also covered things like the financing rate for the North West Transmission distribution project from the Clean Energy Finance Corporation is a very discounted rate. They were not at all keen for that number to be public. They obviously do a whole range of deals across the country on a whole range of other transmission infrastructure with a whole range of other governments. So, they were very keen for the Tasmanian rate not to be put forward. That's an example of some of the sensitivity from the various businesses. And as I said on the basis of that, we put up to the Government a redacted version in the circumstance that they wished to release the Whole-of-State Business Case.⁶⁹

Consideration of Caretaker Conventions

- 3.34 In relation to the Project Marinus FID, Clause 2.5 of the Guidelines is the most relevant of the Caretaker Conventions. Clause 2.5 is as follows:

If circumstances require the Government to make a major policy decision during the caretaker period that would bind an incoming government, the relevant Minister, after agreement with the Premier, would usually consult the relevant Opposition⁷⁰ spokesperson(s) beforehand. The requirement to consult does not require the Government to obtain the endorsement of non-Government parties.⁷¹

- 3.35 Evidence provided by a number of representatives of the Government, including Minister Duigan and the Premier, suggests that Caretaker Conventions were extended in this instance, by the undertaking of consultation not only with the Opposition spokesperson, but also with a broader cohort of Members of Parliament.
- 3.36 Professor Twomey was asked about the applicability of consultation clauses in caretaker conventions and associated guidelines, given the increasing trend towards minority government:

Prof TWOMEY - ... I think one of the issues here is that, at least in Australia and most of these other countries, it really has been effectively a two-party system. So you've got a government, you've got an opposition and nobody much thinks about anyone else; but we are drifting towards a different kind of system where

⁶⁹ Transcript of Evidence, 27 July 2026, Hon. Eric Abetz MP, Treasurer, and the Department of Treasury and Finance, pp. 7-8.

⁷⁰ Cited in *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025*, p. 7, <https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/government-information/governance-ministerial/caretaker-conventions>., Footnote 3, In this document, the "Opposition" is the largest minority party within the Parliament during the Caretaker period, willing to assume office in the event of a change of government either after an election or as a result of a loss of support for the Government in the House of Assembly. For more details see: Premier and Leader of the Opposition | Parliament of Tasmania.

⁷¹ *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025*, p. 7, <https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/government-information/governance-ministerial/caretaker-conventions>.

it's not that way, and so you might end up with three main political parties or you might end up with groups that aren't political parties at all, and that's when it starts to become more difficult because, you know, how many people can you, you know, effectively consult and take into account their views, and if you're taking into account the view of an independent, well, that's all well and good, but they're one person out of a, you know, entire parliament, and if they themselves are not going to be able to form government, then they're not the one who's going to be bound potentially by the decision that you're making, and so there would be difficulties with how broadly you did that.

So maybe one of the things you need to consider in doing that well is, you know, well, which groups are potentially likely to form an alternative government; because the whole idea about the caretaker conventions is to make things are fair for an incoming government, so they're not bound by particular decisions made by an outgoing government. So in considering that, you might want to take that into account too. So say for example in Tasmania, you were a Liberal government heading into caretaker mode, but there was a possibility that the incoming government might be a coalition of Greens and Labor, would it therefore be appropriate not just to consult Labor, but also to consult the Greens if they hadn't been a coalition in the opposition period? That's something that you may want to consider when you're looking at your caretaker guidelines and how to redraw them in the future. If you have more than one party, but they might together form a government, that might give you more reason for consulting the minor party of the two or the smaller party of the two; but going further and consulting every single independent of the parliament, even though the number of independents might be relatively large, is going to be more difficult for you because you wouldn't be able to say that any particular independent is likely to be representative of an incoming government.⁷²

- 3.37 There was also acknowledgement from Minister Duigan and department representatives, that the volume of material relevant to Project Marinus made it difficult to craft a fulsome opportunity for consultation with all Members.
- 3.38 Finally, Clause 2.5 of the *Guidelines* states that endorsement for major projects is not needed from non-Government parties. In the instance of the Project Marinus FID, the actions of the Premier in requesting such an endorsement from the then-Leader of the Opposition, Mr Winter MP, appear to be in conflict with the intention of the Clause for consultation, not approval. However, Clause 2.5 does not disclose that endorsement from the Opposition cannot be sought.

⁷² Transcript of Evidence, 15 June 2026, Professor Emerita Anne Twomey, p. 22.

Findings

1. The Project Marinus Final Investment Decision was appropriately advised to be a Major Project and a Major Policy decision under the *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025* by the Department of Premier and Cabinet.
2. The Government consulted with the Opposition, the Tasmanian Greens and Members of the crossbench from both Houses of the Parliament of Tasmania in relation to the Project Marinus Whole-of-State Business Case and the Final Investment Decision, during the 2025 Caretaker Period. This consultation was wider than the requirement for discussion with the relevant Opposition spokesperson only, as per Clause 2.5 of the *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025*.
3. The wider consultation, outside of the relevant Opposition spokesperson, on the Project Marinus Whole-of-State Business Case (WoSBC) and the Final Investment Decision (FID), provided an opportunity for more Members and Members-elect to have a chance to better understand the WoSBC and the FID.
4. The volume of technical information and documentation made available during consultation in the 2025 Caretaker Period regarding the Project Marinus Whole-of-State Business Case and the Final Investment Decision was considerable and the initial 2-hour period, with less than 24-hours' notice, to view this was inadequate. While of some assistance, the provision of access to the documents around the state, and ongoing opportunities to seek verbal advice, also did not enable fulsome consultation.
5. Clause 2.5 of the *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025* requires consultation with the Opposition on Major Policy Decisions during the Caretaker Period. It does not require the Opposition endorse a Major Policy Decision.
6. The Premier, the Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, publicly mischaracterised obligations under the *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025*, in regard to his request to the then-Leader of the Opposition, Mr Dean Winter MP, to endorse a positive Project Marinus Final Investment Decision by 31 July 2025.

7. The Project Marinus Whole-of-State Business Case was not publicly released during the Final Investment Decision process, due to the Tasmanian Government's concerns it would negatively impact Tasmania's negotiations with the Federal Government.

Recommendations

1. **The Committee recommends consideration of the expansion of requirements under Caretaker Conventions for consultation on Major Projects and Major Policy Decisions with all relevant Members and Members-elect.**
2. **The Committee recommends guidance for appropriate requirements and criteria for adequate consultation be included in the Guidelines on Caretaker Conventions for future elections.**

4 TAsRACING AND TAsINSURE

- 4.1 Chapter 4 focuses on the promotion of TasInsure by Tasracing during the 2025 General Election campaign period. Prior to the establishment of the Committee, a significant amount of information regarding this matter was already publicly available, however the Committee did receive further evidence which had not previously been accessible.
- 4.2 The Tasracing, TasInsure matter was first raised on the public record at the Tasracing House of Assembly GBE scrutiny hearing on Wednesday 28 November 2025. At this hearing, the then-Minister for Racing, Ms Jane Howlett MP, was asked if she had any involvement in the circulation of the following communication from Tasracing on 2 July 2025:

Tasracing is pleased to advise that TasInsure, a Tasmanian insurer that will be established by a Liberal government if re-elected, will provide workers' compensation insurance among its products that is expected to be applicable, subject to eligibility, for racing industry participants.

While Tasracing appreciates that this mostly affects the thoroughbred code, we felt it appropriate to write to the industry as a whole about this initiative.

We will continue to keep you updated on developments as they relate the 2 July insurance announcement, but believe it is a positive development that could assist participants with business operating costs.⁷³

The then-Minister responded that she did not believe she had any engagement in the production or circulation of this communication.⁷⁴

- 4.3 Then-Tasracing Chair, Gene Phair, and CEO, Andrew Jenkins, were also questioned at the 2025 scrutiny hearing as to if the organisation had, when the communication was drafted and released, made anyone in the Government or

⁷³ Parliament of Tasmania, House of Assembly, Tabled Paper, 'Documents regarding Tasracing ordered to be tabled by the House on 5 March 2026', tabled 5 March 2026, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/taled-papers/house-of-assembly-tabled-papers-2026/TP52-1-254.pdf>.

⁷⁴ Parliament of Tasmania, House of Assembly Government Business Scrutiny Committee 2025, Tasracing, 26 November 2025, p. 19. https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/100774/HA-GBE-Wed-26-Nov-2025-Tasracing-Pty-Ltd.pdf.

Liberal Party aware of its intended publication.⁷⁵ Mr Phair and Mr Jenkins stated that, to their knowledge, no such persons knew.⁷⁶

- 4.4 Mr Phair was also queried as to his interpretation of Tasracing's conduct alongside the Caretaker Conventions:

Mr WINTER - ... the State Service Code of Conduct requires agency - and in this case Tasracing is defined in this as an agency - employees and officers to use Tasmanian government resources in a proper manner. It says that the State Service principles in the State Service Act 2000 assert that:

State Service is apolitical, performing its function in an impartial, ethical and professional manner.

Are you confident that Tasracing has not breached the caretaker conventions or the State Service Code of Conduct, State Service Principles and State Service Act 2000 in sending out that text message encouraging people to look at the Liberal Party policy?

Mr PHAIR - ... I'm not an expert on the policy and the code of conduct, other than to say that the rationale around the sending of the message, as explained by the CEO, was around that this could be a benefit to the workers' compensation hurdles and impediments that participants had in place that were resulting in some businesses nearly having to shut their door. Whether it was a Liberal policy or a Labor policy, it was irrelevant; it was around making people aware of that.

*In hindsight - and I've had numerous conversations with the CEO and we're both in complete alignment with this - we are an apolitical organisation and pride ourselves on that, so in no way would we be willingly participating in breaking that code of conduct.*⁷⁷

- 4.5 After the GBE scrutiny hearing, the then-Minister for Racing was further questioned on the matter during Question Time in the House on 2, 3 and 4 December 2025.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Parliament of Tasmania, House of Assembly Government Business Scrutiny Committee 2025, Tasracing, 26 November 2025, p.25, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/100774/HA-GBE-Wed-26-Nov-2025-Tasracing-Pty-Ltd.pdf.

⁷⁶ Parliament of Tasmania, House of Assembly Government Business Scrutiny Committee 2025, Tasracing, 26 November 2025, p. 25. https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/100774/HA-GBE-Wed-26-Nov-2025-Tasracing-Pty-Ltd.pdf.

⁷⁷Parliament of Tasmania, House of Assembly Government Business Scrutiny Committee 2025, Tasracing, 26 November 2025, p. 25. https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/100774/HA-GBE-Wed-26-Nov-2025-Tasracing-Pty-Ltd.pdf.

⁷⁸ Parliament of Tasmania, House of Assembly, Parliamentary Debates, 2 December 2025, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/chamber-proceedings/proceedings/2025/december/house-of-assembly-2-december>; Parliament of Tasmania, House of Assembly, Parliamentary Debates, 3 December 2025, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/house->

- 4.6 On 4 March 2026, the ABC published an article based upon information released under a Right to Information (RTI) application to Tasracing. The article posited that Mr Luke Gaetani, a Senior Adviser to the then-Minister for Racing, was aware that Tasracing intended to make a public communication regarding TasInsure:

The ABC understands that Mr Gateani was made aware of the message as a standard courtesy, to ensure the relevant ministerial office is aware of upcoming communications to be sent out by a government business.

There is no suggestion Mr Gaetani had input into the wording of the message.⁷⁹

- 4.7 Following the ABC article, in Question Time on 4 and 5 March 2026, the then-Minister for Racing was queried as to the knowledge of herself and her Office on the matter. The then-Minister maintained that her Office was not aware of the outgoing Tasracing communication and that she had not misled Parliament when discussing the matter.⁸⁰ Two statutory declarations from Mr Gaetani were also tabled in the House.
- 4.8 In the statutory declaration dated 2 March 2026, tabled in the House on 4 March 2026, Mr Gaetani stated that ‘at no time was I aware Tasracing intended to issue a text message or social media post regarding the policy.’⁸¹
- 4.9 In the statutory declaration dated, and tabled on, 5 March 2026, Mr Gaetani stated ‘my previous statutory declaration referred to specific communication in response to the ABC story. I can confirm that at no time was I aware of

[of-assembly/chamber-proceedings/proceedings/2025/december/house-of-assembly-3-december](#); and Parliament of Tasmania, House of Assembly, Parliamentary Debates, 4 December 2025, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/chamber-proceedings/proceedings/2025/december/house-of-assembly-4-december>.

⁷⁹ Holmes, Adam, ABC News, ‘Racing minister’s office aware of Tasracing’s TasInsure message that may have breached caretaker conventions,’ 4 March 2026, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-03-04/tasracing-jane-howlett-office-caretaker-convention/106406032>.

⁸⁰ Parliament of Tasmania, House of Assembly, Parliamentary Debates, 4 March 2026, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/chamber-proceedings/proceedings/2026/january/house-of-assembly-4-march> and Parliament of Tasmania, House of Assembly, Parliamentary Debates, 5 March 2026, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/chamber-proceedings/proceedings/2026/january/house-of-assembly-5-march>.

⁸¹ Parliament of Tasmania, House of Assembly, Tabled Paper, ‘Statutory Declaration of Luke Theodore Gaetani, dated 2 March 2026,’ 4 March 2026, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/tailed-papers/house-of-assembly-tabled-papers-2026/TP52-1-235.pdf>.

Tasracing's intended plan to issue any public communication about the Tasinsure [sic] policy on any platform.'⁸²

Evidence received

- 4.10 As per the evidence of the Head of the State Service, Ms Morgan-Wicks, Tasracing and all other GBEs and SOCs were provided with a letter regarding the commencement of the 2025 Caretaker Period, which included a copy of the *Guidelines*.⁸³

Creation and release of communication by Tasracing

- 4.11 Mr Jenkins, CEO of Tasracing, provided the following evidence to the Committee regarding the inception of the communication from Tasracing regarding TasInsure:

Mr WINTER - ... Are you able to start by potentially explaining what, if any, engagement or interaction you had - Tasracing had - with the [former] Minister or her office before the text message and the rest of the communications went out?

Mr JENKINS - ... As I recall, the only direct interaction that I had with the [former] minister or the [former] Minister's office in relation to the matter was via a telephone call; the [former] minister and I were speaking on general racing matters prior to the SMS and so forth being released. During that conversation, as I recall, the [former] Minister simply confirmed to me that workers compensation insurance would, in fact, be within the scope of the TasInsure portfolio or suite of insurance products. I don't recall that there was any other direct engagement.

Mr WINTER - So, that call was on - I assume that's Wednesday 2 July 2025?

Mr JENKINS - The morning of.

Mr WINTER - So, the morning of Wednesday 2 July [2025], and there's been an announcement by the Premier on TasInsure and you're on a phone call with the [former] Minister for Racing about general racing matters. You've said that during that conversation, the workers compensation - that aspect of TasInsure was brought up. Did the [former] Minister raise the issue of TasInsure or did you?

Mr JENKINS - I can't recall, Mr Winter, whether we were having a - as I say, we were talking about whatever racing matters, as a normal course of interaction between the then-Minister and I. I can't recall.

Mr WINTER - Did the [former] Minister suggest that it would be a good thing for Tasmanian racing participants that TasInsure would cover workers compensation?

⁸² Parliament of Tasmania, House of Assembly, Tabled Paper, 'Statutory Declaration of Luke Gaetani, Ministerial Advisor, dated 5 March 2026', 5 March 2026, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/taled-papers/house-of-assembly-tabled-papers-2026/TP52-1-253.pdf>.

⁸³ Submission No. 5, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 4.

Mr JENKINS - Not as I recall. It was a simple statement along the lines of, 'While we're talking, I'll confirm that -' ... 'Workers comp is within scope of TasInsure.' That was it.

Mr WINTER - Okay, sure. And did the [former] Minister make any suggestion to you that Tasracing should communicate this to its industry members?

Mr JENKINS - Not at all, no. Simple update to me.⁸⁴

- 4.12 The former-Minister for Racing, Ms Howlett MP, appeared before a public hearing of the Committee on 14 August 2026. At this hearing, Ms Howlett MP addressed her recollections of the phone call with Mr Jenkins, and the ensuing communication:

CHAIR - ... Mr Jenkins provided the Committee evidence that he had spoken to you directly about what the TasInsure policy might be over the phone. Do you recall that conversation and can you talk the Committee through it, please?

Ms HOWLETT - In relation to a call with Mr Jenkins, I don't recall the phone conversation in question. But when I was the Minister for Racing, I did talk to Mr Jenkins many, many times about various matters of racing. I understand that it was confirmed to this Committee that the matter of communication around TasInsure was not discussed and I've got no reason to believe the conversation didn't occur and, in line with my previous evidence, I did not direct any communication to go out.

...

CHAIR - Minister, thank you very much for providing that; the Committee has already got this evidence on hand. If you don't recall that actual phone call, we might move on. When was the first time that you recall either speaking with Tasracing about TasInsure or your Office doing so?

Ms HOWLETT - Look, I want to make it very, very clear that I did not tell anyone from Tasracing to send out any communication about TasInsure, nor did I tell anyone on my behalf to do so. I certainly was not part of that communication.⁸⁵

- 4.13 Mr Jenkins confirmed to the Committee that he made the decision to first draft, and then release, the communication:

Mr WINTER - ... can you explain to the Committee how it came about that Tasracing would decide to communicate that policy to its industry members?

⁸⁴ Transcript of Evidence, 3 July 2026, Tasracing, pp. 29-30.

⁸⁵ Transcript of Evidence, 14 August 2026, Ms Jane Howlett MP, pp. 2-3.

Mr JENKINS - Yeah, certainly. Thanks, Mr Winter. So, having received that confirmation, it was ultimately my decision to send a communication out to industry - simply on the basis that, as I'm sure you're aware, Mr Winter, in particular for our thoroughbred trainers, the significant increase in workers compensation costs are crippling some of our trainers' businesses. And given the scope of the proposed insurance suite, I felt that that would be information that was relevant for our equine trainers, in particular our thoroughbred trainers.

Mr WINTER - There was no communication or encouragement from anyone in the Liberal Party or [former] Minister's office or Premier's office? None at all?

Mr JENKINS - Not at all.⁸⁶

4.14 Mr Jenkins stated to the Committee that, after his phone call with the former-Minister for Racing on the morning of Wednesday, 2 July 2025, no further communication occurred between himself and Ms Howlett MP regarding the TasInsure matter.⁸⁷

4.15 Nick Turner, Executive Director of CorComms, appeared before the Committee. CorComms is a Tasmanian PR, marketing and publishing company which provides support to a number of GBEs and SOCs, including Tasracing.⁸⁸ Mr Turner was the CorComms employee responsible for drafting the Tasracing communication for racing participants which referenced TasInsure, at the request of Mr Jenkins. The production of such communications was standard procedure for CorComms on behalf of its clients, including Tasracing. Mr Turner explained the drafting process for this particular communication:

Mr TURNER - ... I provide external and internal communication advice to Tasracing. I was asked to prepare a message to industry about the proposed TasInsure policy by CEO Andrew Jenkins, with particular reference to workers' compensation and how that element of the insurance package would benefit the Tasmanian racing industry, particularly the Thoroughbred Code. I prepared the words in line with the request and forwarded them to Andrew for approval and distribution. Once approved by him, as per normal practice, I sent them to the Minister's office for its information...

CHAIR - ... to the best of your recollection, whose initial idea was it to communicate the details of the TasInsure policy via Tasracing communication channels? Was it through Tasracing or the Minister's office?

⁸⁶ Transcript of Evidence, 3 July 2026, Tasracing, pp. 29-30.

⁸⁷ Transcript of Evidence, 3 July 2026, Tasracing, p. 32.

⁸⁸ Transcript of Evidence, 15 June 2026, CorComms, p. 37.

Mr TURNER - Definitely through Tasracing. I think it's important to note I work for Tasracing, not the government and there's a clear delineation or a clear distinction certainly in my mind and in Tasracing's mind. I mean, it pays the bill.⁸⁹

For clarity, Mr Turner also noted that the request from Mr Jenkins to draft the correspondence first came during a phone call.⁹⁰

- 4.16 As per the information publicly available through the ABC RTI application, on Wednesday, 2 July 2025 at 4.48 p.m., Mr Turner emailed the first draft of the communication to Mr Jenkins.⁹¹ This read as follows:

Tasracing is pleased to advise that TasInsure, a Tasmanian insurer that will be established by a Liberal Government if re-elected, will provide workers' compensation insurance among its products for racing industry participants.

While Tasracing appreciates that this mostly affects the thoroughbred code, we felt it appropriate to write to the industry as a whole about the initiative.

*We will continue to keep you updated on developments as they relate to today's insurance announcement, but believe it is a positive development that could assist participants with business operating costs.*⁹²

- 4.17 Additional information provided by Mr Turner to the Committee showed that Mr Jenkins replied to Mr Turner at 4.51 p.m., providing small edits to the draft communication. These edits are represented in bold below, which is emphasis added by the Committee for clarity:

*Tasracing is pleased to advise that TasInsure, a Tasmanian insurer that will be established by a Liberal Government if re-elected, will provide workers' compensation insurance among its products **that is expected to be applicable** for racing industry participants.*

While Tasracing appreciates that this mostly affects the thoroughbred code, we felt it appropriate to write to the industry as a whole about the initiative.

⁸⁹ Transcript of Evidence, 15 June 2026, CorComms, pp. 37-38.

⁹⁰ Transcript of Evidence, 15 June 2026, CorComms, pp. 37-38.

⁹¹ Parliament of Tasmania, House of Assembly, Tabled Paper, 'Documents regarding Tasracing ordered to be tabled by the House on 5 March 2026, tabled 5 March 2026, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/tailed-papers/house-of-assembly-tabled-papers-2026/TP52-1-254.pdf>.

⁹² Parliament of Tasmania, House of Assembly, Tabled Paper, 'Documents regarding Tasracing ordered to be tabled by the House on 5 March 2026, tabled 5 March 2026, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/tailed-papers/house-of-assembly-tabled-papers-2026/TP52-1-254.pdf>.

We will continue to keep you updated on developments as they relate to today's (2 July) insurance announcement, but believe it is a positive development that could assist participants with business operating costs.⁹³

- 4.18 The response from Mr Jenkins was then forwarded by Mr Turner to Mr Gaetani at 4.52 p.m.
- 4.19 Before the Committee, Mr Turner clarified the reason for providing a copy of the communication to Mr Gaetani. He explained that it is the practice of CorComms to alert relevant Ministers and Ministerial Offices to communications or announcements which are to be made public by GBEs or SOCs for which a given Minister is the shareholder Minister of, as a simple courtesy. Mr Turner was asked to explain his contact with the then-Minister for Racing's Office in this instance:

Mr WINTER - *And so the content - you've crafted a set of words, and Luke says 'it's okay for tonight now', was Luke aware of what form that communication would come out in?*

Mr TURNER - *No. Again, all I worry about is them - the Government - seeing what we're going to say, just from a professional communication perspective, because we don't want them to read about it in, you know. So, I just needed him to - needed it, the Government or the Minister's office to have seen it and that's all I care about. So, there's never a conversation about how we're going to distribute it, because, honestly, you make those decisions, you know, we decided that we didn't need to do media, we decided that the best thing for us to do was just industry, so we communicated directly to industry.*

Mr WINTER - *Did you require him to sign off though?*

Mr TURNER - *No, so it's not a sign off, we don't need approval. It's a for-information. As I mentioned in my evidence, given the clients that I work for in a Government context, we don't provide an opportunity for the Government to rewrite what I write. But if I've made a mistake and they want to correct it, that's a different thing altogether.*

Mr WINTER - *So it's more fact-checking the content?*

Mr TURNER - *Information.*

Mr WINTER - *It's confirming, correct me if I'm wrong, not trying to lead you here, but you're trying to confirm that what your communicating is accurate in terms of what the Liberal Party's policy.*

⁹³ Additional Information provided by Nick Turner of CorComms, dated 18 June 2026, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0017/107360/18062026_Turner_Nick_Response-to-Additional-Information-request_Redacted.pdf.

Mr TURNER - Not in not in that instance, not in the TasInsure instance. I mentioned the other things only because, just to give a bit of context around why I would change a statement if I'd written it. You know, obviously we don't want to send out stuff that's incorrect. But in the TasInsure instance, it's really just line of sight. It was, you know, 'we're going to say this at some point', and it's just for their acknowledgement or their knowledge.⁹⁴

4.20 Mr Turner was further questioned as to his communication with the former-Minister's Office:

CHAIR - Can we just delve a bit further into that a little bit more? Like in your email it says 'Luke says okay for tonight', which sort of implies that there may have been discussions around some kind of timeline with the Minister's adviser, what discussions had you had around that sort of timeframe and going out?

Mr TURNER - Again, my recollection isn't clear as to the conversation that I had with him other than the 'okay' bit, and the fact that that was an acknowledgement that he had sighted it and we could do with what we will. I really don't recall if we spoke about the timing. For all I know, and for all I remember, all I can recollect, is that the conversation with Andrew around timing was exactly that. As I mentioned before, wanting to make the most of the news cycle and get a message out to industry that demonstrated, because, you know, workers' compensation for the thoroughbred code in particular has been a hot topic. Some industry participants have indicated that they may have to leave the industry because of some of these costs. We saw it as an opportunity to push that. So yes, my recollection is that the timing wasn't discussed with Luke, and this could have been my assessment of it, in terms of talking to Andrew about getting something out.

CHAIR - You just mentioned before about - I just want to confirm that the full content of the message was seen by Luke in the Minister's office?

Mr TURNER - Yes.

CHAIR - What does that mean for us? Unpack what the full content is that he was able to see.

Mr TURNER - He would have seen the message that was sent to industry, which was, I think - and I could provide a copy of that - in the ABC RTI documentation that was released, and it was certainly published online. In fact, I have a copy of it here. Yes, so he would've seen - if it was four paragraphs, he would have seen the entirety of the message. But we wouldn't have said 'We're going to send this as a media release', or 'We're going to send this as an SMS', or 'We're going to put it online'; we would have just said 'This is what we're going to say'.

⁹⁴ Transcript of Evidence, 15 June 2026, CorComms, p. 39.

- 4.21 In a response to a Question on Notice taken during her appearance at a public hearing, Ms Howlett MP noted the following regarding such communications from CorComms to her Office:

It was not uncommon for representatives of Tasracing including CorComm [sic] to communicate with me as minister and my office, in relation to various racing related matters, including policy matters if required.⁹⁵

- 4.22 During Question Time in the House on 16 June 2026, the Premier provided the following answer in addressing the communication between Mr Turner and Mr Gaetani:

My understanding at the centre of this is a misunderstanding caused by a simple matter of crossed purposes. My understanding is that Mr Turner sent the adviser an email which the adviser believed was a clarification about whether TasInsure would cover workers' compensation... Mr Turner did not tell the adviser the intention was to distribute the words as a general message to industry. The adviser has, in a sworn statement, stated that he thought he was simply providing clarification and commentary about the policy, but was unaware it would be distributed in that form, hence Mr Turner's belief that he was not receiving policy detail. These were two people communicating at cross-purposes, I am advised, and it's my understanding.⁹⁶

- 4.23 The Committee asked Mr Turner to provide any additional information available to him regarding the 2 July 2025 email thread between himself, Mr Jenkins and Mr Gaetani. Mr Turner provided an additional email thread to the Committee, which was published on 18 June 2026.

- 4.24 On the evening of 18 June the Honourable Eric Abetz MP provided an update to the above answer to the House from the Premier, in light of the publication of the email thread:

Speaker, if I may, briefly, based on information available to the Premier on Tuesday, he advised the House that, and I quote;

'Mr Turner did not tell the adviser that the intention was to distribute the words as a general message to the industry.'

On Thursday - that's today - the Premier was advised that an additional email had been provided to the Select Committee on Caretaker Matters. The Premier notes

⁹⁵ Response to Questions on Notice by Ms Jane Howlett MP, dated 31 August 2026, p. 1, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/111584/31082026_Jane-Howlett-MP_QoN-response_Redacted.pdf.

⁹⁶ Parliament of Tasmania, House of Assembly, Hansard, 16 June 2026, p. 3, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/chamber-proceedings/proceedings/2026/june/house-of-assembly-16-june>

*an email sent to the adviser with a subject line 'Message to Industry'. After being made aware of this additional email, the Premier is adding this additional information and context to his Answer. The Premier is advised the adviser does not recall receiving the email and notes that he did not respond to it.*⁹⁷

- 4.25 Appearing before a hearing of the Committee on 3 July 2026, the Premier provided a further clarification regarding his answer before the House on 16 June 2026. He clarified that his original answer was incorrect and that he should have stated 'Mr Turner contacted the adviser' and not specified that this communication was via email.⁹⁸ The Premier informed the Committee of his understanding of the full series of contact between Mr Turner and Mr Gaetani:

Mr ROCKLIFF - ... This is the sequence of events, as I'm advised. The adviser received a call from CorComms' Mr Turner on the day the TasInsure policy was announced. The adviser's firm recollection is Mr Turner was asking for a clarification of the policy relating to workers' compensation. Mr Turner's email to Mr Jenkins says, 'Luke says okay'. The adviser was not party to this email. The adviser maintains the reference to him does not confirm he said 'okay' to the contents of the email or was aware of the intended message. The only email that Mr Turner sent to the adviser was the one that contains 'Message to industry' as a subject line. I'm advised that the adviser maintains he does not recall seeing that.

CHAIR - Premier, who wrote the answer that you read in on 16 June [2026], and why did it say that there was an email?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I'll have to seek information on exactly that, but the information I was provided was not correct, I'm advised⁹⁹

- 4.26 Prior to the formation of the Committee, Mr Gaetani's name had been associated with this matter due to the public coverage following the release of the ABC RTI application. The Committee consequentially invited Mr Gaetani to provide a written submission, which he chose not to provide. Following this, the Committee twice provided the opportunity for a written or oral right of reply to Mr Gaetani, as per Standing Order 357A, given references which had been made to him in evidence before the Committee. No reply correspondence was received. In considering this matter, the Committee thought it essential to receive evidence from Mr Gaetani, so that he had the opportunity to respond to matters which had been raised in the public domain. Consequentially, on 18 August 2026, the Committee wrote to Mr Gaetani requesting written responses

⁹⁷ Parliament of Tasmania, House of Assembly, Hansard, 18 June 2026, p. 98, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/chamber-proceedings/proceedings/2026/june/house-of-assembly-18-june>

⁹⁸ Transcript of Evidence, 3 July 2026, the Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, Premier, and the Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 2.

⁹⁹ Transcript of Evidence, 3 July 2026, the Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, Premier, and the Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 3.

to specific questions regarding the Tasracing TasInsure communication. A response from Mr Gaetani was received on 27 August 2026. Further communication occurred between the Committee and Mr Gaetani on 1 September, 14 September and 21 September 2026 in which the publication of these communications was discussed.¹⁰⁰

- 4.27 In its written request, the Committee asked Mr Gaetani what the nature of his correspondence on 2 July 2025 was with Mr Turner and Mr Jenkins. He confirmed he does not recall any such communication with Mr Jenkins on this day.¹⁰¹ In relation to the phone call and email correspondence with Mr Turner, he stated the following:

In relation to the nature of communication with Mr Turner on 2 July 2025, my recollection is consistent with my Statutory Declaration and the evidence provided by Mr Turner to the Committee on 15 June 2026. Namely a phone call where details about the TasInsure policy was provided to the best of my then knowledge. Consistent with the advice provided by Mr Turner to the Committee, I was not made aware, to my knowledge, in that phone call or informed of any external communications that were being planned.

Mr TURNER “what wasn’t communicated to the Minister’s office was how we were going to communicate – whether it was a text, email, online, media release.”.

In relation to the email from Mr Turner to myself, timestamped 4:52p.m., 2 July 2025, no other correspondence or a response from me to that email was provided. For the awareness of the Committee, I do not recall receipt of that email.¹⁰²

- 4.28 After the Committee sought further information as to his responses, Mr Gaetani provided the following:

My recollection, which I understand is consistent with other evidence before the Committee, is that no proposed external communication, media strategy or public announcement by Tasracing was discussed with me during that call.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Correspondence between the Committee and Mr Luke Gaetani, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0026/111779/Combined-Correspondence-between-Committee-and-Mr-Luke-Gaetani.pdf

¹⁰¹ Correspondence between the Committee and Mr Luke Gaetani, p. 3, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0026/111779/Combined-Correspondence-between-Committee-and-Mr-Luke-Gaetani.pdf

¹⁰² Correspondence between the Committee and Mr Luke Gaetani, pp. 3-4, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0026/111779/Combined-Correspondence-between-Committee-and-Mr-Luke-Gaetani.pdf

¹⁰³ Correspondence between the Committee and Mr Luke Gaetani, p. 9, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0026/111779/Combined-Correspondence-between-Committee-and-Mr-Luke-Gaetani.pdf

4.29 As referenced in paragraph 4.19 above, Mr Turner noted that his contact with the then-Minister's Office on 2 July 2025 was to acknowledge the Tasracing communication would be made public 'at some point.'¹⁰⁴

4.30 Mr Gaetani was also asked if he maintained that his two statutory declarations were true and accurate statements. He confirmed he did.¹⁰⁵ He further stated the following regarding the production of the statutory declarations:

*I can confirm that of my own accord, I proposed, signed and provided personally to be tabled in the House of Assembly statutory declarations, dated 2 March 2026 and 5 March 2026.*¹⁰⁶

4.31 The Premier and Ms Howlett MP both told the Committee that they understood that Mr Gaetani stands by his statutory declarations.¹⁰⁷ Ms Howlett MP confirmed she was aware that statutory declarations were being produced, but that she did not assist with this.¹⁰⁸ The Premier, in response to a request for additional information from the Committee, stated that his Office provided some assistance to Mr Gaetani in the production of the statutory declarations:

Administrative assistance was provided by my office in preparing the statutory declarations at the advisor's request.

*The declarations were made of the declarant's own accord and contain his own account and evidence.*¹⁰⁹

4.32 Returning to the timeline of the draft communication, the RTI response obtained by the ABC included a further email from Mr Turner to Mr Jenkins, time stamped 6:16 p.m. This email is provided below and the Committee notes that the yellow highlight has been exactly replicated from the original RTI response:

¹⁰⁴ Transcript of Evidence, 15 June 2026, CorComms, p. 39.

¹⁰⁵ Correspondence between the Committee and Mr Luke Gaetani, p. 3, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0026/111779/Combined-Correspondence-between-Committee-and-Mr-Luke-Gaetani.pdf

¹⁰⁶ Correspondence between the Committee and Mr Luke Gaetani, p. 3, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0026/111779/Combined-Correspondence-between-Committee-and-Mr-Luke-Gaetani.pdf

¹⁰⁷ Transcript of Evidence, 3 July 2026, the Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, Premier, and the Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 5 and Transcript of Evidence, 14 August 2026, Ms Jane Howlett MP, p. 10.

¹⁰⁸ Transcript of Evidence, 14 August 2026, Ms Jane Howlett MP, p. 10.

¹⁰⁹ Response to request for additional information, the Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, Premier, dated 20 July 2026, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0030/108786/P20072026_PREMIER_Redacted.pdf.

Hey mate

See below. Luke says ok for tonight now.

Tasracing is pleased to advise that TasInsure, a Tasmanian insurer that will be established by a Liberal Government if re-elected, will provide workers' compensation insurance among its products **that is expected to be applicable, subject to eligibility, for** racing industry participants.

While Tasracing appreciates that this mostly affects the thoroughbred code, we felt it appropriate to write to the industry as a whole about the initiative.

We will continue to keep you updated on developments as they relate to today's (2 July) insurance announcement, but believe it is a positive development that could assist participants with business operating costs.

Cheers
Nick¹¹⁰

- 4.33 After this email, Mr Jenkins thanked Mr Turner at 6.31 p.m. and forwarded the communication, as drafted above, to Tasracing staff for circulation. This email was sent at 6.36 p.m.
- 4.34 Mr Turner was directly asked as to the nature of the highlighted content in the draft of the communication provided above in Paragraph 4.32:

CHAIR - Your email highlights a change to the text from the original draft.

Mr TURNER - Yes.

CHAIR - Can you confirm for us if that change was made based on the conversation with the ministerial adviser, or how did that come to be?

Mr TURNER - It would have definitely come from Andrew. As I say, Andrew - the process would be he will brief me, I will write it, he will change it, a word here or there, and then that's the version that would have been sent to the Minister's office. Like I said before, we would only change messaging if it was factually incorrect. We're not in - we're sort of reasonably rigid about that. It's Andrew - again, it sounds a bit mercenary, but I work for him. I don't work for the Government.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Parliament of Tasmania, House of Assembly, Tabled Paper, 'Documents regarding Tasracing ordered to be tabled by the House on 5 March 2026', tabled 5 March 2026, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/tailed-papers/house-of-assembly-tabled-papers-2026/TP52-1-254.pdf>.

¹¹¹ Transcript of Evidence, 15 June 2026, CorComms, p. 42.

- 4.35 The Chair again prompted Mr Turner to confirm the origin, and timing, of amendments to the draft communication, as shown in the RTI response to the ABC:

CHAIR - ... you made a change about a policy detail in that email and that added in products that are expected to be applicable. So, just to confirm, the Minister's office absolutely didn't give you that detail on the policy to add in.

...

Mr TURNER - ... absolutely any amendments to that message absolutely, definitely would have come from Andrew Jenkins, not from the Minister's office. As to where Andrew gets his information from that, you know, that's yeah, that's a question for him. Absolutely.¹¹²

- 4.36 The former-Minister for Racing, Ms Howlett MP, was queried throughout her appearance before the Committee as to her knowledge of the Tasracing communication. Ms Howlett MP stated she did not request the communication be created and circulated and was unable to share when her Office may have become aware of the draft communication. She was also questioned as to the point at which she personally became aware of the release of the communication by Tasracing:

Mr WINTER - ... So, you can't tell us exactly when you found out or how you found out about the communications?

Ms HOWLETT - ... I can't recall. As I said, I was working ridiculously long hours during - I think it was at scrutiny during 2025.

Mr WINTER - That was the first you found out about the communication?

...

Mr WINTER - So, how did the Facebook post occur some months earlier then?

Ms HOWLETT - Well, as I said, I take full responsibility for what was posted.

...

Mr WINTER - Minister, you said that you removed the comments from your Facebook page as soon as you became aware. So, when did you become aware and how did you become aware?

Ms HOWLETT - As soon as I was made aware, I believe it was during Estimates hearing; that's when I was made aware and I'm sure it was then. I removed the post and corrected the record as soon as I was able to.

¹¹² Transcript of Evidence, 15 June 2026, CorComms, p. 45.

Mr WINTER - Because the post and the comment are still there, Minister, today.

Ms HOWLETT - I thought I'd removed them. I would have to go through and have a look.¹¹³

- 4.37 In his correspondence with the Committee, Mr Gaetani also confirmed that he did not request the production of the Tasracing communication:

*To clarify, at no time did I seek to try and make Tasracing provide any information externally to its wider stakeholders. I understand this was a decision solely by Tasracing. This is consistent with the information provided to the Committee by both Mr Jenkins and Mr Turner.*¹¹⁴

Breach of Caretaker Conventions by Tasracing

- 4.38 In consideration of the potential breach of Caretaker Conventions by Tasracing, the Hon. Mr Willie MP provided the Oppositions consideration of 'inconsistencies' of the GBE in their actions during the Caretaker Period:

- *TasRacing used its resources to communicate favourably about a Liberal Party election policy;*
- *the communication occurred during the caretaker period;*
- *TasRacing is a government-owned business subject to caretaker expectations; and*
- *the communication risked advantaging one political party during an election campaign.*¹¹⁵

- 4.39 DPAC provided confirmation that it viewed Tasracing's public communication regarding TasInsure to be a breach of Caretaker Conventions.¹¹⁶ DPAC provided four pieces of correspondence between Mr Phair, Mr Gregory, in his then role as Acting Secretary and Head of the State Service, and Ms Morgan-Wicks regarding the TasInsure communication. In the first instance on 6 January 2026, Mr Phair was asked to detail the Tasracing Board's response to the TasInsure communication. Mr Phair responded on 19 January 2026 noting that he felt the matter 'had been resolved to the satisfaction of the Board, and no further action was required,'¹¹⁷ in detailing the actions that were taken by the GBE:

¹¹³ Transcript of Evidence, 14 August 2026, Ms Jane Howlett MP, pp. 6-7.

¹¹⁴ Correspondence between the Committee and Mr Luke Gaetani, p. 4, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0026/111779/Combined-Correspondence-between-Committee-and-Mr-Luke-Gaetani.pdf

¹¹⁵ Submission No. 6, Hon. Josh Willie MP, Opposition Leader, pp. 4-5.

¹¹⁶ Submission No. 5, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 4.

¹¹⁷ Submission No. 5, Department of Premier and Cabinet, pp. 68-69.

In no way did Tasracing endorse or recommend the election commitment. We did note that we believe the initiative would provide workers' compensation insurance that could be applicable for racing industry participants and to essentially watch this space for developments. Our approach was simply to provide participants with information that could assist them with business operating costs given workers' compensation has been a long-standing issue of concern for our industry, particularly in the thoroughbred code.

That said, when I was advised of the matter by the former Leader of the Opposition, Dean Winter, I sought to have the post removed from our website. I spoke to the CEO of the need to remain apolitical during election campaigns, noting previous comments about our messaging, that an approach with an abundance of caution mindset was required.¹¹⁸

- 4.40 At a hearing, Mr Gregory explained the process he undertook upon receipt of the written response from Mr Phair:

Mr GREGORY - *With that piece of information, going back, looking through the guidelines and reading that, I formed the view that perhaps naively, perhaps inadvertently, but clearly there had been a breach by Tasracing of the caretaker guidelines and, as I'd said before, by the time the Chair came back, and I reviewed and formed a view, Ms Morgan-Wicks was back from leave and we discussed it and from my view, I believe there was a breach of the caretaker guidelines.¹¹⁹*

- 4.41 Ms Morgan-Wicks responded to Mr Phair on 29 January 2026 stating that she considered the Tasracing comments 'to be a breach, inadvertent or otherwise', of the Guidelines.¹²⁰ In this letter Ms Morgan-Wicks continued:

The Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet is not responsible for the adjudication of potential breaches during an Election period unless it relates to the conduct of a state servant. However, I do play an important advisory role in the application of the caretaker conventions.

My recommendation to the Board is that it considers providing additional professional development to Tas Racing employees at the commencement of any Election period to support understanding and compliance with the conventions.

The Department of Premier and Cabinet would be willing to support the provision of training and information sessions, should this be useful.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Submission No. 5, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 68.

¹¹⁹ Transcript of Evidence, 3 July 2026, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 22.

¹²⁰ Submission No. 5, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 70.

¹²¹ Submission No. 5, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 70.

Mr Phair subsequently accepted the offer of additional support from DPAC in the future on matters of Caretaker Conventions.¹²²

- 4.42 Before the Committee, Mr Phair noted that it was normal practice for DPAC to provide the *Guidelines* to the Chair of Tasracing, on behalf of the Board and the CEO, on behalf of the Tasracing management team.¹²³
- 4.43 Ms Morgan-Wicks was invited to outline how the additional training and support on Caretaker Conventions offered to, and accepted by, Tasracing would be provided:

CHAIR - ... You spoke about obviously the need for more training and better education and looking at how that would roll out. Can you give us a summary of what that will look like and what timeframe you're looking at rolling that out? Or is that something that would pop up again if - elections are hard to predict - but in a more immediate time before caretaker conventions come into play?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - ... It's certainly something that we would conduct right on the point of the announcement of caretaker, so that it is fresh and immediate, you know, in the minds. And I do believe that during the caretaker period, we [inaudible] reminders to staff in relation to the caretaker guidelines, but it would involve - and I certainly write to the head of each entity. We have developed training materials and a presentation on the reminder of people's obligations under the guidelines. We are still reviewing the guidelines post the 2025 election and also pending the outcome of this Inquiry, should further recommendations be made for amendment to the guidelines. But we would do it right on the point of calling.¹²⁴

- 4.44 The former-Minister for Racing, Ms Howlett MP, publicly 'shared' the Tasracing TasInsure communication online. Ms Morgan-Wicks was asked to consider this occurrence in regard to the duties of Ministers under the Caretaker Conventions:

Mr WINTER - ... You mentioned secretaries having responsibility. What about ministers? For example, in the application of the guidelines, within the caretaker conventions, it talks about the guidelines applying to all ministers, staff and employees in State Service agencies. What's the role for ministers in overseeing whether caretaker conventions are upheld?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Ministers are required to uphold the caretaker guidelines. Certainly, my understanding is that the Premier shared the caretaker guidelines and wrote to each minister to provide those guidelines, I think just after I wrote to all State Service entities.

¹²² Submission No. 5, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 71.

¹²³ Transcript of Evidence, 3 July 2026, Tasracing, pp. 31-32.

¹²⁴ Transcript of Evidence, 3 July 2026, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 24.

Mr WINTER - So, [former] Minister Howlett shared the TasInsure communications online from Tasracing. Is that a breach of the caretaker conventions?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - So, in terms of - and I'd have to look at the material in relation to the sharing, so I don't know that I can comment on what Ms Howlett has done or not done, but certainly, should a minister allegedly breach the caretaker guidelines, it's a matter for the Premier to determine.¹²⁵

Launceston Greyhound Racing Club advertisement

- 4.45 Throughout the Inquiry the Committee also followed a secondary line of questions in regard to Tasracing's conduct during the 2025 Caretaker Period. Questions were asked regarding the GBE's involvement in proposed advertisements in Tasmanian newspapers by the Launceston Greyhound Racing Club (LGRC) during the 2025 Caretaker Period. The Committee was provided with copies of email correspondence on this matter dated 8 and 9 July 2025, in which the advertisements were predominantly discussed by Mr Jenkins, CEO of Tasracing and Mr Turner, of CorComms.¹²⁶
- 4.46 From the emails that are publicly available, Mr Jenkins and other representatives of Tasracing were first provided a copy of the proposed advertisement by the LGRC on 8 July 2025 at 8:24 p.m. At 8:57 p.m., Mr Jenkins forwarded the email to Mr Gaetani, former-adviser to Ms Howlett MP.
- 4.47 On 9 July 2025, the following day, Mr Jenkins provided a proposed response to the LGRC to Mr Turner and Mr Gaetani at 1:02 p.m., which addressed the approach of the GBE to such advertising during election periods. In this original draft, Mr Jenkins included the following point:

The erroneous statement the Code does not rely on taxpayer money does not take into account the cost of running the Code and, further, provides a lobbying angle for the anti-racers to remove the Code's funding under the Deed. This is especially concerning given the possibility of a minority State Government that may need to negotiate with Independents to form Government¹²⁷

- 4.48 After the first email, Mr Turner responded to the other two parties at 1:09 p.m., providing some amendments. This included reference to public statements from candidates and a Member of Parliament regarding greyhound racing:

¹²⁵ Transcript of Evidence, 3 July 2026, Department of Premier and Cabinet, pp. 24-25.

¹²⁶ Additional information from Tasracing, dated 20 July 2026, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0031/108787/20072026_Tasracing-additional-information-combined_Redacted.pdf.

¹²⁷ Additional information from Tasracing, dated 20 July 2026, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0031/108787/20072026_Tasracing-additional-information-combined_Redacted.pdf

*Two anti-racing Independent Candidates (plus MLC Meg Webb) had their media opportunity and the issue passed. There is now a real risk of their views being resurfaced in the media following the advertisement placement.*¹²⁸

- 4.49 Mr Turner concluded his email in suggesting, if Tasracing could not request the advertisements be withdrawn, the organisation provide the following advice to the LGRC:

*For the reasons outlined, Tasracing requests that consideration be given to withdrawing the advertisement until the election campaign is concluded.*¹²⁹

This proposition was endorsed by Mr Jenkins at 1:13 p.m.

- 4.50 The email timestamped 1:13 p.m. is the final one available to the Committee. In this email Mr Jenkins states ‘will await Luke’s comments then send to Gene for a final approval,’ Luke being Mr Gaetani and Gene being then-Tasracing Chair, Mr Phair. In the available email thread, no email was sent by Mr Gaetani. Further, when invited by the Committee to provide any other existing correspondence, Mr Turner confirmed no further correspondence existed.

Consideration of Caretaker Conventions

- 4.51 In relation to the Tasracing communication regarding TasInsure, the Committee notes again Ms Morgan-Wicks’ and Mr Gregory’s finding that, whether inadvertently or otherwise, the GBE breached Caretaker Conventions.¹³⁰

Findings

8. Tasracing breached the *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025* through the release of the TasInsure communication on 2 July 2025.
9. The Department of Premier and Cabinet undertook an investigation of the Tasracing communication regarding TasInsure which found it was a breach of the *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025*.

¹²⁸ Additional information from Tasracing, dated 20 July 2026, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0031/108787/20072026_Tasracing-additional-information-combined_Redacted.pdf

¹²⁹ Additional information from Tasracing, dated 20 July 2026, p. 6, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0031/108787/20072026_Tasracing-additional-information-combined_Redacted.pdf.

¹³⁰ Submission No. 5, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 70.

10. The drafting and release of the TasInsure communication was requested by Tasracing CEO, Mr Andrew Jenkins.
11. The Tasracing TasInsure communication was drafted by Mr Nick Turner from CorComms, edited by Mr Andrew Jenkins, CEO of Tasracing, and emailed a former-Senior Adviser of the former-Minister for Racing, Ms Jane Howlett MP. Mr Turner replied back to Mr Jenkins that 'Luke says ok for tonight now.'
12. A former-Senior Adviser of the former-Minister for Racing, Ms Jane Howlett MP, received an email from Mr Nick Turner of CorComms at 4.52 p.m. on 2 July 2025 with the subject line 'FW: Message to industry.'
13. The Office of the former-Minister for Racing, Ms Jane Howlett MP, was informed that Tasracing planned to issue public communications about the TasInsure policy.
14. The statutory declarations of the former-Senior Adviser to Jane Howlett MP, drafted with administrative support provided by the Office of the Premier and tabled in the Parliament of Tasmania, are inconsistent with the evidence received regarding the drafting of the Tasracing public industry communication addressing TasInsure.
15. Given the conflicting evidence provided by the Premier and other witnesses, the matter as to the extent of the involvement of the Office of the former-Minister for Racing in the Tasracing communication on TasInsure cannot be definitively closed. This includes how the two statutory declarations tabled in Parliament align with evidence received by this Committee.
16. Tasracing breached Clauses 7.5 and 7.10 of the *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025* in its communication with the Launceston Greyhound Racing Club.

Recommendations

3. **The Department of Premier and Cabinet enhance the existing provision of the relevant Caretaker Conventions Guidelines to Government Business Enterprises and State-Owned Companies by the provision of compulsory training for the Board Chairs and Chief Executive Officers.**
4. **The Premier of the day order a compulsory review of any instances in which Ministers, or their Ministerial Office, may have had involvement in a breach,**

or alleged breach, of the relevant Caretaker Conventions Guidelines, including by a Government Business Enterprise or State-Owned Company.

5 TT-LINE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

- 5.1 Chapter 5 considers evidence received in regard to additional financial assistance provided to TT-Line during the 2025 Caretaker Period. TT-Line is a GBE that operates the Spirit of Tasmania.
- 5.2 The matter of additional financial assistance provided to TT-Line via the Government, through TASCORP, has been considered in detail by the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts (PAC) throughout its ongoing *Inquiry into the TT-Line's Spirits Project*.¹³¹
- 5.3 On 30 April 2025, TT-Line requested from TASCORP an increase to its borrowing limit from \$1.035 billion to \$1.445 billion.¹³² On 24 June 2025, the TASCORP Board considered the request, finding it unsustainable for the long term, but approving a temporary increase of the requested amount until October 2026.¹³³ Consequentially, on 26 July 2025, the then-Treasurer, the Hon. Guy Barnett MP, approved the required legislative guarantee that would enable the borrowing increase to be facilitated.¹³⁴

Evidence received

Approval and consultation regarding the temporary borrowing increase

- 5.4 Treasury defined its conduct during the Caretaker Period as responding to 'emerging issues,'¹³⁵ which included providing advice to TT-Line and the then-Treasurer regarding the proposed increase to borrowing:

The Auditor-General contacted Treasury to communicate concerns in relation to TT-Line's solvency, and TT-Line requested guidance from Treasury on the process for seeking additional debt and potentially equity support.

¹³¹ Parliament of Tasmania, Public Accounts Committee, *Inquiry into the TT-Line's Spirits Project*, <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/committees/joint-committees/standing-committees/public-accounts-committee/inquiries/tt-lines-spirits-project>.

¹³² Parliament of Tasmania, Public Accounts Committee, *Inquiry into the TT-Line's Spirits Project*, Transcript of Evidence, 21 October 2025, TASCORP, p. 1, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0025/98008/Public-Accounts-Committee-21-Oct-2025-TT-Line-Public-FINAL.pdf.

¹³³ Parliament of Tasmania, Public Accounts Committee, *Inquiry into the TT-Line's Spirits Project*, Transcript of Evidence, 21 October 2025, TASCORP, p. 2, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0025/98008/Public-Accounts-Committee-21-Oct-2025-TT-Line-Public-FINAL.pdf.

¹³⁴ Parliament of Tasmania, Public Accounts Committee, *Inquiry into the TT-Line's Spirits Project*, Transcript of Evidence, 21 October 2025, TASCORP, p. 2, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0025/98008/Public-Accounts-Committee-21-Oct-2025-TT-Line-Public-FINAL.pdf.

¹³⁵ Submission No. 4, Department of Treasury and Finance, p. 3.

These discussions informed Treasury's written advice to the Treasurer on 25 July 2025, the same day that TT-Line wrote to the Treasurer to seek an increase in its maximum guaranteed borrowing limit. Treasury's advice was that any Government support provided to TT-Line, at the time, would be subject to the caretaker conventions.

Further advice was then provided by Treasury to the Treasurer in response to subsequent developments, including further correspondence from TT-Line to the Shareholding Ministers, and from the Auditor-General to Treasury.¹³⁶

- 5.5 The Committee invited the Hon. Guy Barnett MP, who was Treasurer at the time of the decision, to provide comment. He stated that the decision was made public on 26 July 2025, following:

Updated advice provided on 25 July 2025, which indicated that TT-Line would require additional temporary borrowings to support its Vessel Replacement Program. In accordance with Caretaker Conventions, I consulted regarding this decision with the then Shadow Treasurer, Mr Josh Willie, on 26 July 2025.

These steps were announced publicly on 26 July 2025 in a media statement issued by me as the then Treasurer.¹³⁷

- 5.6 The Committee requested a further response from the Deputy Premier for total confirmation as to when the decision on the TT-Line borrowing capacity expansion was made. The Deputy Premier wrote:

The increase to TT-Line's borrowing limit was announced following my phone call with Mr Willie.

As the Committee would be aware, Caretaker Conventions do not require that the Government has not yet formed a view or intended position on a matter prior to consulting. I can confirm that when I spoke to Mr Willie regarding this matter it was my intent to approve an increase in the borrowing limit, consistent with advice that I had received. Nothing in my conversation with Mr Willie alerted this view, and as such I proceeded with that decision and made a public announcement later that afternoon of 26 July.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Submission No. 4, Department of Treasury and Finance, p. 3.

¹³⁷ Additional Information from the Hon. Guy Barnett MP, Deputy Premier and Attorney-General, dated 3 June 2026, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/107141/03062026_Hon.Guy-Barnett-MP_Redacted.pdf.

¹³⁸ Additional information from the Hon. Guy Barnett MP, Deputy Premier and Attorney-General, dated 31 August 2026, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/111582/31082026_Hon.-Guy-Barnett-MP_TT-Line-Decision_Redacted.pdf.

5.7 In his submission, the Hon. Mr Willie MP, Leader of the Opposition, acknowledged that the then-Treasurer had contacted him via phone in July 2025 regarding the increase in the loan facility.¹³⁹ At this time, Mr Willie MP was Shadow Treasurer. It was confirmed to the PAC that this call occurred on the morning of 26 July 2025.¹⁴⁰ While the increase in the loan facility was mentioned, Mr Willie MP determines that the Auditor-General's determination of TT-Line's insolvency was not.¹⁴¹ Mr Willie MP therefore contends that not all relevant information was provided to him at the time and that he was contacted after the decision had been made to increase the loan facility, not before it. He therefore submitted that the Government failed to meet Caretaker Conventions in the following ways:

- the increase in the loan facility was a major financial decision;
- the decision was taken during the caretaker period;
- the decision was likely to bind an incoming government or limit its freedom to act;
- the Opposition was notified after the decision had been made, rather than consulted beforehand;
- material information about TT-Line's financial position was not disclosed to the Opposition at the time; and
- the Government's approach reduced the Opposition's ability to properly assess the decision.¹⁴²

5.8 Before a hearing of the Committee, representatives from Treasury were invited to explain the advice that was provided to the then-Treasurer and Government regarding Caretaker Conventions:

Mr WINTER - In terms of Treasury's view, would the Treasurer informing the Opposition after the decision was made constitute consultation?

Mr BURGESS - If I may, through you, Treasurer, I think the way Treasury approaches these matters is to point out the obligations upon the Government in relation to caretaker conventions and then it's ultimately a matter for the Government to decide how it satisfies those obligations.

Mr SWAIN - Through you, Treasurer, that's exactly right. So, we have - actually before this and separate to this, in relation to a separate matter, sought SG advice that clarified that exact point, that the caretaker convention - you know, it's a political convention that manages the interactions between political parties. We

¹³⁹ Submission No. 6, the Hon. Josh Willie MP, Leader of the Opposition, p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ Parliament of Tasmania, Public Accounts Committee, *Inquiry into the TT-Line Spirits Project*, Transcript of Evidence, 9 January 2026, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0013/101920/Response-to-Question-on-Notice-PAC-Hon-Ruth-Forrest-MLC-Inquiry-into-the-TT-Line-Spirits-Project-9-January-2026.pdf.

¹⁴¹ Submission No. 6, the Hon. Josh Willie MP, Leader of the Opposition, p. 3.

¹⁴² Submission No. 6, the Hon. Josh Willie MP, Leader of the Opposition, p. 3.

support its application, but ultimately it's for the government of the day as to how it interprets and implements.

Mr WINTER - Just to be clear though, so the then-Treasurer Barnett was provided with clear advice that he should consult before the decision was made?

Mr SWAIN - I believe that is so.¹⁴³

- 5.9 In a response to a question taken on notice during the Treasury public hearings, the Secretary provided the advice which was given by the Department to the then-Treasurer. This advice quotes from the responsibilities under the *Guidelines*, including Opposition consultation and stated:

Treasury considers that any Government support provided to TT-Line, including your approval of an increase in the guaranteed borrowing limit, are caretaker period policy decisions and should be subject to the Caretaker Conventions.

...

Subject to consultation with the relevant Opposition spokesperson, you can approve an increase in the guaranteed borrowing limit for TT-Line, under the Tascorp Act,¹⁴⁴

- 5.10 Ms Morgan-Wicks, in her capacity as Secretary of DPAC, was invited to provide an assessment of if the consultation by the then-Treasurer with the then-Shadow Treasurer regarding the TT-Line borrowing expansion was sufficient or if it could constituted a breach of caretaker conventions. Ms Morgan-Wicks stated:

In accordance with the Guidelines, I am advised that Mr Josh Willie MP, the then Shadow Treasurer, was consulted regarding the decision to increase the borrowing limit by the then Treasurer, Mr Guy Barnett MP, on 26 July 2025. Following this, I am advised the Government decided later that day to provide a temporary \$410 million increase to TT-Line's borrowing capacity.

Professor Anne Twomey, the leading expert on Caretaker Conventions in Australia has stated that it is acceptable for the incumbent Government to have formed a view about how they want to proceed with the major policy decision before they undertake consultation. Accordingly, it is not a breach of the Caretaker Conventions to have formed a view about the major policy decision to be made prior to consultation, and to run this specific view past the Opposition spokesperson during consultation.

¹⁴³ Transcript of Evidence, 27 July 2026, the Hon. Eric Abetz MP, Treasurer, and the Department of Treasury and Finance, p. 4.

¹⁴⁴ Response to Questions on Notice, Department of Treasury and Finance, dated 7 August 2026, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0013/112045/07082026_QoN-Response_Treasury-and-Finance_Redacted.pdf.

*An Opposition spokesperson is able to ask questions or raise an alternate position during consultation.*¹⁴⁵

Consideration of Caretaker Conventions

- 5.11 The *Guidelines* address the notion of consultation for major decisions during the Caretaker Period in two key locations, being Section 2 ‘Major Policy Decisions’ and Section 4 ‘Major Contracts and Agreements.’ Both call for active consideration of the magnitude of a decision and if it can be deferred until after the Caretaker Period.¹⁴⁶ Consultation with the relevant Opposition spokesperson is required in both Sections.¹⁴⁷
- 5.12 The Committee received conflicting accounts of the adequacy of the consultation on the TT-Line matter between the then-Treasurer, the Hon. Guy Barnett MP and then-Shadow Treasurer, Mr Willie MP. Mr Willie MP contends that while he was contacted by the then-Treasurer, not all available evidence on the matter was provided to him, meaning inadequate consultation occurred.
- 5.13 While the Committee cannot make a full determination regarding the adequacy of the consultation, the TT-Line instance, along with the Project Marinus FID consultation, draws attention to the need for constructive, informed and well-intentioned consultation throughout any Caretaker Period regarding major policy decisions or contracts which could impact future governance in Tasmania. This is reflected in Recommendations 1 and 2.

Findings

17. The Department of Treasury and Finance appropriately defined any changes to the borrowing limit of TT-Line to occur during the 2025 Caretaker Period as being applicable to the Caretaker Conventions.
18. The then-Treasurer, the Hon. Guy Barnett MP, followed Caretaker Conventions and consulted with the then-Shadow Treasurer, Mr Josh Willie MP, on 26 July 2025, regarding the temporary borrowing increase for TT-Line.

¹⁴⁵ Response to Questions on Notice, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 1, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0020/109073/29072026_QoN-Response-DPAC_Redacted.pdf.

¹⁴⁶ *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025*, pp. 7 and 11, <https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/government-information/governance-ministerial/caretaker-conventions>.

¹⁴⁷ *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025*, pp. 7 and 11, <https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/government-information/governance-ministerial/caretaker-conventions>.

19. The Caretaker Guidelines do not define what consultation should entail. There can be conflicting interpretations of if consultation did occur and whether or not to an adequate level. In this case, then-Treasurer, the Hon. Guy *Barnett* MP consulted with the then-Shadow Treasurer, Mr Josh *Willie* MP, in regard to the temporary borrowing increase for TT-Line, however Mr *Willie* did not consider it adequate.

6 GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING WITH PULSE TASMANIA

- 6.1 This Chapter discusses the Government's procurement of the advertising services of Pulse Media Group (Pulse), through their news outlet Pulse Tasmania, commencing for the 2025-2026 *Barnett Budget* in May 2025 and continuing into the 2025 Caretaker Period.
- 6.2 Prior to the commencement of this Inquiry, information regarding the Government's arrangements with Pulse became available through RTI requests to DPAC from the Tasmanian Times. The RTI response was released on Thursday, 18 December 2025 and included three invoices from Pulse to DPAC, totalling \$52,212.10:¹⁴⁸

Invoice number and service	Invoice Date	Invoice amount
INV – 1466 for Full Digital Takeover and Advertorial content	27 May 2025	\$38,781.10
INV – 1483 for Full Digital Takeover	6 June 2025	\$8,954.00
INV – 1486 for Full Digital Takeover	11 June 2025	\$4,477.00

- 6.3 At the time of the establishment of the Committee, two further RTI responses from DPAC were released on its website, which provided email correspondence between staff from the Office of the Premier and Pulse regarding the invoiced services.¹⁴⁹
- 6.4 The Committee understands the following timeline represents the procurement and use of the advertising services of Pulse:

Social Advertorial post

- Thursday 29 May 2025 (Budget day), published at 7 p.m. on Facebook and Instagram.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Tasmanian Times, 'Premier Used Budget Funds For Secret Election Blitz,' 18 December 2025, <https://tasmaniantimes.com/2025/12/premier-used-budget-funds-for-secret-election-blitz/>.

¹⁴⁹ Department of Premier and Cabinet, Right to Information Release, 'Pulse Media Engagement,' https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/475021/Pulse-Media-Engagement.pdf and Department of Premier and Cabinet, Right to Information Release, 'Pulse Engagement,' https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0025/489211/Pulse-Engagement.pdf

¹⁵⁰ Submission No. 2, Pulse Media Group, p. 1.

Full Digital Takeover, commencing for an 8-day period

- Friday, 30 May 2025, Full Digital Takeover launched.

Full Digital Takeover, 48-hour extension

- Wednesday, 4 June 2025, proposal for 35-day extension of Takeover provided by Pulse, as per the request of the Government Media Office (GMO);
- Friday, 6 June 2025, proposal for 2-day extension of Takeover provided by Pulse, as per the request of the GMO. Contract also signed; and
- Monday, 9 June 2025 and Tuesday, 10 June 2025, 48-hour extension of Takeover in place.

Full Digital Takeover, final 24-hour extension

- Wednesday, 11 June 2025, confirmation of extension of Takeover until 11.59 p.m. that evening.¹⁵¹

Evidence received

Procurement of the Social Advertorial and Full Digital Takeover

- 6.5 Pulse stated that the GMO first approached the organisation to provide dedicated Budget coverage in early May 2025.¹⁵² Josh Agnew, Managing Director of Pulse Media Group, noted that such approaches are commonplace for a range of media outlets, but that the 2025-2026 Barnett Budget was the first in which Pulse had been approached to provide a proposal and quote for these services.¹⁵³ The approved Pulse campaign and accompanying content was as follows:

... consisted of eight 24-hour Full Digital Takeovers across the Pulse Tasmania website and app, together with one Social Advertorial published on the Pulse Tasmania Facebook and Instagram accounts.

Both products are standard advertising offerings used by most major commercial news publishers in Australia, and are core pillars of Pulse's business model - enabling us to produce and freely publish local news read by more than 200,000 Tasmanians each day. These same products are routinely purchased by small and large Tasmanian businesses, not-for-profits and government departments.¹⁵⁴

- 6.6 The Social Advertorial content from Pulse was defined as:

¹⁵¹ RTI Release, Department of Premier and Cabinet, 'Pulse Engagement,' https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0025/489211/Pulse-Engagement.pdf.

¹⁵² Transcript of Evidence, 15 June 2026, Pulse Media Group, p. 26.

¹⁵³ Transcript of Evidence, 15 June 2026, Pulse Media Group, p. 30.

¹⁵⁴ Submission No. 2, Pulse Media Group, p. 1.

A Single Facebook/Instagram post published at 7pm on budget day (29 May 2025), headlined “What’s in the latest Tassie budget for you,” with an Instagram carousel highlighting key budget investments.

The post carried the disclosure label “In partnership with Tas Gov” in bold above the headline and a “Pulse Advertorial” label beneath it; the caption identified the investments as “key initiatives in the budget the government has outlines for Pulse’s audience.”

*It followed three independently produced news articles by Pulse’s editorial team in the four hours prior, covering net debt, public service cuts and the state opposition’s response to the budget.*¹⁵⁵

- 6.7 The Full Digital Takeover highlighted the Budget, providing ‘100% share of voice in industry-standard display units (MREC, Billboard, Half-Page, Leaderboard and sidebar skins) appearing around news content.’¹⁵⁶ Pulse provided that, after the receipt of post-campaign results, a 48-hour extension of the Full Digital Takeover was requested and booked.¹⁵⁷ A second extension, for an additional 24-hours was also sought, which went live on 11 June 2025 at 12:01 a.m., being the date on which the Parliament was later dissolved. In additional information provided to the Committee, Mr Agnew confirmed the timeline for the removal of the Budget advertising after the dissolution:

The relevant sequence of events on the evening of 11 June 2025 was as follows:

- At 6:57pm, the Governor's statement confirming that Parliament would be dissolved was published.*
- At approximately 6:59pm, the Government advertising extension for the 2025-2026 Budget was taken offline from Pulse Tasmania's media pages.*
- Between 7:00pm and 7:05pm, Pulse's news story announcing an early election was published across Pulse's various platforms.*¹⁵⁸

- 6.8 At a public hearing Mr Agnew was questioned as to the removal of the Full Digital Takeover and when it was due to expire if the dissolution had not occurred:

Mr WINTER - ... You, of your own volition, because you understood caretaker conventions, you made that decision to withdraw it [the extended digital takeover] yourself with no intervention or request from Government?

Mr AGNEW -Absolutely.

¹⁵⁵ Submission No. 2, Pulse Media Group, p. 1.

¹⁵⁶ Submission No. 2, Pulse Media Group, p. 1.

¹⁵⁷ Submission No. 2, Pulse Media Group, p. 1.

¹⁵⁸ Response to Questions on Notice, Pulse Media Group, dated 1 July 2026, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0029/108785/02072026_QoN-Response-Pulse-Media-Group_Redacted.pdf.

Mr WINTER - ... So, if you hadn't had taken that position, then the advertising would have continued, is that correct?

Mr AGNEW - At that point the Government had only booked a single 24-hour takeover. So, if we hadn't have taken the advertising offline it would have finished at midnight that night.

Mr WINTER - So, the advertising wasn't stopped because the GMO or DPAC asked it to stop. It stopped because you perceived that we'd gone into a caretaker mode and should therefore stop the advertising?

Mr AGNEW - That's right.¹⁵⁹

- 6.9 DPAC confirmed as correct the dates of the three Pulse invoices which had been made public under the RTI application. Defining the payment of the invoices as an aspect of financial services provided to Ministerial and Parliamentary Support (MPS), 'DPAC's involvement in relation to the matter of expenditure on advertising with Pulse Media Group is administrative.'¹⁶⁰

- 6.10 At a hearing, Ms Morgan-Wicks reiterated the administrative-only role of DPAC in procurement:

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - Not to my knowledge. It might be something that's done by the Department of Treasury and Finance, but I don't want to speak for them. We obviously share a lot of the budget information, do presentations in relation to the budget information, but I can't speak to advertising. That is booked by the Government Media Office or MPS (Ministerial and Parliamentary Services) but it's not - DPAC has involvement from an administration of payment and finance perspective.

Mr WINTER - That's the perspective I'm asking you about. Is it unusual that the Government Media Office would be booking ads directly?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - I don't know the way in which they usually book ads, but certainly in terms of the budget itself, is a function of Government. The budget information is shared across the Tasmanian community in a variety of ways. But DPAC does not, in itself, run the publication of the budget nor the advertising of it, so I don't think I can really comment further.¹⁶¹

- 6.11 In a written response to questions from the Committee, the Premier clarified the relationship between the GMO, MPS and DPAC, as well as the Pulse advertising in question:

The Government Media Office (GMO) is part of Ministerial and Parliamentary Services.

¹⁵⁹ Transcript of Evidence, 15 June 2026, Pulse Media Group, p. 34.

¹⁶⁰ Submission No. 5, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 5.

¹⁶¹ Transcript of Evidence, 3 July 2026, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 27.

The GMO works closely with the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) and other State Government agencies, across a range of portfolios to provide responses to media requests and plan media events for initiative delivered by the Government.

As Premier, I am not involved in booking media advertising for any outlet, including Pulse Media Group.

The GMO books advertising with a range of media outlets. The Pulse Media Group Full Digital Takeover was arranged through the GMO in accordance with normal processes.¹⁶²

Consideration of Caretaker Conventions

- 6.12 In regard to upholding Caretaker Conventions, DPAC provided the following assessment of the use of the services of Pulse for the 2025-2026 Barnett Budget campaign:

The conventions apply to making decisions, not to their announcement. Accordingly, the conventions are not infringed where decisions made before the dissolution of the House are announced during the caretaker period. The timeframe from invoice received to payment is within normal Tasmanian Government processing timeframes.¹⁶³

- 6.13 DPAC's comment regarding the timing of announcements as the definitive aspect of a potential breach of Caretaker Conventions relates to Clause 2.3 of the *Guidelines* which state:

The conventions apply to the timing of the making of decisions that are likely to commit an incoming government, not to their announcement. Accordingly, the conventions are not necessarily contravened where decisions made before the calling of an election are announced during the caretaker period. Where possible, decisions about policies that have been agreed but not made public should be announced ahead of the caretaker period if their announcement is likely to cause controversy during the election campaign.¹⁶⁴

- 6.14 The Committee notes that, in this instance, all advertising regarding the 2025-2026 Barnett Budget with Pulse was arranged prior to the commencement of the Caretaker Period and that, furthermore, Pulse removed the content once the Period commenced.

- 6.15 The Committee notes Section 7 of the *Guidelines* contains operational notes which clearly state:

¹⁶² Additional Information Response, the Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, Premier, dated 20 July 2026, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0030/108786/P20072026_PREMIER_Redacted.pdf.

¹⁶³ Submission No. 5, Department of Premier and Cabinet, p. 5.

¹⁶⁴ *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025*, p. 7, <https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/government-information/governance-ministerial/caretaker-conventions>.

Prior to the likely start of the caretaker period, agencies should review all agency-managed websites, online and social media platforms to identify any material that requires removal upon the commencement of the caretaker period.

- 6.16 Advertising as a general mechanism available to governments as a political and campaign tool was raised with the Committee. While Professor Twomey does not, in her academic belief, consider advertising to fall within the bounds of caretaker conventions, she does raise concern with the ‘reasonableness,’ or otherwise, of the use of government funds on media advertising if an election may be imminent:

Prof TWOMEY - So there are real issues in relation to government spending on advertising in the lead-up to elections... I wouldn't count them as caretaker convention issues. I think the way you use the public service and the way you deal with advertising is actually a separate issue. That's just my view. Other people sort of see it in the whole ballpark of caretaker conventions; but one way or another, you absolutely should have restrictions upon how governments can use public funding or public services in order to advertise themselves in the period prior to the election, because it's just fundamentally not fair. Now governments will always say, ‘oh well, it's just public service, we're telling people that look here's this particular policy that we've introduced and it's giving you all these fantastic advantages and we want people to know about it’; well, that's just rubbish, it's actually advertising for political benefit, and it's a complete and utter exploitation of public funds.

...I think they're things that we need to be quite careful about to make that distinction between politics and government, and government should not be exploiting their power in relation to government to achieve political wins.¹⁶⁵

Findings

20. The Government Media Office procured the Full Digital Takeover and the Social Advertorial for the 2025-2026 Budget from Pulse Media Group prior to the commencement of the 2025 Caretaker Period. A 48-hour extension to the Full Digital Takeover was requested, as well as a final 24-hour extension.
21. The final 24-hour extension of the Pulse Media Group Full Digital Takeover regarding the 2025-2026 Budget went live at 12.01 a.m. on 11 June 2025. At 6.59 p.m., following the proclamations from the Governor, the 2025-2026 Budget Takeover was removed from all Pulse Tasmania media pages at the initiative of its Managing Director. No Takeovers were active at the commencement of the Caretaker Period.
22. The Government breached Caretaker Conventions when it made the decision to extend advertising of its proposed 2025-2026 Budget, whilst there was a

¹⁶⁵ Transcript of Evidence, 15 June 2026, Professor Emerita Anne Twomey, pp. 23-24.

motion of no-confidence before the House. This is contrary to the operational notes in Section 7 of the Guidelines.

Recommendations

- 5. Guidelines on Caretaker Conventions be broadly disturbed and made easily accessible, including for employees in communication roles across the State Service, or contractors employed to fill such roles, to ensure compliance in the lead up to, and during, the Caretaker Period.**

7 OTHER MATTERS

- 7.1 This Chapter will examine Ministerial and Parliamentary Services staff and State Servant responsibilities during Caretaker Periods.

Ministerial and Parliamentary Services staff and State Servant responsibilities during Caretaker Periods

- 7.2 The Committee received evidence from Sharee Minnikin-Smith in regard to her employment in Ministerial and Parliamentary Services (MPS). MPS is a function of the Premier's Office, which provides support to Ministers and Members of Parliament, including in relation to parliamentary roles. MPS employees are not employees of the Parliament itself, nor are they employed as Tasmanian State Servants, but appointed under an Instrument of Appointment, authorised by the Premier's delegate.¹⁶⁶
- 7.3 Ms Minnikin-Smith worked in MPS across three formal roles from 2023 – 2025, as follows:

I was appointed as Adviser, Office of the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council, commencing 13 November 2023. My appointment in that position continued until 10 April 2024, before my new appointment commenced on 11 April 2024.

I was appointed as Adviser in the Office of the Honourable Jane Howlett MP, commencing 11 April 2024. That appointment continued until 2 July 2024. From 3 July 2024, I was appointed as Electorate Officer in the Electorate Office of Mark Shelton MP. Although I was formally appointed to Mr Shelton's office, I remained based in Ms Howlett's office while working, before subsequently taking a period of leave due to an arm and shoulder injury.¹⁶⁷

- 7.4 These dates of employment were confirmed by the Premier.¹⁶⁸ The Premier also provided the following information in regard to Ms Minnikin-Smith's employment:

Ms Minnikin-Smith had a workplace accident on 1 May 2024 resulting in her incapacity to work for a period of time.

¹⁶⁶ Additional Information, the Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, Premier, dated 8 September 2026, p. 2, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/111431/08092026_Premier_Chair-of-the-HA-SC-on-Caretaker-Conventions.pdf.

¹⁶⁷ Response to Questions on Notice, Sharee Minnikin-Smith, dated 18 August 2026, pp. 1-2, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/110321/18082026_Sharee-Minnikin-Smith-QoN-Response.pdf.

¹⁶⁸ Additional Information, the Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, Premier, dated 8 September 2026, p. 1, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/111431/08092026_Premier_Chair-of-the-HA-SC-on-Caretaker-Conventions.pdf.

...

Ms Minnikin-Smith was employed on a six-month contract from 3 July 2024 to 3 January 2025 as an Electorate officer in the officer (sic) of Mr Mark Shelton MP. Her contract concluded on the 3rd January. However, due to her injury she continued to receive (sic) workers compensation payments as is required under the Act until 19th August 2025 when she signed a Deed of Release and her compensation case was finalised.¹⁶⁹

- 7.5 In her submission to the Inquiry, Ms Minnikin-Smith also explained, from her point of view, how her employment in MPS arose:

I did not apply for the position through an advertised competitive recruitment process. I recall Ms Howlett approaching me to take up a parliamentary position associated with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Legislative Council.

I accepted that opportunity in good faith. However, I did not clearly understand the position description, reporting structure, or boundaries of my duties. As the weeks progressed, I raised questions about my position because I wanted clarification about my responsibilities and wanted to perform my job properly.¹⁷⁰

Duties while employed in MPS

- 7.6 In her supplementary submission to the Inquiry, Ms Minnikin-Smith also provided the following explanation regarding her employment experiences in MPS:

My instrument of appointment, commencing on 13 November 2023, appointed me as an Adviser in the Office of the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council, Leonie Hiscutt MLC. I performed duties for that office for approximately two weeks. After that period, although my formal appointment remained with that office until 10 April 2024, the messages record substantial day-to-day directions from Ms Jane Howlett.

When the House of Assembly election was called, I was not instructed to return to the Legislative Council office. I instead continued undertaking work at Ms Howlett's direction. I was not given a written variation explaining that arrangement or clearly identifying who held formal responsibility for supervising and directing my work.¹⁷¹

- 7.7 While still appointed to the Office of Ms Hiscutt, Ms Minnikin-Smith was provided a space to work in the Sorell Electorate Office of Ms Howlett MP, who was at the time still the Member for Prosser in the Legislative Council. During this time, Ms Minnikin-Smith was of the understanding that she remained employed by Ms Hiscutt, but could provide assistance to Ms Howlett MP if

¹⁶⁹ Additional Information, the Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, Premier, dated 8 September 2026, p. 1, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0011/111431/08092026_Premier_Chair-of-the-HA-SC-on-Caretaker-Conventions.pdf.

¹⁷⁰ Submission No. 7, Sharee Minnikin-Smith, p. 2.

¹⁷¹ Supplementary Submission No. 7a, Sharee Minnikin-Smith, p. 1.

requested or if she was able.¹⁷² Ms Minnikin-Smith contends that there was no formal variation made to her Instrument of Appointment during this time in which her activity on behalf of Ms Howlett MP was increasing. Ms Minnikin-Smith suggests that once the 2025 General Election was called, she continued to be instructed by Ms Howlett MP, who had at the time resigned from the Legislative Council and was a candidate for Lyons. This meant Ms Howlett MP no longer had an electorate office, so Ms Minnikin-Smith states she would work remotely in no fixed location. In relation to her duties for Ms Howlett MP, Ms Minnikin-Smith informed the Committee that it is her recollection that the Manager of the Premier's Office did inform her that she should take direction from Ms Howlett MP:

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - ... I was told by management that it was her [Ms Jane Howlett MP, then MLC]...

Mr WINTER - ... at what point in time did they tell you that?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - When I started asking questions.

Mr WINTER - When was that?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - That would have been, it was the end of 2023.

Mr WINTER - So you were told at the end of 2023 that you should take direction from Ms Howlett.

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Yes. It was quite early.

Mr WINTER - Was that through that Manager within the Premier's Office as well.

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Yes.

Mr WINTER - So, the manager from the Premier's Office told you to take direction from Ms Howlett... And once Ms Howlett resigned from Parliament to become a candidate for Lyons, was there any further conversation about whether you should take direction from Ms Howlett?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - It was just assumed.

Mr WINTER - So there was no communication, you just continued as...

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - I just continued as before without an office.¹⁷³

The Committee did not receive comment from the Premier, MPS or Ms Howlett MP regarding this evidence.

- 7.8 During her first appearance at a public hearing, Ms Minnikin-Smith was invited to explain the types and quantity of activity she undertook while in her roles in MPS that she considered outside of the remit of her formal Instrument's of Appointment:

¹⁷² Transcript of Evidence, 15 September 2026, Sharee Minnikin-Smith, p. 5.

¹⁷³ Transcript of Evidence, 15 September 2026, Sharee Minnikin-Smith, p. 18.

Mr WINTER - The thing that strikes me about your evidence on the email is that on the 22nd of March [2024], when the email was sent out, Jane Howlett wasn't even a Member of Parliament; she wasn't a Member for Prosser; she was a candidate for Lyons. Can you explain to the Committee why someone who wasn't even a Member of Parliament was directing parliamentary staff to do things?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - It was part of who Jane - how I know her in the workplace, it was - I was directed to send different emails to certain members of the public. I mean there were times when it was even for signage as well, where I didn't think that it would be approved and I would question her on that - 'I can't do that.' Like I said again, that there was -

Mr WINTER - So at this point you were working for Leonie Hiscutt, formally.

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Yes.

Mr WINTER - What percentage of your work at that time was for Leonie Hiscutt and what percentage of your work was for Jane Howlett at that time?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - A hundred per cent for Jane Howlett.

Mr WINTER - Over what period of time do you think you're doing 100 per cent of work for Jane Howlett?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - Two weeks after I'd been employed.¹⁷⁴

This claim of the percentage of work undertaken was later refuted by Ms Howlett MP.¹⁷⁵

- 7.9 Ms Howlett MP appeared before the Committee, during which she was questioned about the evidence given by Ms Minnikin-Smith. During the hearing, Ms Howlett MP refuted the description Ms Minnikin-Smith provided of her employment during the 2024 Caretaker Period:

Ms HOWLETT - ... Ms Minnikin-Smith was employed by Ministerial and Parliamentary Services. I resigned from the Legislative Council on 27 February 2024. At the time of Ms Minnikin-Smith's claims, as I understand them, I was a candidate for Lyons and Ms Minnikin-Smith was working for MPS. To be clear, in regards to her activities in her role at that time, she was not employed by me.¹⁷⁶

- 7.10 The nature of Ms Minnikin-Smith's support for her was described as voluntary in nature by Ms Howlett MP:¹⁷⁷

Mr WINTER - Ms Minnikin-Smith's given evidence that she spent weeks and weeks, hours, assisting you with tasks like door-knocking and other campaign tasks. I know that, technically, she was employed by MPS - that's the whole point. Do you deny the claims that's she's made about the amount of support she was giving to you?

¹⁷⁴ Transcript of Evidence, 31 July 2026, Sharee Minnikin-Smith, p. 5.

¹⁷⁵ Transcript of Evidence, 14 August 2026, Ms Jane Howlett MP, p. 14.

¹⁷⁶ Transcript of Evidence, 14 August 2026, Ms Jane Howlett MP, p. 2.

¹⁷⁷ Transcript of Evidence, 14 August 2026, Ms Jane Howlett MP, p. 16.

Ms HOWLETT - I really appreciate her support and her advocacy and being a believer in the Liberal Party and certainly helping us win government. As I said, that's a matter the Premier has written to the Head of the State Service to investigate those matters and the Premier will await the outcome of that investigation. I can't comment anymore on that because that's not a matter for me and that matter is being investigated

CHAIR - Were you of the understanding that Ms Minnikin-Smith, with the benefit of the doubt, was doing the amount of work that she's said to this Committee that she was, was doing so exclusively as a volunteer and member of the Liberal Party at that time?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank Ms Minnikin-Smith for her work and her work previously in her Member Engagement Officer role at the Party. She did an incredible amount of work for the Party, and I thank her very much for that.

CHAIR - So, was it your understanding during that 2024 caretaker period that the extent of work that she was doing, that was campaigning by nature, that she was undertaking as a volunteer or member of the Liberal Party?

Ms HOWLETT - Look, any campaign work is managed by the Party, and I don't manage volunteers in campaigns and that's certainly not my role. My role at the time was - as I said, I'd resigned from being a member of the Legislative Council and I was out campaigning every single day - seven days, seven nights a week - to get elected into the House of Assembly; not sure whether that's fortunate or not.

Mr WINTER - Are you contending that Ms Minnikin-Smith was doing all of this purely as a volunteer?

Ms HOWLETT - As I said to you, that is a matter that the Premier has written to the Head of the State Service to investigate those matters that were raised and the Premier will await the outcome of the investigation. I can't comment on that as it's not a matter for me.¹⁷⁸

- 7.11 Ms Minnikin-Smith provided a detailed chronology of activity she undertook while employed in MPS, including activity for Ms Howlett MP while she was still employed under the Instrument of Appointment for Ms Hiscutt.¹⁷⁹ This included text messages with Ms Howlett MP which make reference to Ms Minnikin-Smith's 'work' and 'job.'¹⁸⁰ She suggests the level of activity shown in this chronology extends beyond a level of voluntary work or what her role in MPS working for Ms Hiscutt should have entailed. In her supplementary submission, Ms Minnikin-Smith responded to Ms Howlett MP's discussion of the 'voluntary' work:

I wish to clarify the suggestion that this work was voluntary because I was a Liberal Party member. I acknowledge that I was a Liberal Party member and that I have volunteered for the Party, as I have volunteered for many community and charitable organisations. That does not mean I understood that every task Ms

¹⁷⁸ Transcript of Evidence, 14 September 2026, Ms Jane Howlett MP, pp. 14-15.

¹⁷⁹ Supplementary Submission No. 7a, Sharee Minnikin-Smith, pp. 6-32.

¹⁸⁰ Submission No. 7, Sharee Minnikin-Smith, pp. 7-11.

Howlett directed me to perform while I was a paid parliamentary employee was voluntary work.

*I was not given clear guidance identifying which requests, if any, were voluntary campaign activity rather than duties connected with my employment. Nor was I told when I was acting as an employee and when I was supposedly acting as a volunteer. My evidence raises the absence of a clearly communicated distinction as a central issue.*¹⁸¹

- 7.12 Having received evidence from Ms Minnikin-Smith and Ms Howlett MP, the Committee invited the Premier to provide a response to a number of written questions arising from this evidence. This included a question as to who would have had authority to direct Ms Minnikin-Smith's day-to-day work while employed by MPS:

*Generally Members direct the day to date [sic] work of MPS employees. However, if a staff member is employed in a ministerial office, the Chief of Staff directs their day-to-day work.*¹⁸²

- 7.13 The Premier was also asked as to whether the undertaking of activities related to election campaigns was consistent with employment in MPS. He provided the following response, which did not directly address the Committee's query:

*MPS employees undertake a range of duties consistent with their roles working for Members of Parliament with all MPS staff required to continue to work during the caretaker period.*¹⁸³

- 7.14 In addition to her duties during her employment with Ms Hiscutt, Ms Howlett MP and Mr Shelton MP, Ms Minnikin-Smith shared with the Committee reference to undertaking campaign activities for then candidate for Prosser, Kerry Vincent, during the 2024 Prosser Election campaign. Ms Minnikin-Smith contends she assisted with the campaign for four weeks, during which time she was formally under the employment of Ms Howlett MP.¹⁸⁴ Ms Minnikin-Smith states she raised queries during a meeting with the Manager of the Premier's Office regarding this campaign activity and that the Manager was concerned by the matter:

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - ... I explained that I'd been instructed by Jane to be somewhere else for Mr Vincent and then I was asked the question 'What are you doing that for?' I said 'I'm doing what Ms Howlett had asked me to do.' Then she said 'oh, that's not okay.' And I didn't really think anything of it to be honest with

¹⁸¹ Supplementary Submission No. 7a, Sharee Minnikin-Smith, p. 2.

¹⁸² Additional Information, the Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, Premier, dated 8 September 2026, p. 2, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0011/111431/08092026_Premier_Chair-of-the-HA-SC-on-Caretaker-Conventions.pdf.

¹⁸³ Additional Information, the Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, Premier, dated 8 September 2026, p. 2, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0011/111431/08092026_Premier_Chair-of-the-HA-SC-on-Caretaker-Conventions.pdf.

¹⁸⁴ Supplementary Submission No. 7a, Sharee Minnikin-Smith, p. 58.

you. Then it wasn't until she rang me back and said that she was going to talk to the Premier's Chief of Staff because I shouldn't be doing that.

Mr WINTER - Did you know why you shouldn't have been doing that?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH – No. I do now, yes.

Mr WINTER – What's your understanding of what the concern was?

Ms MINNIKIN-SMITH - That I was being paid by [Ministerial and] Parliamentary Services but again, I'm actually working for another candidate of the Liberal Party.¹⁸⁵

Ms Minnikin-Smith does not suggest that the Hon. Mr Vincent MLC was responsible for any wrongdoing in relation to this matter.

- 7.15 The Committee notes that Ms Minnikin-Smith suffered a workplace injury while travelling to undertake campaign related activities for the Hon. Mr Vincent MLC.¹⁸⁶ The matter is not within the remit of the Committee for consideration.
- 7.16 During her appearance, Mr Winter MP queried Ms Minnikin-Smith as to if she was aware of expenditure limits for Legislative Council candidates and as to whether she was aware of the disclosure by Mr Vincent MLC for the 2024 Prosser election and the inclusion of her work in it. Ms Minnikin-Smith was not aware, and Mr Vincent MLC did not provide any response to the Committee after having been informed of this evidence.
- 7.17 The Committee wrote to the Tasmanian Electoral Commission (TEC) requesting a copy of Mr Vincent's candidate election expenditure return for the 2024 Prosser election.¹⁸⁷ While the request wasn't met, a copy was obtained by an RTI.¹⁸⁸ The 2024 expenditure limit was set at \$19,500. Mr Vincent MLC declared a total expenditure of \$19,335.90.¹⁸⁹ There was no declaration of any staffing resources in the candidate election expenditure return which, at the time, had to be provided under Section 161 of the *Electoral Act 2004*.

¹⁸⁵ Transcript of Evidence, 15 September 2026, Sharee Minnikin-Smith, p. 8.

¹⁸⁶ Supplementary Submission No. 7a, Sharee Minnikin-Smith, p. 6-32.

¹⁸⁷ Committee correspondence with the Tasmanian Electoral Commission, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0021/112917/Correspondence-with-the-Tasmanian-Electoral-Commission.pdf

¹⁸⁸ RTI Response regarding candidate election expenditure return of the Hon. Kerry Vincent MLC, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0022/112918/12102026_Final-redacted-combined-files-Tasmanian-Electoral-Commission-and-election-campaign-return-of-Kerry-Vincent.PDF

¹⁸⁹ RTI Response regarding candidate election expenditure return of the Hon. Kerry Vincent MLC, Tasmanian Electoral Commission, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0022/112918/12102026_Final-redacted-combined-files-Tasmanian-Electoral-Commission-and-election-campaign-return-of-Kerry-Vincent.PDF

Mistaken email communication

- 7.18 Ms Minnikin-Smith raised with the Committee a specific instance during the 2024 Caretaker Period in which a campaign-related email for Ms Howlett MP was inadvertently sent from her own Government email address. The email was to a mailing list of constituents on the Tasman Peninsula. Ms Minnikin-Smith sent this email on the evening of 22 March 2024. After sending the email, Ms Minnikin-Smith alerted Ms Howlett MP to the error via text message, stating:

*I have done Tasman and it has gone from my parliament email. How do I change it?*¹⁹⁰

- 7.19 During Legislative Council Budget Estimates on 24 September 2024, the Honourable Meg Webb MLC, raised the email with the Premier. The following exchange occurred:

Ms WEBB - Are you aware of an electioneering email from this election campaign period, 22 March it was dated for this year, issued during the state election sent by a Liberal endorsed and former government MP candidate to the work email addresses of public servants working at Port Arthur Historic Society Management Authority and potentially to other agencies? I may not be aware of other agencies. I've got a copy of the email here. I have redacted the name of the person who sent it and the person who received it, but you can see clearly that their email addresses are government email addresses. May I table that and provide it to the premier, Chair?

I recognise the candidate in question was a former minister at the time but is currently a minister. However, surely the misuse of publicly funded resources such as party-political electioneering emails sent from a parliament email address to public sector taxpayer funded agency addresses still constitutes an unacceptable breach of this code of conduct and the public interest principles that sit behind this code of conduct, even if not explicitly in this code of conduct. Can you confirm that that email would be a breach of the ministerial code of conduct if the candidate had been a minister seeking re-election?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Well, hypothetical, Ms Webb, in terms of the question. Wasn't a minister at the time as you correctly, I believe, have stated. So I haven't read the email. Happy to take it on notice. I'm sure there was no malice behind the motivation. We could always –

Ms WEBB - So it's an email sent from a government email address to another government email address with a letterhead of Jane Howlett as a candidate for the Liberal party encouraging people to vote for her. So what action will you take on this matter to investigate the appropriateness of that email and take any follow-up action that might be required?

¹⁹⁰ Question on Notice response, Sharee Minnikin-Smith, dated 18 August 2026 and Questions on Notice response, Ms Jane Howlett MP, dated 31 August 2026, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0020/111584/31082026_Jane-Howlett-MP_QoN-response_Redacted.pdf.

Mr ROCKLIFF - It's the first I've been made aware of it today from my knowledge. Happy to take it on notice and examine the contents of the email. It's all about continuous improvement.¹⁹¹

- 7.20 Later in the same hearing of Budget Estimates, the Premier provided the following update:

Mr ROCKLIFF - ... I'm advised that there was an email sent out on 22 March this year at 9.03 p.m. The email was inadvertently sent from a staffer's email using a parliamentary address instead of a campaign email. This error was realised at the time and I'm advised an apology was made by the staffer once that was realised. That's the information and advice that I have.¹⁹²

- 7.21 During her appearance before the Committee, Ms Howlett MP characterised her memory of the email event as an error, which was acknowledged at the time of its occurrence by Ms Minnikin-Smith:

Ms HOWLETT - What actually occurred, as far as the email that was sent, I had a message the following day saying that she inadvertently sent an email using her Parliament email instead of her Liberal Party email, and at the time she apologised for doing so. The email was sent at 9.03 at night, not during the day. The following day, Ms Minnikin-Smith sent me a text message that said, and I quote:

I have done the Tasman and it has gone from my Parliament email. How do I change it?

So, to me, that indicates she made an error, like many people do when using IT, et cetera, and she apologised for it.¹⁹³

Consideration of Caretaker Conventions and other relevant mechanisms

- 7.22 In considering the experiences of Ms Minnikin-Smith in relation to the duties of MPS staff, the Committee sought updated participation from relevant individuals in relation to the evidence which was received. After receiving the supplementary submission from Ms Minnikin-Smith and after her second public hearing appearance, the Committee again invited the Premier, Ms Howlett MP and representatives of DPAC and MPS to provide comment if they wished. Additionally, after the receipt of this evidence, the Committee also invited the Hon Mr Vincent MLC to comment if he wished. No responses were received.
- 7.23 Ministerial staff, such as Ms Minnikin-Smith, are employed as Crown Prerogative Appointees and are not defined as State Servants. However, as per

¹⁹¹ Parliament of Tasmania, Legislative Council, Budget Estimates Committee B, Transcript of Evidence, 24 September 2024, p. 39, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0029/86915/LC-Estimates-B-Tuesday-24-September-Rockliff-Full-Text.pdf.

¹⁹² Parliament of Tasmania, Legislative Council, Budget Estimates Committee B, Transcript of Evidence, 24 September 2024, p. 47, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0029/86915/LC-Estimates-B-Tuesday-24-September-Rockliff-Full-Text.pdf.

¹⁹³ Transcript of Evidence, 14 August 2026, Ms Jane Howlett MP, p. 16.

Clause 1.14 of the *Guidelines*, they do still apply to Ministerial staff.¹⁹⁴ In addition to this, Ministerial staff are accountable under other relevant employment legislation and are to abide by the *Ministerial Staff Conduct* code.¹⁹⁵ A version of this is also replicated in MPS Instrument's of Appointment.

- 7.24 However, Clause 7.5 of the *Guidelines*, in discussing the political participation of State Servants, states the following, implying that MPS staff can conduct campaign related activity during their employment:

*At no time should Tasmanian State Service employees and officers (other than those formally seconded to Ministerial, parliamentary or electorate offices) engage in activities of a political nature while on duty. Extra care is required during the caretaker period to ensure impartiality.*¹⁹⁶

- 7.25 In her evidence before the Committee, Ms Minnikin-Smith maintains that she acted as directed during her employment in MPS, including querying superiors at different junctures when she was concerned with the requests made of her. The Committee does not contend that Ms Minnikin-Smith sought to act in a manner inconsistent with her employment, but instead that the nature of her employment with MPS lacked clarity. Furthermore, the volume of activity undertaken by Ms Minnikin-Smith for Ms Howlett MP during the 2024 General Election campaign is of concern, given she was not then employed in the Office of Ms Howlett MP, who was not a Member of either House of Parliament during the campaign.¹⁹⁷
- 7.26 In light of Clause 7.5 of the *Guidelines*, the Committee notes that while as an MPS employee, Ms Minnikin-Smith could have been appropriately able to undertake campaign activity, questions remain regarding the legitimacy and manner in which this appears to have been undertaken for, and under the direction of, Ms Howlett MP.
- 7.27 The Committee was informed by Ms Howlett MP on 14 August 2026 that the Premier had requested the Head of the State Service, Ms Morgan-Wicks, investigate the matters raised with the Committee.¹⁹⁸
- 7.28 The Committee requested advice from the Premier as to the exact nature of his request of Ms Morgan-Wicks. The Premier provided a copy of the letter he sent

¹⁹⁴ *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During the Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025*, p. 6, <https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/government-information/governance-ministerial/caretaker-conventions>.

¹⁹⁵ Tasmanian Government, *Ministerial Staff Conduct*, https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0030/493518/Ministerial-Staff-Code-of-Conduct.pdf.

¹⁹⁶ *Guidelines on the Caretaker Conventions and the Operations of Government During the Caretaker Period: Tasmanian State Election 2025*, p. 19, <https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/government-information/governance-ministerial/caretaker-conventions>.

¹⁹⁷ Noting Ms Howlett MP was only a candidate, not a Member of Parliament during this time.

¹⁹⁸ Transcript of Evidence, 14 August 2026, Ms Jane Howlett MP, p. 2.

to Ms Morgan-Wicks, dated 5 August 2026, in which he requested the investigation:

I request that you undertake an investigation into the matters raised by Ms Minnikin-Smith and provide advice on:

- *whether any policies, procedures, codes of conduct, employment arrangements or other requirements applicable to Parliamentary Services, the State Service or the Department of Premier and Cabinet have been breached; and*
- *whether concerns raised by Ms Minnikin-Smith were appropriately managed and responded to.*

*I would be grateful if you could provide a report of your findings at the earliest practicable opportunity.*¹⁹⁹

- 7.29 Having received this information in regard to the DPAC investigation, the Committee notes that further inquiry is required into the circumstances behind Ms Minnikin-Smith's employment status in MPS, including as to the claim by Ms Howlett MP that this activity was 'voluntary,' the electoral expenditure return of the Hon. Mr Vincent MLC for the 2024 Prosser Election and Ms Minnikin-Smith's 2024 Workers' Compensation Claim which was paid by DPAC.

Findings

23. Evidence provided by Sharee Minnikin-Smith raised serious questions about the potential inappropriate allocation of public resources and potential breaches of the responsibility of Ministerial and Parliamentary Service staff in the 2024 General and Prosser election periods.
24. The role of Sharee Minnikin-Smith while employed by Ministerial and Parliamentary Services was unclear and may have led to breaches of Caretaker Conventions during the 2024 General Election campaign and the inappropriate use of Government resources during the 2024 Prosser Election.
25. Sharee Minnikin-Smith's email mistakenly sent from her Government email address promoting a Government candidate was a breach of Caretaker Conventions and a potential further misuse of Government resources.
26. The candidate election expenditure return lodged by the Hon. Kerry Vincent MLC for the 2024 Legislative Council election in Prosser omitted the financial value of taxpayer-funded staff and state resources Sharee Minnikin-Smith states she provided. If Ms Minnikin-Smith's salary was declarable, the Hon. Mr Vincent MLC would have exceeded the 2024 statutory spending limit of \$19,500 set under Section 161 of the *Electoral Act 2004*.

¹⁹⁹ Additional Information, the Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, Premier, dated 8 September 2026, p. 3, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0011/111431/08092026_Premier_Chair-of-the-HA-SC-on-Caretaker-Conventions.pdf.

27. Information received regarding Sharee Minnikin-Smith's Workers' Compensation Claim for an injury sustained while campaigning for the Hon. Kerry Vincent MLC during the 2024 Prosser election suggests she was undertaking these duties as a Government employee. In which case this activity should have been declared by the Hon. Mr Vincent MLC in his candidate election expenditure return.
28. Adherence to Workers' Compensation requirements and electoral expenditure law appears mutually exclusive. If Sharee Minnikin-Smith was supporting the Hon. Kerry Vincent MLC's 2024 Prosser election campaign as a volunteer, she was likely ineligible for Workers' Compensation through the Department of Premier and Cabinet. However, if Ms Minnikin-Smith was working in her capacity with Ministerial and Parliamentary Services, that paid work likely should have been included as part of Mr Vincent MLC's candidate election expenditure return to the Tasmanian Electoral Commission.

Recommendations

6. **The Head of the State Service ensures the ongoing review of matters raised by Sharee Minnikin-Smith be publicly released upon completion and includes, but is not limited to, the following matters:**
 - a. **How it is Ms Minnikin-Smith's activities during the 2024 Prosser election campaign could be labelled voluntary when she was a Government employee and received a Workers' Compensation Claim;**
 - b. **How Ms Minnikin-Smith was both a volunteer and engaged to campaign for then-candidate for Lyons Ms Jane Howlett MP for 100% of her work hours, while employed under then-MLC Ms Leonie Hiscutt; and**
 - c. **Whether the Hon. Kerry Vincent MLC complied with the 2024 Prosser candidate election expenditure limit, as then prescribed under the *Electoral Act 2004*.**

DISSENTING STATEMENT – MR MARCUS VERMEY MP

I have prepared this dissenting report to outline the principal issues and concerns I have with aspects of the Committee's findings and recommendations, and to ensure those matters are considered alongside the Committee's report.

Finding 4

The Committee's findings should recognise that the Government went beyond the minimum consultation requirements contemplated by the Caretaker Conventions.

The Guidelines required consultation with the Opposition on a major decision but did not require the Opposition's agreement. In this case, the Government sought bipartisan support for a decision of importance to Tasmania and offered briefings and access to supporting documentation to Members across both Houses of Parliament.

The Government sort to facilitate informed consideration of the decision, rather than merely satisfy the minimum requirements of the Guidelines. The scale and importance of Marinus Link made it appropriate to seek boarder parliamentary engagement.

I think that the Committee's findings should give appropriate weight to the Government's effort to provide information, facilitate briefings and seek bipartisan support, while recognising that consultation does not require agreement.

Finding 7

The decision not to publicly release the Whole-of-State Business Case during the caretaker period must be considered in the context of the negotiations underway with the modelling contained in the document.

The material before the Committee indicates that, as the Business Case approached finalisation, an opportunity emerged to negotiate improved funding and equity arrangements for Tasmania.

Transparency and accountability remain important. However, they must be balanced against the responsibility to protect Tasmania's legitimate commercial interests. The absence of public release during the caretaker period does not establish that the decision was politically motivated or inconsistent with the Caretaker Conventions.

Finding 19

The Government's intention was clearly to inform Tasmanians about Government services, cost-of-living measures and opportunities available to them following the 2025-26 Budget.

The campaign concluded on the evening of 11 June 2025. The contract with Pulse Digital was concluded at that point. The formal caretaker period was declared by the Head of the State Service on 12 June 2025. The campaign had concluded before the formal caretaker period commenced, and the relevant decisions should be assessed against the Guidelines and arrangements applicable at the time.

The public has a legitimate interest in being informed about Government services and assistance. That interest must be balanced against the need for appropriate restraint during an election period, but the application of that restraint should be based on the actual timing, content and purpose of the communications.

Findings 21 – 26

The Committee should acknowledge that a number of claims made by an individual under parliamentary privilege are disputed by the Government.

The Premier has written to the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet requesting an investigation into these matters and whether the concerns raised by Ms Minnikin-Smith were appropriately managed and responded to.

That investigation has commenced, and it is appropriate that the processes be allowed to run its course and that conclusions on these matters not be finalised before the investigation has been completed.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M Vermey', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Marcus Vermey MP
26 October 2026

APPENDIX A - LIST OF SUBMISSIONS

1. Tasracing
2. Pulse Media Group
3. Department of State Growth
4. Department of Treasury and Finance
5. Department of Premier and Cabinet
6. Hon. Josh *Willie* MP, Leader of the Opposition
7. Sharee Minnikin-Smith (including additional supplementary submission)

APPENDIX B - LIST OF WITNESSES

Monday 15 June 2026, Parliament House, Hobart	
Witness	Organisation (if applicable)
The Hon. Nick <i>Duigan</i> MLC, Minister for Energy and Renewables	
Shane Gregory, Acting Secretary	Department of State Growth (Building Tasmania from 2 July 2026)
Vanessa Pinto, Acting CEO	Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania (ReCFIT), Department of State Growth (Building Tasmania from 2 July 2026)
Professor Emerita Anne Twomey (via <i>Microsoft Teams</i>)	TasRacing
Josh Agnew, Managing Director	Pulse Media Group
Nick Turner, Executive Chairman	CorComms

Friday 3 July 2026, Parliament House, Hobart	
Witness	Organisation (if applicable)
The Hon. Jeremy <i>Rockliff</i> MP, Premier	
Kathrine Morgan-Wicks, Secretary	Department of Premier and Cabinet
Shane Gregory, Acting Secretary	Department of State Growth (Building Tasmania from 2 July 2026)
Lisa Howes, Chief Governance and Risk Officer	Department of Premier and Cabinet
Gene Phair, then-Chair	Tasracing
Andrew Jenkins, CEO	

Monday 27 July 2026, Parliament House, Hobart	
Witness	Organisation (if applicable)
The Hon. Eric Abetz MP, Treasurer	
Gary Swain, Secretary	Department of Treasury and Finance
Dean Burgess, Deputy Secretary, Economic and Financial Policy	Department of Treasury and Finance
Anton Voss, Executive Director, Marinus Transition and Strategic Advisory	Department of Treasury and Finance

Friday 31 July 2026, Parliament House, Hobart	
Witness	Organisation (if applicable)
Sharee Minnikin-Smith	

Friday 14 August 2026, Parliament House, Hobart	
Witness	Organisation (if applicable)
Ms Jane Howlett MP, Member for Lyons	
Former-Minster for Racing	

Tuesday 15 September 2026, Parliament House, Hobart	
Witness	Organisation (if applicable)
Sharee Minnikin-Smith	

APPENDIX C - MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY SELECT COMMITTEE ON CARETAKER CONVENTIONS

THURSDAY, 9 April 2026

The Committee met in Committee Room 3,
Parliament House, Hobart and via Microsoft
Teams at 2:30 p.m.

Members Present:

In Committee Room 3:
Ms Badger
Mr Vermey

Via Microsoft Teams:
Mr Garland
Mr Winter

RESOLUTION

The Secretary took the Chair and read the
Order of the House of Assembly, dated 18
March 2026, appointing the Committee.

ELECTION OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

The Secretary called for nominations for
Committee Chair. *Mr Vermey* nominated *Ms*
Badger, who consented to the nomination.

The nomination was seconded by *Mr Garland*.

There being no other candidates the Secretary
declared *Ms Badger* elected as Chair.

Ms Badger took the Chair.

ELECTION OF DEPUTY COMMITTEE CHAIR

The Chair called for nominations for Deputy
Chair. *Mr Garland* nominated *Mr Winter*, who
consented to the nomination.

The nomination was seconded by *Mr Vermey*.

There being no other candidates the Chair
declared *Mr Winter* the Deputy Chair.

CONDUCT OF THE COMMITTEE NOMENCLATURE

Resolved, that the Committee be titled ‘the
House of Assembly Select Committee on
Caretaker Conventions.’ (*Mr Garland*).

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH SUPPORT FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY RESEARCH SERVICE

Resolved, That unless otherwise ordered
Officers of the Parliamentary Research Service
be admitted to the proceedings of the
Committee whether in public or private
session. (*Ms Badger*).

PRESS STATEMENTS

Resolved, That unless otherwise ordered, press
statements on behalf of the Committee be
made only by the Chair after approval in
principle by the Committee or after
consultation with the committee. (*Mr*
Vermey).

CHAIR AS SPOKESPERSON

Resolved, That the Chair be the spokesperson
in relation to the operations of the Committee.
(*Ms Badger*).

PUBLICATION OF BROADCAST

Resolved, that the broadcast of any public
proceedings be published on the parliamentary
website. (*Mr Vermey*).

PUBLICATION OF HANSARD

Resolved, that the transcripts of public hearings
be published following the secretariat sending
witnesses a copy of the transcript once
prepared and giving witnesses two days to
correct for mistranscriptions. (*Mr Vermey*).

MEDIA RELEASE FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS

Resolved, that prior to each public hearing of
the Committee, a standard Media Release be
circulated and published. (*Mr Winter*).

FORMAT AND PROCESS OF INQUIRY

INQUIRY TYPE

Resolved, that the Inquiry be run as a Short
Inquiry, with submissions to only be opened to
invited participants (*Mr Winter*).

INVITATIONS TO SUBMIT

Resolved, that the following list of individuals and organisations be invited to provide a submission to the Inquiry (Ms Badger):

- Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP;
- Hon. Nick Duigan MLC/Hon. Guy Barentt MP;
- ReCFIT;
- Hon. Eric Abetz MP;
- Department of Treasury and Finance;
- Marinus Link;
- ...;
- Hon. Jane Howlett MP;
- Luke Gaetani;
- Tasracing;
- CorComm;
- The Liberal Party of Australia – Tasmanian Division;
- TT-Line;
- TASCORP;
- Department of Premier and Cabinet;
- Pulse Media Group/Pulse Tasmania;
- Professor Emerita Anne Twomey;
- Professor Gabrielle Appleby;
- Bret Walker AO SC; and
- Duncan Kerr AO SC.

INQUIRY TIMELINE

Resolved, that the following timeline, including meeting dates, be that of the Inquiry:

- Submission closes: 8 May 2026;
- Meeting to accept submissions: 18 May 2026;
- Public Hearings:
 - 15 June 2026;
 - 19 June 2026;
 - 24 June 2026; and
 - 26 June 2026.
- Report Deliberative meetings:
 - 10 August 2026;
 - 14 August 2026;
 - 24 August 2026; and
 - 25 August 2026.

PRESS RELEASE

Resolved, that the draft press release as circulated be updated to reflect the short inquiry status and sent to relevant parties in the media. (Mr Vermey).

INQUIRY CHARTER

The Committee considered the draft Inquiry Charter.

Resolved, to adopt the draft Inquiry Charter as amended to reflect the relevant resolutions of the Committee in this meeting. (Mr Winter). Secretary to update and circulate final copy to Committee Members.

OTHER MATTERS

Nil.

At 3.07 p.m. the Committee adjourned until 18 May 2026.

Confirmed,

MONDAY, 18 May 2026

The Committee met in Committee Room 3, Parliament House, Hobart and via Microsoft Teams at 9:59 a.m.

Members Present:

In Committee Room 3:
Ms Badger (Chair)
Mr Vermey
Mr Winter

Via Microsoft Teams:
Mr Garland

APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting on 9 April 2026 were confirmed as an accurate record (Mr Winter).

INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE

Received, the following items of correspondence (Mr Vermey):

- Letter from the Treasurer, the Hon. Eric Abetz MP, dated 16 April 2026;
- Letter from the Chair of TASCORP, dated 28 April 2026; and
- Letter from the Minister for Racing, the Hon. Jane Howlett MP, dated 8 May 2026.

SUBMISSIONS

DPAC EXTENSION

Noted, out of session resolution to approve the extension of the submission due date for DPAC to Friday 15 May 2026, from original closure date of Friday 8 May 2026 (Ms Badger).

RECEIPT OF SUBMISSIONS

Resolved, the following submissions be received, and published in full, with personal contact details redacted as standard: (Ms Badger)

- Submission No. 1 – Tasracing;
- Submission No. 2 – Pulse Media Group;
- Submission No. 3 – Department of State Growth;
- Submission No. 4 – Department of Treasury and Finance; and
- Submission No. 5 – Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC).

ADDITIONAL SUBMISSION INVITATIONS AND INFORMATION REQUESTS

Resolved, to write to the following individuals and organisations inviting them to provide a written response to the Committee (Ms Badger):

- Hon. Josh Willie MP, Leader of the Opposition (invitation to submit);
- Dr Rosalie Woodruff MP, Leader of the Greens (targeted questions on interactions from Government during Caretaker);
- The Hon. Guy Barnett MP in his capacity as former Treasurer (targeted question on TT-Line Term of Reference);
- Firmus (invitation to submit);
- The Liberal Party of Australia – Tasmania Division (targeted question on TasInsure and Tasracing Term of Reference); and
- ... (invitation to submit, if contactable).

PUBLICATION OF INVITATIONS TO SUBMIT

Resolved, that the list of individuals and organisations invited to provide a submission to the Inquiry be published. This list is to include the additional requests agreed to in this meeting, noting that they were invited at a later point in time. Agreed to redact the name of an individual whom the Committee wished

to invite, but could not be successfully contacted. (Mr Winter).

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Resolved, to invite the following individuals and organisations to appear before public hearings of the Inquiry: (Ms Badger)

- The Treasurer, the Hon. Eric Abetz MP, and Department of Treasury and Finance and for a period of 30 minutes;
- Minister for Racing, the Hon. Jane Howlett MP, for a period of 1 hour;
- Minister for Energy and Renewables, the Hon. Nick Duigan MLC, and the Department of State Growth for a period of 1 hour;
- The Premier, the Hon. Jermy Rockliff MP, and DPAC, for a period of 2 hours;
- CorComm for a period of 40 minutes;
- Tasracing for a period of 40 minutes;
- Pulse Media Group for a period of 30 minutes; and
- Professor Emerita Anne Twomey for a period of 30 minutes.

Noted that, pending the availability of witnesses, attempts will be made to theme the evidence to the Terms of Reference.

Noted that, pending the receipt of additional information, further witnesses may be invited to appear before a public hearing or further questions may be provided for written responses.

OTHER MATTERS

Nil.

At 10.36 a.m. the Committee adjourned until Monday, 15 June 2026.

Confirmed,

THURSDAY, 28 May 2026

The Committee met in Committee Room 1, Parliament House, Hobart and via Microsoft Teams at 1:16 p.m.

Members Present:

In Committee Room 1:
Ms Badger (Chair)
Mr Garland

Mr Winter

Via Microsoft Teams:
Mr Vermey (from 1.18 p.m.)

APOLOGISES

There were no apologies.

PUBLIC HEARING CHANGES

Resolved, that the Committee change its schedule for public hearings, as follows, to allow all Members to participate (Ms Badger):

Cancel public hearings on:

- Friday 19 June 2026;
- Wednesday 24 June 2026; and
- Friday 26 June 2026.

Proceed with public hearings, including 3 new dates, on:

- Monday 15 June 2026;
- Friday 3 July 2026;
- Wednesday 22 July 2026; and
- Thursday 23 July 2026 from 1pm.

OTHER MATTERS

Nil.

At 1.25 p.m. the Committee adjourned until Monday, 15 June 2026.

Confirmed,

MONDAY, 15 June 2026

The Committee met in Committee Room 1, Parliament House, Hobart and via Microsoft Teams at 8:58 a.m.

Members Present:

In Committee Room 1:
Ms Badger (Chair)
Mr Garland
Mr Vermey
Mr Winter

APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

At 9.00 a.m., the Hon. Nick Duigan MLC, Minister for Energy and Renewables was

called and examined by the Committee in public.

Shane Gregory, Acting Secretary – Department of Growth and Vanessa Pinto, Acting CEO - ReCFIT were also called, made the statutory declaration and were examined by the Committee in public.

At 10.00 a.m. the witnesses withdrew.

DELIBERATIVE MEETING

MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 18 May 2026 and 28 May 2026 were adopted as an accurate record (Mr Winter).

INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE

Resolved, to receive and publish correspondence from the Hon. Guy Barnett MP dated 3 June 2026 (Mr Vermey).

Resolved, to receive and note correspondence from the office of the Hon. Jane Howlett MP (Mr Winter).

Resolved, to publish the letter from Minister Howlett, dated 8 May 2026 (Mr Winter).

Resolved, to receive and publish the submission from the Hon. Josh Willie MP, Leader of the Opposition, with personal information redacted (Ms Badger).

OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE

Noted the following pieces of outgoing correspondence (Ms Badger):

- Letter to Dr Rosalie Woodruff, dated 19 May 2026;
- Letter to Hon. Guy Barnett MP, dated 19 May 2026;
- Letter to the Liberal Party of Australia – Tasmanian Division, dated 19 May 2026;
- Invitation to submit to Firmus, dated 19 May 2026; and
- Invitation to submit to Hon. Josh Willie MP, dated 19 May 2026.

PAPERS FROM MEMBERS

Resolved, to accept and publish the 3 pieces of correspondence referred to the Committee by Mr Winter, being:

- Letter from the Premier to Mr Dean Winter MP and Dr Rosalie Woodruff MP, dated 28 July 2025;
- Letter from the Premier to Mr Dean Winter MP, dated 30 July 2025; and
- Letter from Mr Dean Winter MP to the Premier, dated 30 July 2025. (Mr Winter)

OTHER MATTERS

The Chair raised the ACT Legislative Assembly Committee Report on Caretaker Conventions, released in February 2026. The Chair will circulate this to Members for their awareness.

Suspension of sitting from 10.07 a.m. to 10.14 a.m.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

At 10.15 a.m., Professor Emerita Anne Twomey was called via Microsoft Teams and was examined by the Committee in public.

At 10.44 a.m. the witness withdrew.

Suspension of sitting from 10.44 a.m. to 10.47 a.m.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

At 10.50 a.m., Josh Agnew, Managing Director – Pulse Media Group, was called, made the statutory declaration and was examined by the Committee in public.

Papers – Mr Agnew tabled a copy of the Government’s media spend with Pulse Media Group.

At 11.19 a.m. the witness withdrew.

Suspension of sitting from 11.20 a.m. to 11.29 a.m.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

At 11.30 a.m., Nick Turner, Executive Chairman - CorComms, was called, made the statutory declaration and was examined by the Committee in public.

At 12.03 p.m. the witness withdrew.

At 12.05 p.m. the Committee adjourned until Friday, 3 July 2026.

Confirmed,

TUESDAY, 16 June 2026

The Committee met in Committee Room 3, Parliament House, Hobart at 12:02 p.m.

Members Present:

In Committee Room 3:

Ms Badger (Chair)

Mr Garland

Mr Vermey (from 12.11 p.m.)

Mr Winter

APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

DRAFT REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Committee considered the draft letter requesting additional information from Mr Nick Turner of CorComms after his appearance before the Committee on Monday, 15 June 2026.

Resolved, to invite Mr Turner to provide the additional information to the Committee by 10 a.m., Thursday, 18 June 2026 (Mr Winter).

RIGHT TO REPLY TO POTENTIALLY ADVERSE

REFLECTIONS

The Committee considered, including in relation to its obligations under Claus 13 of Standing Order 357A, the evidence provided by Mr Nick Turner on Monday, 15 June 2026, which referenced Mr Luke Gaetani.

Resolved, to extend to Mr Gaetani the opportunity to provide a written submission and/or appear before the Committee regarding the matter (Ms Badger).

OTHER MATTERS

Resolved, to hold an additional meeting of the Committee at 1.10 p.m. on Thursday, 18 June 2026, for the consideration of any incoming correspondence and the future public hearings, including in reference to the announcement of the resignation of former-

Minister for Racing, Jane Howlett MP (Ms *Badger*).

At 12.19 p.m. the Committee adjourned until Thursday, 18 June 2026.

Confirmed,

THURSDAY, 18 June 2026

The Committee met in Committee Room 3, Parliament House, Hobart and via Microsoft Teams at 1:11 p.m.

Members Present:

In Committee Room 1:
Ms *Badger* (Chair)
Mr *Garland*
Mr *Vermey*

Via Microsoft Teams:
Mr *Winter*

APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 15 June 2026 and 16 June 2026 were approved as an accurate record (Mr *Vermey* and Mr *Garland*).

INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE

Resolved, to receive and publish the incoming correspondence from Mr Nick Turner, dated 18 June 2026, with personal information redacted (Mr *Winter*).

OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE

Noted the following items of outgoing correspondence (Ms *Badger*):

- Letter to Mr Nick Turner requesting additional information dated 16 June 2026; and

Letter to Mr Luke Gaetani noting rights under Standing Order 357A (13) dated 16 June 2026.

CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

The Committee considered the upcoming public hearings on 3 July 2026 and 27 July 2026.

Resolved, to contact Ms Jane Howlett MP to confirm the extension, via way of invitation, of her planned attendance before the Committee

on 27 July 2026. This arrangement had been previously made with her then-Office in her role as then-Minister for Racing (Ms *Badger*).

Resolved, that the Hon. Roger Jaensch MP, Minister for Racing, does not currently need to be invited to participate in the Committee. The Secretary is to contact the Minister's Office to advise that he is not required to attend the hearing commitment of the former-Minister for Racing (Ms *Badger*).

Resolved that, having provided contact to Mr Luke Gaetani on 16 June 2026 regarding Standing Order 357A, no further action is required at this point in time, also noting the personal circumstances of Mr Gaetani. Further contact to be reassessed in the future if required (Mr *Winter*).

OTHER MATTERS

The Chair raised the Committee's invitation to Firmus to provide a submission, which was not taken up. Noted that, at this point in time, the Committee will not further pursue a contribution from Firmus but that the matter will be reconsidered in the future as required.

At 1.23 p.m. the Committee adjourned until Friday, 3 July 2026.

Confirmed,

FRIDAY, 3 July 2026

The Committee met in Committee Room 1, Parliament House, Hobart and via Microsoft Teams at 12.00 p.m.

Members Present:

In Committee Room 1:
Ms *Badger* (Chair)
Mr *Vermey*
Mr *Winter*

Via Microsoft Teams:
Mr *Garland*

PUBLIC HEARING

At 12.08 p.m., the Hon. Jermy Rockliff MP, Premier, was called and examined by the Committee in public, via Microsoft Teams.

Kathrine Morgan-Wicks, Secretary – Department of Premier and Cabinet and Lisa Howes, Chief Governance and Risk Officer – Department of Premier and Cabinet, were also called, made the statutory declaration and were examined by the Committee in public, via Microsoft Teams.

Shane Gregory, Acting Secretary – Building Tasmania, was recalled and also examined by the Committee in public, via Microsoft Teams.

At 1.01 p.m. the witnesses withdrew.

Suspension of sitting from 1.01 p.m. – 1.06 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING

At 1.06 p.m., Ms Morgan-Wicks, Mr Gregory and Ms Howes were recalled and examined by the Committee in public, via Microsoft Teams.

At 1.09 p.m. Mr Vermey withdrew.

At 1.52 p.m. the witnesses withdrew.

Suspension of sitting from 1.52 p.m. – 1.59 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING

At 2 p.m., Andrew Jenkins, CEO and Gene Phair, Chair representing Tasracing, were called, made the statutory declaration and were examined by the Committee in public.

At 2.05 p.m. Mr Vermey returned to the meeting via Microsoft Teams.

At 2.22 p.m. the witnesses withdrew.

DELIBERATIVE MEETING

APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2026 were adopted as an accurate record (Mr Winter).

INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE

Nil.

OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE

Noted the following pieces of outgoing correspondence (Ms Badger):

- Re-invitation to appear at a public hearing to Ms Jane Howlett MP, dated 18 June 2026; and
- Invitation to ... to provide a submission, dated 1 July 2026.

OTHER MATTERS

SECRETARY CRAIG LIMKIN

Noted, contact from members of the public to the Chair in regards to what role the former Secretary of State Growth, Craig Limkin, may have had in the Marinus FID decision during the caretaker period. *Resolved*, that no further action to be taken at this time (Ms Badger).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUEST TO PREMIER

Resolved, to write to the Premier requesting responses to questions regarding the following matters:

- If the Premier's Office assisted in the preparation of the Statutory Declarations signed by Luke Gaetani; and
- The connections between DPAC, the GMO and MPS in relation to the Pulse Tasmania matter.

Draft questions to be circulated out of session to Members prior to sending (Mr Winter).

FUTURE PUBLIC HEARING

MS JANE HOWLETT MP

Resolved, that if a response is still not received by the Secretary from Ms Jane Howlett MP, Member for Lyons, by Thursday, 9 July 2026, a formal letter will be sent from the Chair further extending the invite and requesting a response within a specific timeframe (Ms Badger).

MR LUKE GAETANI

Resolved, that a further invitation be extended to Mr Gaetani inviting a written response, within a specific timeframe, from the Chair if a response is not received prior to Thursday, 9 July 2026 (Mr Winter).

At 2.40 p.m. the Committee adjourned until Monday, 27 July 2026.

Confirmed,

MONDAY, 27 July 2026

The Committee met in Committee Room 1, Parliament House, Hobart and via Microsoft Teams at 1.00 p.m.

Members Present:

In Committee Room 1:
Ms *Badger* (Chair)
Mr *Winter*

Via Microsoft Teams:
Mr *Garland*
Mr *Vermey*

PUBLIC HEARING

At 1.00 p.m., the Hon. Eric Abetz MP, Treasurer, was called and examined by the Committee in public.

Gary Swain, Secretary; Dean Burgess, Deputy Secretary – Economic and Financial Policy, and Anton Voss, Executive Director – Marinus Transition and Strategic Advisory, all representing the Department of Treasury and Finance, were also called, made the statutory declaration and were examined by the Committee in public.

At 1.32 p.m. the witnesses withdrew.

Suspension of sitting from 1.32 p.m. – 1.33 p.m.

DELIBERATIVE MEETING

APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2026 were adopted as an accurate record (Mr *Winter*).

INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE

The following correspondence was noted as received:

1. Response to questions on notice from Pulse Media Group dated 1 July 2026;
2. Request from Ms Sharee Minnikin-Smith to provide evidence to the Committee dated 16 July 2026;

3. Additional information requested by the Committee from Tasracing dated 20 July 2026; and
4. Response from the Premier to request for additional information dated 20 July 2026 (Mr *Winter*).

Resolved, publish the response to Questions on Notice from Pulse Media Group, dated 1 July 2026; the additional information provided by Tasracing dated 20 July 2026; and the response to request for additional information from the Premier, dated 20 July 2026 (Mr *Winter*).

It was noted that further questions may be necessary for Tasracing and CorComms.

Resolved, to receive and note the correspondence from Sharee Minnikin-Smith, dated 16 July 2026.

Resolved, to invite Ms Minnikin-Smith to provide evidence to the Committee at either 10.30 a.m. or 12 p.m. on Friday, 31 July 2026 for a period of 30 minutes (Mr *Winter*).

Resolved, to publish the correspondence from Ms Minnikin-Smith after confirming Ms Minnikin-Smith is happy for said correspondence to be published (Ms *Badger*).

OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE

Noted the following pieces of outgoing correspondence:

1. Letter to the Premier, dated 7 July 2026;
2. Letter to Luke Gaetani, dated 9 July 2026;
3. Questions on Notice from public hearings to Premier, DPAC and Tasracing, all dated 13 July 2026.

OTHER MATTERS

The Committee had received a request from the Department of Premier and Cabinet on 23 July 2026 in relation to an extension from 27 July 2026 to 3 August 2026 for the provision of additional information. *Resolved*, to agree to

the extension as previously discussed by the Committee via email (*Ms Badger*).

At 1.53 p.m. the Committee adjourned until Friday, 31 July 2026.

Confirmed,

FRIDAY, 31 July 2026

The Committee met in Committee Room 1, Parliament House, Hobart and via Microsoft Teams at 10.30 a.m.

Members Present:

In Committee Room 1:

Ms Badger (Chair)

Mr Vermey

Mr Winter

Via Microsoft Teams:

Mr Garland

PUBLIC HEARING

At 10.31 a.m., *Ms Sharee Minnikin-Smith*, was called, made the statutory declaration and was examined by the Committee in public.

At 11.03 a.m. the witness withdrew.

DELIBERATIVE MEETING

APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

MINUTES

Consideration of the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2026 were deferred (*Ms Badger*).

INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE

Resolved, to note and receive the incoming correspondence from ..., dated 22 July 2026 (*Mr Winter*).

Resolved, to receive and publish the responses to Questions on Notice from *Ms Morgan-Wicks*, received on 29 July 2026 (*Mr Garland*).

Resolved, to note and receive the incoming correspondence from *Ms Jane Howlett MP*, dated 30 July 2026 (*Ms Badger*).

The Committee discussed that, in the first instance, *Ms Howlett* will be reinvited to appear on Monday 10 August or Friday 14 August 2026, if this is suitable. Noted that, at the current time, the Committee can still meet its reporting date of 1 September 2026, but this will be reassessed in regard to *Ms Howlett's* availability.

OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE

Nil.

OTHER MATTERS

Resolved, that the Committee write to *Mr Nick Turner* of CorComms in relation to the responses to Questions on Notice received from Tasracing, seeking further information from him on the matter if available (*Ms Badger*).

Noted that the Committee may consider in future the support of Liberty Bell Bay by the Government during and after the 2025 Caretaker period.

At 11.17 a.m. the Committee adjourned until Monday, 10 August 2026.

Confirmed,

MONDAY, 10 August 2026

The Committee met in Committee Room 3, Parliament House, Hobart at 9.02 a.m.

Members Present:

In Committee Room 1:

Ms Badger (Chair)

Mr Garland

Mr Vermey

Mr Winter

APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 27 and 31 July 2026 were adopted as accurate records (*Mr Winter*).

INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE

The following correspondence was noted as received:

1. Response to request for additional information from Nick Turner of CorComms, dated 4 August 2026; and
2. Correspondence from the Hon. Josh Willie MP and Ms Ella Haddad MP, dated 5 August 2026.

The Committee opened discussion of the correspondence from the Hon. Mr *Willie* and Ms *Haddad*, which regarded the evidence of Ms Sharee Minikkin-Smith and the Terms of Reference of the Committee.

The Committee considered if it should place a Motion before the House asking for it to consider that the Terms of Reference be amended in point (1) so as that the words '**2025 State Election**' be replaced with '**Tasmanian elections held since 1 January 2024,**'

And the Question being put – That the Motion to the House requesting the Terms of Reference be amended be agreed to;

The Committee divided

Ayes (3)	Noes (1)
Ms <i>Badger</i>	Mr <i>Vermey</i>
Mr <i>Garland</i>	
Mr <i>Winter</i>	

And so it was resolved in the Affirmative.

Resolved, that the Chair respond to the Hon. Mr *Willie* and Ms *Haddad* thanking them for their correspondence and informing them of the pending Motion (Mr *Winter*).

Resolved, that the Chair be empowered to inform Leaders of Business in the House and Members of the crossbench of the pending Motion (Ms *Badger*).

Resolved, the Secretary ask the Clerk of the House to draft the Motion for moving this sitting week and that Committee Members be informed of when it will be moved once it has been prepared (Ms *Badger*).

Resolved, that the reporting date of the Committee remain 1 September 2026, but an extension be further considered after the Motion has been before the House (Mr *Winter*).

CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT REPORT

The Committee commenced consideration of the Draft Report. It was noted that the Committee would follow the operations of Committee of the Whole in the Chamber and raise specific paragraphs, findings or recommendations as they arise in the flow of the Report. Each item is to be moved by the Chair to be voted on for inclusion by the Committee.

Chapter 1 and 2 postponed.

Chapter 3 considered in full.

Findings 1 – 5 amended.

Finding 6 postponed.

Recommendations 1-2 considered.

Chapter 4 postponed.

Chapter 5 considered in full.

Findings 13 – 14 considered.

Chapter 6 considered in full.

Findings 15 – 17 considered.

Recommendation 4 amended.

Chapter 7 postponed, pending additional evidence.

Resolved, to write to relevant Ministers for Resources in regard to the Government's support for Liberty Bell Bay during the 2025 Caretaker Period.

OTHER MATTERS

Resolved that, if the Motion to amend the Terms of Reference is passed in the Affirmative by the House, Ms Minnikin-Smith be invited to provide a submission or documentation to the Committee (Mr *Winter*).

Resolved, that an additional meeting be scheduled for Thursday, 27 August 2026 from 1 p.m. – 5 p.m. (Ms Badger).

Resolved, that the meeting on Friday, 14 August 2026 be rescheduled to 1 p.m. – 4 p.m., including the hearing with Ms Jane Howlett MP (Ms Badger).

At 11 a.m. the Committee adjourned until Friday, 14 August 2026.

Confirmed,

FRIDAY, 14 August 2026

The Committee met in Committee Room 1, Parliament House, Hobart and via Microsoft Teams at 1.00 p.m.

Members Present:

In Committee Room 1:

Ms Badger (Chair)

Mr Vermey

Mr Winter

Via Microsoft Teams:

Mr Garland

DELIBERATIVE MEETING

APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 August 2026 were agreed to as an accurate record (Mr Winter).

INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE

The correspondence from Mr Greg Todd, dated 7 August 2026 was noted and received (Mr Winter).

The correspondence from Mr Gary Swain was noted, received and resolved to be published (Ms Badger).

Resolved, that the Chair write to the Premier requesting he supply the response to his outstanding Question on Notice (Ms Badger).

OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE

Noted the outgoing correspondence as follows (Mr Winter):

- Response to the Hon. Josh Willie MP and Ms Ella Haddad MP, dated 10 August 2026;
- Invitation to Ms Sharee Minnikin-Smith, dated 12 August 2026; and
- Information request to the Treasurer and the Minister for Resources, dated 12 August 2026.

EXPANSION OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

Noted the resolution of the House of Assembly on 12 August 2026 which passed in the Affirmative the Committee's request to expand its Terms of Reference to now include 'any election held in Tasmania since 1 January 2024.' (Ms Badger).

The Committee discussed next steps now that the expansion had been approved, deciding to await pending evidence before the Inquiry before future avenues are pursued.

Resolved, to write to the Hon. Guy Barnett MP, in his capacity as former-Treasurer to directly as to if he made the decision to increase the borrowing capacity of TT-Line during the 2025 Caretaker Period before or after he called Mr Josh Willie MP on 26 July 2025 (Mr Winter).

CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT REPORT

The Committee continued consideration of the Draft Report.

Chapter 1

Paragraphs 1 – 1.11 agreed to.

Paragraphs 1.13 – 1.17 agreed to.

Paragraph 1.18 agreed to.

Chapter 2

Paragraphs 2.1 – 2.8 agreed to.

Paragraphs 2.9 – 2.13 agreed to.

Paragraphs 2.14 – 2.17 agreed to.

Chapters 3 – 5 deferred.

Chapter 6

Paragraph 6.1 – 6.4 agreed to.

Paragraphs 6.5 – 6.15 agreed to.

Finding 15 agreed to.

Finding 16 agreed to as amended.

Finding 17 agreed to as amended.

Recommendation 4 agreed to as amended.

Sitting suspended from 1.45 p.m. – 1.57 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING

At 2.00 p.m., Ms Jane Howlett MP, Member for Lyons and former-Minister for Racing, was called and examined by the Committee in public.

At 2.58 p.m. the witness withdrew.

DELIBERATIVE MEETING

EXTENSION OF DUE DATE

Resolved, that the Committee seek an extension of its due date by the House until 27 October 2026, including in the Motion the ability to Table out of session prior to this date if able (*Ms Badger*).

Resolved, that the Committee empower the Chair to inform Leaders of Business and crossbench Members of the pending Motion, once the Committee Secretary has sought advice that this remains an appropriate mechanism for the Committee to utilise (*Mr Winter*).

FURTHER EVIDENCE COLLECTION

The Committee discussed if further evidence needed to be sought in consideration of the evidence presented by *Ms Howlett* and the outstanding information request. It was agreed that, given *Ms Minnikin-Smith* has indicated she will provide a submission, the Committee await asking further questions of relevant parties regarding her evidence until after this submission has been received.

The Committee discussed the evidence in relation to Tasracing and TasInsure, including

the statutory declarations of Mr Luke Gaetani. It was noted that, if the Committee wished to seek the participation of Mr Gaetani, a new line of invitations should be commenced to ensure all express opportunity is provided. The mechanisms available to the Committee under the *Parliamentary Privileges Act 1858* were explained by the Committee Secretary, including its applicability to ministerial staff.

Resolved, to write to Mr Gaetani with specific questions in relation to the Tasracing TasInsure matter, including in the first communication reference to the aforementioned powers of committee's of the House, with a due date of 27 August 2026 (*Ms Badger*).

MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

Resolved, that the Committee hold the following meetings (*Ms Badger*):

- Monday 24 August 2026 – 12.30 p.m. – 2.30 p.m.;
- Thursday 27 August 2026 – 1 p.m. – 5 p.m.

Noted the Committee Secretary would seek further available dates for potential hearings and report deliberations.

OTHER MATTERS

Nil.

At 3.28 p.m. the Committee adjourned until Monday, 24 August 2026.

Confirmed,

MONDAY, 24 August 2026

The Committee met in Committee Room 1, Parliament House, Hobart at 12.36 p.m.

Members Present:

In Committee Room 1:
Ms Badger (Chair)
Mr Vermey
Mr Winter

APOLOGIES

Mr Garland was an apology.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 August 2026 were agreed to as an accurate record (Mr Winter).

INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE

Resolved, to receive and publish the following incoming correspondence, with any required redactions undertaken (Mr Winter):

- Premier response to Questions on Notice, dated 17 August 2026; and
- Sharee Minnikin-Smith response to Questions on Notice, dated 18 August 2026.

OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE

Noted the outgoing correspondence as follows (Ms Badger):

- Letter to the Premier regarding the outstanding response to Questions on Notice, dated 17 August 2026; and
- Letter to the Deputy Premier in his role as then-Treasurer regarding the TT-Line borrowing decision, dated 18 August 2026.

FURTHER EVIDENCE

The Committee discussed what further evidence may be required in regard to the evidence of Ms Minnikin-Smith and Ms Jane Howlett MP. The Committee considered whom such questions should be raised with.

Resolved, that the Chair write to the Premier inviting comment on the investigation he has asked the Head of the State Service to undertake in light of Ms Minnikin-Smith's evidence, as well as provide the dates and appointment details for her roles in MPS. The Committee to ask for the Terms of Reference for that investigation (Mr Winter).

Noted that it is likely that this Inquiry will conclude before the investigation does. Therefore, the Committee will still include in its Report elements of Ms Minnikin-Smith's evidence which are relevant to caretaker periods, but may look to include a recommendation regarding the pending completion, and release, of the investigation by DPAC.

RECEIPT OF SUBMISSION

Resolved, to receive and publish in full the submission from Sharee Minnikin-Smith, with standard redactions applied (Mr Winter).

The Committee discussed next steps following the receipt of Ms Minnikin-Smith's submission, including how this work could intersect, or not, with the DPAC investigation.

Resolved, to request Ms Minnikin-Smith provide any documentary evidence which supports the text message chronology she has provided (Ms Badger).

Resolved, to invite Ms Minnikin-Smith to appear for a 1-hour public hearing on Tuesday, 15 September 2026 from 2 p.m. – 3 p.m (Mr Winter). Noted that the opportunity to respond will need to be provided to related parties after this hearing.

Resolved, to include in the letter to the Premier questions regarding the nature of Ms Minnikin-Smith's employment with MPS (Mr Winter).

OTHER MATTERS

Nil.

At 1.34 p.m. the Committee adjourned until Thursday, 27 August 2026.

Confirmed,

THURSDAY, 27 August 2026

The Committee met in Committee Room 3, Parliament House, Hobart and via Microsoft Teams at 1.00 p.m.

Members Present:

In Committee Room 1:
Ms Badger (Chair)
Mr Vermey
Mr Winter

Via Microsoft Teams:
Mr Garland

INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE

Resolved, to receive the correspondence from Mr Luke Gaetani, dated 27 August 2026.

The Committee discussed the correspondence, including Mr Gaetani's request that it be kept confidential.

Resolved, that the Chair write to Mr Gaetani requesting he explain why he requests the confidentiality and inviting further response to Questions 2 and 3 (*Ms Badger*).

OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE

Noted the outgoing correspondence to the Premier, dated 25 August 2026.

CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT REPORT

The Committee continued consideration of the Draft Report.

Chapter 3

Paragraphs 3.1 – 3.4 agreed to.

Paragraph 3.5 agreed to.

Paragraphs 3.6 – 3.11 agreed to.

Paragraphs 3.12 – 3.15 agreed to.

Paragraph 3.16 agreed to.

Paragraph 3.17 agreed to.

Paragraph 3.18 agreed to.

Paragraphs 3.19 – 3.20 agreed to.

Paragraphs 3.21 – 3.22 agreed to.

Paragraphs 3.23 – 3.25 agreed to.

Paragraphs 3.26 – 3.28 agreed to.

Paragraphs 3.29 – 3.30 agreed to.

Paragraph 3.31 agreed to.

Paragraphs 3.32 – 3.33 agreed to.

Paragraphs 3.34 – 3.38 agreed to.

Findings

Finding 1 agreed to.

Finding 2 agreed to as amended.

Finding 3 agreed to.

Finding 4 agreed to.

Finding 5 agreed to.

Finding 6 agreed to as amended.

New Finding inserted and agreed to. To be relocated to be new Finding 3.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 agreed to as amended.

Recommendation 2 agreed to.

Chapter 5

Paragraphs 5.1 – 5.3 agreed to.

Paragraphs 5.4 and 5.5 agreed to.

Paragraph 5.6 deferred.

Paragraphs 5.7 – 5.10 agreed to.

Paragraph 5.11 agreed to.

Paragraphs 5.12 and 5.13 deferred.

Findings

Finding 14 agreed to.

Finding 15 deferred.

Recommendations deferred.

The Committee considered additional paragraphs in Chapter 1.

Proposed new Paragraphs 1.13 and 1.14 agreed to.

OTHER MATTERS

Nil.

At 1.58 p.m. the Committee adjourned until Tuesday, 15 September 2026.

Confirmed,

TUESDAY, 15 September 2026

The Committee met in Committee Room 2, Parliament House, Hobart and via Microsoft Teams at 1.45 p.m.

Members Present:

In Committee Room 1:

Ms Badger (Chair)

Mr Vermey

Mr Winter

Via Microsoft Teams:

Mr Garland

DELIBERATIVE MEETING

APOLOGISES

There were no apologies.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 24 and 27 August 2026 were agreed to as an accurate record of proceedings (Mr Winter).

INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE

The Committee received and noted the incoming correspondence from Sharee Minnikin-Smith, dated 14 September 2026, consisting of 9 documents.

Resolved, to publish documents 1 – 3 and 5 – 7, with required redactions and keep confidential documents 4, 8 and 9 (attachments B, F and G as titled by Ms Minnikin-Smith) (Mr Winter)

Resolved, to note, receive and publish the following items of correspondence (Ms Badger):

- Letter from the Hon. Guy Barnett MP, regarding his TT-Line decision as then-Treasurer, dated 31 August 2026; and
- Letter from the Premier, regarding Ms Sharee Minnikin-Smith, dated 8 September 2026.

PUBLIC HEARING

WITNESS

At 2.00 p.m., Ms Sharee Minnikin-Smith, was recalled and examined by the Committee in public.

At 3.00 p.m. the witness withdrew.

DELIBERATIVE MEETING

INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE CONTINUED

The Committee continued its consideration of incoming correspondence.

Resolved, to note, receive and publish the following items of correspondence (Mr Winter):

- o Letter from the Hon. Felix Ellis MP, regarding Liberty Bell Bay, dated 31 August 2026; and
- o Response to Questions on Notice from Ms Jane Howlett MP, dated 31 August 2026.

Resolved, that no further action required by the Committee regarding Liberty Bell Bay (Mr Winter).

The Committee noted and received the incoming correspondence from Mr Luke Gaetani dated 14 September 2026 (Ms Badger).

The Committee discussed Mr Gaetani's request for confidentiality in relation to his first piece of correspondence with the Committee.

The Question being put – that the Committee publish the correspondence from Mr Gaetani, dated 27 August 2026, and write to him confirming this course of action and the date and time at which the letter will be published.

The Committee divided:-

Ayes	Noes
Ms Badger	Mr Vermey
Mr Garland	
Mr Winter	

And so it was passed in the Affirmative.

The letters from the Committee to Mr Gaetani on this matter are also to be published.

OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE

Noted the outgoing correspondence to Mr Luke Gaetani, dated 1 September 2026.

CONSIDERATION OF EVIDENCE

The Committee considered the evidence provided by Ms Minnikin-Smith, including references to third parties.

Resolved, to write to the Premier (cc'ing DPAC and MPS), Minister Vincent and Ms Howlett MP alerting them to the evidence and providing an opportunity to respond if they wish (*Ms Badger*).

OTHER MATTERS

Nil.

At 3.28 p.m. the Committee adjourned until Wednesday, 23 September 2026.

Confirmed,

WEDNESDAY, 23 September 2026

The Committee met in Committee Room 3, Parliament House, Hobart at 1.34 p.m.

Members Present:

Ms Badger (Chair)
Mr Vermey
Mr Winter

APOLOGISES

Mr Garland was an apology.

MINUTES

Resolved, that the minutes be adopted as an accurate record of proceedings (*Mr Winter*)

INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE

Nil.

OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE

Noted the outgoing correspondence to the Premier (cc'ing DPAC and MPS), Minister Vincent and Ms Jane Howlett MP, dated 17 September 2026 and correspondence to Mr Luke Gaetani dated 21 September 2026.

CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT REPORT

The Committee continued consideration of the Draft Report.

Chapter 4

Paragraphs 4.1 – 4.3 agreed to.

Paragraphs 4.4 and 4.5 agreed to.

Paragraphs 4.6 and 4.7 agreed to.

Paragraphs 4.9 – 4.11 agreed to.

Paragraph 4.12 agreed to as amended.

Paragraph 4.13 agreed to.

Paragraph 4.14 agreed to as amended.

Paragraph 4.15 agreed to.

Paragraphs 4.16 – 4.18 agreed to.

Paragraph 4.19 agreed to.

New inserted Paragraph 4.20 agreed to.

New Paragraphs 4.21 – 4.23 agreed to.

New Paragraph 4.24 agreed to as amended.

New Paragraphs 4.25 – 4.29 agreed to.

New Paragraph 4.30 agreed to as amended.

New Paragraphs 4.31 – 4.37 agreed to.

New Paragraphs 4.38 – 4.44 agreed to.

New Paragraphs 4.45 and 4.46 agreed to.

New Paragraph 4.47 agreed to.

New inserted Paragraphs 4.48 and 4.49 agreed to.

New Paragraphs 4.50 and 4.51 agreed to.

Findings

Finding 8 agreed to.

New Finding 9 inserted and agreed to.

New Finding 10 agreed to.

New Finding 11 agreed to.

New Finding 12 agreed to.

New Finding 13 inserted and considered.
Committee to consider further.

Recommendations

Recommendation 3 agreed to.

Recommendation 4 agreed to.

Suspension of sitting from 2.57 p.m. – 3.06 p.m.

Chapter 5

Sections of Chapter 5 reconsidered.

New inserted Paragraph 5.6 agreed to.

Paragraph 5.12 agreed to as amended.

Paragraph 5.13 agreed to as amended.

Findings

New inserted Finding 15 agreed to.

New Finding 16 agreed to as amended.

Chapter 7

Paragraph 7.1 agreed to.

Paragraph 7.2 agreed to as amended.

Paragraphs 7.3 – 7.6 agreed to.

Paragraph 7.7 agreed to as amended.

Paragraphs 7.8 – 7.13 agreed to.

Paragraph 7.14 agreed to as amended.

Paragraph 7.15 agreed to as amended.

New inserted Paragraph 7.16 agreed to.

Potential for further additional inclusion after
this new inserted paragraph.

New Paragraphs 7.17 – 7.20 agreed to.

Paragraph 7.21 agreed to as amended.

Paragraphs 7.22 – 7.27 agreed to.

Paragraph 7.28 deferred.

Findings and Recommendations deferred.

Resolved, to write to the TEC requesting the
campaign return of the Hon. Mr Vincent MLC
from the 2024 Prosser election and a response
as to whether MPS staff time should be
accounted for in such returns (Mr Winter).

Mr Winter raised the potential referral of
evidence before the Committee to relevant
persons or organisations for investigation. To
be discussed at the next meeting of the
Committee.

OTHER MATTERS

Nil.

At 4.14 p.m. the Committee adjourned until
Tuesday, 29 September 2026 at 9 a.m.

Confirmed,

TUESDAY, 29 September 2026

The Committee met in Committee Room 3,
Parliament House, Hobart and Via Microsoft
Teams at 9.01 a.m.

Members Present:

In Committee Room 3:

Ms Badger (Chair)

Mr Vermey

Via Microsoft Teams:

Mr Garland

Mr Winter

APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

MINUTES

Resolved, that the minutes of the meeting on
23 September 2026 be adopted as an accurate
record of proceedings (Mr Vermey)

INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE

The Committee noted as received incoming correspondence from the Tasmanian Electoral Commission (TEC), dated 28 September 2026 (Mr Vermey).

Resolved, to again write to the TEC requesting the 2024 Prosser Election return of the Hon. Kerry Vincent MLC (Mr Winter).

Noted that the Committee will need an additional meeting to consider a response from the TEC and finalise its Report.

OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE

Noted the outgoing correspondence to the TEC regarding the 2024 Prosser Election.

CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT REPORT

The Committee continued consideration of the Draft Report.

Chapter 4

Finding 13 agreed to as amended.

Chapter 6

New inserted Paragraph 6.15 agreed to.

New Paragraph 6.16 agreed to as amended.

Finding 19 reconsidered and agreed to as amended.

Recommendation 5 removed.

New Recommendation 5 inserted and agreed to.

Chapter 7

Paragraph 7.16 and potential new inserted Paragraph deferred.

New inserted Paragraph 6.28 agreed to.

Findings and recommendations deferred.

OTHER MATTERS

Nil.

At 9.58 a.m. the Committee adjourned until Monday, 12 October 2026 at 2.30 p.m.

Confirmed,

MONDAY, 12 October 2026

The Committee met in Committee Room 3, Parliament House, Hobart and Via Microsoft Teams at 2.30 p.m.

Members Present:

In Committee Room 3:
Ms Badger (Chair)

Via Microsoft Teams:
Mr Garland
Mr Winter

APOLOGIES

Mr Vermey was an apology.

MINUTES

Resolved, that the minutes of the meeting on 29 September 2026 be adopted as an accurate record of proceedings (Mr Winter)

INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE

The Committee noted as received incoming correspondence from the Tasmanian Electoral Commission (TEC), dated 2 October 2026 (Ms Badger).

Resolved, to discontinue the line of query with the TEC in light of the RTI response received by Mr Winter, which he supplied to the Committee. The Chair will write to the TEC informing them that the request no longer needs to be considered by the Board (Ms Badger).

Resolved, to publish the chain of correspondence with the TEC (Mr Winter).

Resolved, to receive as evidence and publish the RTI Response from the TEC to Mr Winter, which is the 2024 Prosser candidate election expenditure return of the Hon. Kerry Vincent MLC (Mr Winter).

OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE

Noted the second item of outgoing correspondence to the TEC regarding the 2024 Prosser Election, dated 29 September 2026.

CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT REPORT

The Committee continued consideration of the Draft Report.

Chapter 7 continued

New inserted Paragraph 7.17 agreed to.

Findings

Finding 20 considered and amended.

Finding 21 considered and amended.

New inserted Finding 23 considered.

New inserted Finding 24 considered.

New inserted Finding 25 considered.

Recommendations

Draft Recommendations 6 and 7 removed.

New inserted Recommendation 6 considered.

Chapter 4 reconsidered

Findings

New inserted Finding 13 considered.

Chapter 5 reconsidered

Recommendations

Finding 5 reconsidered and amended.

Final meeting of the Committee to be held on 16 or 23 October 2026, date and time to be confirmed after discussions with Mr Vermey.

OTHER MATTERS

Nil.

At 4.30 p.m. the Committee adjourned until a date to be confirmed.

Confirmed,

MONDAY, 26 October 2026

The Committee met in Committee Room 2, Parliament House, Hobart and Via Microsoft Teams at 12.00 p.m.

Members Present:

In Committee Room 3:

Ms *Badger* (Chair)

Mr *Winter*

Via Microsoft Teams:

Mr *Vermey*

APOLOGIES

Mr *Garland* was an apology.

MINUTES

Resolved, that the minutes of the meeting on **12 October 2026** be adopted as an accurate record of proceedings (Mr *Winter*).

INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE

The Committee noted as received incoming correspondence from the Tasmanian Electoral Commission (TEC), dated 2 October 2026 and correspondence from Kim Philips-Haines dated 24 October 2026 (Ms *Badger*).

Resolved, to publish the TEC letter with the others published on the webpage (Mr *Winter*).

Resolved, to respond to Ms Philips-Haines thanking her and explaining that, due to the Committee reporting tomorrow, the matter will not be investigated further (Mr *Winter*).

OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE

Noted outgoing correspondence to the TEC regarding the 2024 Prosser Election, dated 13 October 2026.

CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT REPORT

The Committee continued consideration of the Draft Report.

Findings

Finding 12 further considered and amended.

New inserted Finding 13 considered.

New Finding 14 further considered.

New inserted Finding 15 considered.

Finding 25 further considered.

New Finding 28 removed.

New inserted Finding 28 considered.

Recommendations

Recommendation 6 further considered and amended.

Report in full

Findings 1 – 3 agreed to.

Finding 4 considered.

Question was put – That Finding 4 be agreed to;

The Committee divided

Ayes 2	Noes 1
<i>Ms Badger</i>	<i>Mr Vermey</i>
<i>Mr Winter</i>	

And it was resolved in the Affirmative.
Findings 5 and 6 agreed to.

Finding 7 considered.

Question was put – That Finding 7 be agreed to;

The Committee divided

Ayes 2	Noes 1
<i>Ms Badger</i>	<i>Mr Vermey</i>
<i>Mr Winter</i>	

And it was resolved in the Affirmative.

Findings 8 – 18 agreed to.

Findings 19 and 20 agreed to.

Finding 21 considered.

Question was put – That Finding 21 be agreed to;

The Committee divided

Ayes 2	Noes 1
<i>Ms Badger</i>	<i>Mr Vermey</i>
<i>Mr Winter</i>	

And it was resolved in the Affirmative.

Finding 22 agreed to.

Finding 23 considered.

Question was put – That Finding 23 be agreed to;

The Committee divided

Ayes 2	Noes 1
<i>Ms Badger</i>	<i>Mr Vermey</i>
<i>Mr Winter</i>	

And it was resolved in the Affirmative.

Finding 24 considered.

Question was put – That Finding 24 be agreed to;

The Committee divided

Ayes 2	Noes 1
<i>Ms Badger</i>	<i>Mr Vermey</i>
<i>Mr Winter</i>	

And it was resolved in the Affirmative.

Finding 25 agreed to.

Finding 26 considered.

Question was put – That Finding 26 be agreed to;

The Committee divided

Ayes 2 Noes 1
Ms Badger Mr Vermey
Mr Winter

And it was resolved in the Affirmative.

Finding 27 considered.
Question was put – That Finding 27 be agreed to;

The Committee divided

Ayes 2 Noes 1
Ms Badger Mr Vermey
Mr Winter

And it was resolved in the Affirmative.

Finding 28 considered.
Question was put – That Finding 28 be agreed to;

The Committee divided

Ayes 2 Noes 1
Ms Badger Mr Vermey
Mr Winter

And it was resolved in the Affirmative.

Recommendations 1 – 5 agreed to.

Recommendation 6 considered.

Question was put – That Recommendation 6 be agreed to;

The Committee divided

Ayes 2 Noes 1
Ms Badger Mr Vermey
Mr Winter

And it was resolved in the Affirmative.

Question was put – that Chapters 1 – 7 stand as part of the Report.

And it was resolved in the Affirmative.

Question was put – that Appendices A – D, including unconfirmed minutes from today's meeting, stand part of the Report.
And it was resolved in the Affirmative.

And the Question being put that the Report be the Report of the Committee.
And it was resolved in the Affirmative.

Resolved, that any dissenting report be provided to the Secretary by 9.30 a.m. on Tuesday, 27 October 2026 for appending to the Report (Ms Badger).

Resolved, that participants be provided a link to the Report once tabled and that a media release be circulated (Mr Winter).

OTHER MATTERS
Nil.

At 1.05 p.m. the Committee adjourned *sine die*.

Unconfirmed,

APPENDIX D – TRANSCRIPTS OF EVIDENCE

Also available digitally on the Committee webpage:

<https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/committees/house-of-assembly/select-committees/select-committee-on-caretaker-conventions>

