



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

REPORT OF DEBATES

Wednesday 24 June 2026

REVISED EDITION

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Wednesday 24 June 2026

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

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

Bicentenary of the Legislative Council

[11.06 a.m.]

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, officers and staff of the Legislative Council, in June 2026, Tasmania marks a significant milestone - the bicentenary of the Legislative Council.

The Council's history mirrors Tasmania's wider democratic development - from its beginnings as an appointed advisory body, through the expansion of representative government, to its present role as a fully elected and representative House of review.

The Council's strengths lie both in its traditions and continuity, and its capacity to adapt. While the challenges facing our society have changed, the fundamental purpose of the Legislative Council remains constant: to represent Tasmania's diverse communities, to robustly review and scrutinise legislation, and to safeguard the principles of responsible government.

This anniversary provides an opportunity to acknowledge the individuals who have served within it over the past 200 years - members, officers and staff - whose commitment has sustained its work over generations. Their contribution forms a legacy of dedication, integrity and civic responsibility that continues to guide the Council today.

As we look to the future, in an increasingly complex and fast-moving world, the need for thoughtful deliberation, careful scrutiny and independent review is as important as ever. The Council will continue to uphold these principles in the service of all Tasmanians.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2026 (No. 18)

In Committee

Continued from 23 June 2026 (page 93).

Division 9 - Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management

Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management

Operating Services

Output Group 1 - Public Safety

Output 1.1 Support to the Community

Ms WEBB - Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. Just Chair? I wondered where we got up to with Second Deputy Chair.

I did keep some questions open on this line item, which was because we hadn't been provided with answers to them at the time that we met, but they have now been provided. The second question there was in terms of total number of external consultancies and the third question was about expenditure on internal reviews, and both of those have now been provided through to the Committee and I believe they have been tabled or are soon to be tabled. I have no further questions on those.

Ms ARMITAGE - Madam Deputy Chair, I seek leave to table the additional information provided by the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management in relation to Output Group 1.1, to be included as part of the report of Estimates Committee B. This additional information was provided by the minister after the committee had reported and therefore could not be included in its final report.

Leave granted; documents tabled.

Ms ARMITAGE - This was a question I couldn't get an answer to in Estimates; in the end, I just had to leave it. It was to do with the clarification and the rollout of the 12-month pilot wellbeing and mental health support program. I really just wanted to know a concrete timeline because I believe that the government had officially committed to commencing it by mid-year, and the answers I kept getting were to do with other areas of help for retired officers, as opposed to the pilot program. If I can get some information on where the pilot program is at and when it's likely to start, it would just be useful, obviously, for the retired officers who are waiting on it.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, I'm seeking that advice. I can see I have additional assistance today, which I think will be really useful.

I'm writing my own answers now. To the honourable member, this is a very complex matter, and that probably explains why it was difficult to get a clear and concise answer.

Ms ARMITAGE - I didn't get any answer.

Ms RATTRAY - But I can assure you and all other honourable members and any of those officers who might partake in a program of this nature that the government is committed to the pilot program, and discussions with experts on what is required to meet the needs of the program are being undertaken now. There will be some further information provided as soon as possible.

Ms ARMITAGE - With respect, it's not quite an answer. What I'm hearing from particularly retired officers is that they've been told this was being rolled out, that there should be something in place by mid-year, so where is it at and are former officers and current officers being consulted? What's actually happening with the pilot program?

This is what they want to know. They don't want to hear that discussions are happening and it's in the future and we will be told. Where is it at? My understanding is it was supposed to be rolled out or at least something happening by mid-year. We're mid-year now. The answer that I was getting, with a little bit of leeway, was I was told all about how retired officers are wellbeing support officers. That was the answer I got in Estimates, which was nothing to do with the pilot program. I would really like some understanding for those officers who have asked me and who are suffering now, where is this pilot program at? I'd like some dates, if

possible, not just to say in the future that we're looking at - no disrespect to you. It's not your problem, Leader, but I would like some answers for the officers who are concerned.

Ms RATTRAY - Again, I will seek some further explanation on what was previously presented to the member.

I will start with this bit first. At this stage it is not possible to confirm a start date. As I've already indicated, they are complex matters, including and in relation to workers compensation, that must be resolved before a pilot program can be established. I can again reiterate that further discussions are occurring to facilitate the rollout. It is appreciated there is some urgency for this matter and as soon as possible an update will be provided. I give that commitment to the member and any other member who may be interested in this important program that is to be put in place.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Honourable member for Launceston, you have used your third call, but I do note you used one of your calls to table documents and you sat down again and I am prepared to offer you the leeway to ask another question - one more call on this only.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you. Now, this is one final question with regard to that. You mentioned the workers compensation. Now, we all know there'd been some ongoing, long-term compensation matters in this regard. Is there any indication of how long that may take? Because if that impacts on the 12-month pilot wellbeing and mental health support program, which we know is very important to police and we should support our emergency people at all costs, have we any indication of how long? I don't really want an answer to say, 'No, we have no indication.' Is it likely to be months or is it likely to be years of how long this workers compensation is going to actually take to resolve before we can start the pilot program?

Ms RATTRAY - Again, I will seek some assistance.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. I trust this might be a tad more helpful to the member. The issue relates to the potential interaction of the program with departmental workers compensation obligations. It does not require the resolution of the department's broader workers compensation matters, so I think that would certainly be a relief to the member. It's expected that it's a matter of weeks, if not just months, not years.

Item agreed to.

Output Group 2 - Crime

Output 2.1 Investigation of Crime

Ms WEBB - Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. There are some questions that have been kept open that we've popped into this line. It relates to questions I asked and were taken on notice during the Estimates process relating to Project Unify and engagement of KPMG. Twice now we've received correspondence back to the committee to say the Commissioner of Police has written to the Crown Solicitor seeking advice on what information can be legally released in accordance with the separation deed with KPMG, in relation to my questions three and four that were sent through. That's been provided twice and the indication is they will provide answers as soon as practicable. I'm not particularly satisfied with that. I'm sure there are elements to these questions that can be answered now. I would like to have a better understanding about the timeline for getting answers to these and specifically which elements

of these questions are not able to be answered until information from the Crown Solicitor is provided. If it's useful, I can read the questions. The questions are these:

- (1) With regard to the engagement of KPMG for Project Unify and subsequent cancellation of that contract, could you please provide the following information:
 1. Details of all expenditure on KPMG contracts for the project up to the date of cancellation.

I don't see why that can't be provided.

2. Details of deliverables completed under the KPMG contract.
3. An explanation of the cancellation of the KPMG contract. For example, was there a termination of the contract for cause or convenience? Were any termination payments made to KPMG?

With respect to Project Unify, can you please provide an update on the project's funding and delivery status? Specifically:

1. In 2020, \$46 million was allocated to Project Unify. Please provide a breakdown of this allocation for specific areas. Please provide details for each area on how much of the allocation has been expended to date. Please provide details on any additional funds which have been allocated in these project areas since the initial 2020 allocation.
2. In relation to that area, can you please provide a timeline showing what has been delivered in each funded project area, the expenditure of funding in each area over time, details on what remains to be delivered, and the estimated additional funding required to complete the project's objectives.

We've now had a couple of weeks go past for at least some information in answer to these questions to be provided. I'm sure legal advice doesn't prevent us from answering at least some of these questions, and I'd like to have some answers provided today, to the extent that that's possible.

All members will understand that oversight of digital projects being undertaken within departments is quite topical at the moment, and so here this is part of our scrutiny in this Chamber, asking questions and for information to be provided on the parliamentary record about progress of these sorts of projects. I'll leave it at that, and I hope to have some answers.

Ms RATTRAY - Okay, thank you and I appreciate the honourable member reading out those questions for the public record. That's very useful.

Prior to preparing or in preparing the response that the honourable member referred to, it's really important that we need to ensure that the state government complies with confidentiality obligations of a settlement deed and they have received preliminary advice from the Crown Solicitor in regard to providing information. It certainly will be provided as soon as it's possible.

Regarding the question regarding deliverables, it also needs to be very careful that the state does not breach its obligations in providing any answer that may risk a breach and hence the Office of the Crown Solicitor's advice.

Again, regarding the funding payments, if that's disclosed, it may give rise to inadvertently breaching that confidentiality obligation. Therefore, regrettably, there's no further advice as such, but it will be provided as soon as it is possibly able to be provided, certainly outside of this process.

Ms WEBB - This is such a frustrating situation because here's the situation where tens of millions of dollars worth of public money is being spent on a digital upgrade project within this department, and apparently because we've engaged external consultants to deliver elements of that project and something has gone astray or whatever and that project has now been cancelled, we can't ask questions and get details on the expenditure of that public money in an open, transparent way here in this place.

It is utterly unacceptable that that is the situation we find ourselves in. Why can't you provide me with detail about what has been expended as per the second set of questions I just read in in my first contribution on this line?

Why can't we have a breakdown of what's been allocated against specific areas? Why can't we have details for each area on how much of the allocation has been expended, for example, compared to what was budgeted? This is what we're trying to track: what was allocated in each budget, what has been spent of that allocation, and the areas it's been spent in.

It is utterly unacceptable to say that we're legally prevented from having oversight of this expenditure of public money. I would like to expressly know against each of the questions, and the department have had these questions in writing since we put them at the Estimates table, what specifically prevents you from answering each of these questions that I put here?

Ms RATTRAY - I certainly note the honourable member's frustration around this, but I also would respectfully request that when you have confidentiality obligations around a settlement deed, you can only answer what you can. Advice has been sought, preliminary advice has been received from the Crown Solicitor and there needed to be some follow-up questions to that advice and that is what we are awaiting. As soon as that comes, then the information - whatever can be provided - will be provided. There will be some clarity, but we still have to wait for that process to happen.

Ms WEBB - Against each of these questions? What about that last one? Estimated additional funding required to complete the project's objectives? How is that related to a legal confidentiality requirement from a contract that was cancelled? Surely that can be answered.

Ms RATTRAY - I'll sit down and see if I can provide that advice.

In response to the additional funding: it has not been confirmed that any additional funding will be required at this stage. I just want to reinforce the message that as soon as the legal advice is provided and any details can be shared - whatever that might look like, and it might well be a confidentiality arrangement with members of this place - that may well be

something that can be looked at. But until that advice comes through, we're not able to provide the information that the honourable member is seeking at this point in time.

Ms WEBB - I find this astonishing. I think this is just avoiding answering questions and being accountable. I accept that there might be elements of some of these questions that might need to be covered by legal advice in terms of what can and can't be shared, absolutely, about deliverables, for example. I accept that. I don't accept that there should be a legal shield - and we've had two weeks here to get the information - over readily providing information about expenditure that the department has undertaken and about things like timelines and what has been allocated over time in particular areas. They are the department's decisions about how they're allocating funding and what the areas are. It's about the project plan.

Why on earth is there not transparency around that? If there isn't, this is an incredibly problematic situation for us to find ourselves in, given that this is a significant expenditure of public money. There's an oversight responsibility that we have in this place and we're being prevented, potentially, from readily having information about it. I'll be very interested to see what and if something is eventually made available to us in answer to these questions, and I will expect to see an explanation of why legal advice was required before that could be disclosed and it couldn't be disclosed here and now in this Chamber, publicly on the parliamentary record. That's what I'll expect to see when we eventually get whatever we might get in answer to these questions.

Ms RATTRAY - At the expense of repeating some of what I've already said, and I note the member's frustration and her request, and it will be actioned as soon as possible. As I've said, preliminary legal advice has been sought. This has now been received, and this has now been considered, and advice will be provided after it has been considered. It's being actioned, and you just have to be careful about the confidentiality obligations.

Item agreed to.

Output 2.2 Fisheries Security
Output 2.3 Support to Judicial Services

Items agreed to.

Output Group 3 - Traffic Policing
Output 3.1 Traffic Policing

Item agreed to.

Output Group 4 - Emergency Management
4.1 Fire and Emergency Services
4.2 State Security and Rescue Operations

Items agreed to.

Capital Services
Capital Investment Program

Item, as read, agreed to.

Division agreed to without request and without amendment.

Division 10 - Department of Premier and Cabinet

Premier

Operating Services

Output Group 1 - Policy Reform and Government Priorities

Output 1.1 Strategic Policy and Government Priorities

Output 1.2 Child and Youth Wellbeing

Output 1.3 Security and Emergency Management

Items agreed to.

Output Group 2 - Government System Support

Output 2.1 Support Services for Government, Ministerial Parliamentary Offices and Office of the Governor

Ms ARMITAGE - I seek leave to table additional information.

Leave granted.

Ms ARMITAGE - I table the additional information provided by the Premier in relation to Output 2.1 to be included as part of the report of Estimates Committee B. This additional information was provided by the Premier after the committee had reported and therefore could not be included in its final report.

Document tabled.

Ms WEBB - The fact that information came in late has covered some of the questions that I asked here, which related to providing a list of all ministerial requests for legal assistance made in compliance with the Policy and Guidelines for the Grant of Indemnities and Legal Assistance to Public Officers of the State of Tasmania. I asked for that across 2024-25 and 2025-26 to date, including names, dates and amounts requested. Now we've been provided with that in what has just been tabled. That is good to have clear transparency around the ministers who requested it and received financial support for legal assistance.

The other question that has come through in the tabled information was the question about the fact that the guidelines set out that in granting legal assistance a limit can be placed on how much taxpayer support can be provided to a public officer. My question had been specifically whether any limit had been placed on the expenditure of Ms Ogilvie's legal costs, and that has come back to say, yes, it was \$120,000 and, presumably, that's what we understand is the total of assistance she has received so, clearly, a limit was placed at that level. That's useful to know.

I don't have further questions on that, but there was another question in this line-item area that I was not happy with the response we received to questions on notice. I asked the question: in the 2024-25 financial year, how many invoices from Madeleine Ogilvie's legal costs were approved by Cabinet? The response that came back was a bit facetious, Madam Deputy Chair, because it said:

Once indemnity has been approved by Cabinet, the Cabinet Secretary approves the invoices in line with any conditions.

Clearly, the intent of my question was about how many invoices. That said, well, it's not Cabinet who approves the invoices, it's the Cabinet Secretary and they haven't actually provided a number. If we could revert to the intent of that question and see if an answer can be provided. How many invoices for Madeleine Ogilvie's legal costs were approved? Regardless of whether it was Cabinet or the Cabinet Secretary, it's the number that were approved that I'm interested in here. Thank you.

Ms RATTRAY - I am seeking advice.

There were six invoices that were approved.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. It was pretty easy, wasn't it, to provide a number in response to the intent of that question?

Can you provide a breakdown across the years in which they were approved please, if possible?

Ms RATTRAY - I will seek that additional information.

Recognition of Visitors

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Honourable members, while we're waiting for the honourable Leader to provide an answer, it gives me pleasure to welcome to the Chamber today grade 6 students from John Paul II Catholic School, which I believe is in Richmond, which is in the member for Rumney's electorate. The member for Rumney is here on my left. I'm sure all members will join me in welcoming you to the parliament today and hope that you have a wonderful day here learning all about the parliament.

We're just discussing the Budget. It is very important how the government appropriates the money on behalf of Tasmanians to deliver all sorts of programs and services and infrastructure that Tasmanians rely on every day. That's what we're asking questions about today. I'm sure all honourable members will join me in welcoming you to the parliament.

Members - Hear, hear.

Ms RATTRAY - Six invoices totalling \$33,053.66 were approved and paid in the 2024-25 financial year; two invoices on 12 November 2024 and four invoices on 3 June 2025.

Item agreed to.

Output 2.2 Principal and Subordinate Legislation

Output 2.3. State Service Employment and Management

Items agreed to.

Output Group 3 - Community and Government Service Delivery
Output 3.2 Management and Ongoing Development of Service Tasmania

Item agreed to.

Capital Services
Capital Investment Program

Item agreed to.

Output Group 1 - Policy Reform and Government Priorities
Output 1.6 Aboriginal Affairs

Item agreed to.

Minister for Disability Services
Operating Services

Output Group 1 - Policy Reform and Government Priorities
Output 1.7 Disability Services
Output 1.8 National Disability Insurance Scheme
Output 1.10 Office of the Disability Commissioner

Items agreed to.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Operating Services

Output Group 1 - Policy and Government Priorities
Output 1.5 Veterans' Affairs

Item agreed to.

Minister for Local Government
Operating Services

Output Group 1 - Policy Reform and Government Priorities
Output 1.9 Local Government

Item agreed to.

Minister for Community and Multicultural Affairs
Operating Services

Output Group 3 - Community and Government Service Delivery
Output 3.3 Community Services

Item agreed to

Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence

Operating Services

Output Group 1 - Policy Reform and Government Priorities

Output 1.4. Women and the Prevention of Family Violence

Item agreed to.

Minister for Innovation, Science and Digital Economy, Economy

Operating Services

Output Group 3 - Community and Government Service Delivery

Output 3.1 Digital Government and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) - Strategy, Policy and Service Delivery

Item agreed to.

Minister for Macquarie Point Urban Renewal

Operating Services

Grants and Subsidies

Ms O'CONNOR - This is the point at the Estimates table where I again ask government to prove that the alleged P90 cost assessment for the stadium was to an Australian industry standard. What we have here in the answer to the question on notice from the Treasurer is simply a statement that the P90 cost assessment is to an industry standard. Then there's some qualifiers there saying it's in accordance with state government, Australian Government and industry guidance documents. Again, it's another example of where this government is asking us to take them on trust for a proposal which is going to come in in the order of \$2 billion at a minimum by the time that it is completed, if it ever is.

I want to put on record that I don't regard this answer to the question that was asked in Estimates and then put on notice as satisfactory or transparent. This government has a trust problem. My question off the back of it ultimately is: we're told that this P90 cost assessment for the stadium's cost is to an industry standard. We were told that on 4 December last year and my question to the Leader for the Government is: has the P90, as it was at 4 December last year, changed in the intervening period?

Ms RATTRAY - The answer is no, it hasn't changed.

Ms O'CONNOR - The Leader for the Government has advised that the costs that were projected to be part of the stadium as at 4 December last year are the same as the costs now, despite the fact that in the intervening months the Trump regime has launched a war on Iran, the Strait of Hormuz is closed and construction costs have risen by almost 20 per cent around the country. I'm keen to hear the Leader for the Government state unequivocally on the *Hansard* record that there's been no change whatsoever to the estimated cost of stadium construction, because in some ways that's quite a worry, isn't it, because it means that government is not factoring in those likely cost pressures that will be part of the stadium. Could the Leader for the Government unequivocally state on the *Hansard* record that the P90 cost assessment

prepared by a quantity surveyor for Macquarie Point Development Corporation that was referenced in the letter of 4 December last year has not changed one bit since then?

Ms RATTRAY - I can confirm that the P90 cost estimate for the stadium hasn't changed. It was completed in September and was prepared by the project consultant quantity surveyor, who has expertise in construction costs. Additionally, the P90 is informed by detailed design drawings. It includes both client and contract contingencies, and it has been completed by the project quantity surveyor team with the P90 development led by the national risk manager, who is a member of the Australian Institute of Quantity Surveyors with the designation of Certified Quantity Surveyor.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, again, more bland assurances from government that all is well and this P90 is just fine. Is it still the government's position that the wider Council should not be provided an opportunity to have a look at this P90 assessment? Honourable members will recall that I've been asking, at a bare minimum, for MLCs to have a briefing on the P90. We know it has been shown to the Public Accounts Committee, which has on it a small number of members of this place, three in a House of 15 members. Is it still the government's position that they're refusing to allow other members of the Legislative Council to examine that critical document that was provided to PAC but was also part of the government's assurances regarding reining in costs for this completely unaffordable and totally unpopular project?

Ms Webb - It could be in-confidence, couldn't it?

Ms O'CONNOR - Could be in-confidence.

Ms RATTRAY - An overview of the budget components has already been provided in the published Macquarie Point Multipurpose Stadium: Government Response released in October of 2025.

The risk assessment and cost planning are important project management tools, and disclosure and dispersal of information needs to be contained and carefully managed to protect probity, competition and participant confidence in the process. The evaluation committee members and nominated staff assisting the process complete probity training, documentation and complete confidentiality agreements, which are maintained in a register where documents are accessed, and these are constrained to nominated roles and persons.

I can confirm, and it was indicated by the honourable member, that this information has been provided to the Public Accounts Committee on 25 May 2026.

Ms O'CONNOR - Just a point of order if I could, Madam Deputy Chair. I personally take offence to the imputation in that answer that other members of the Legislative Council can't be trusted with this information and I want that placed on the record.

Ms RATTRAY - Madam Deputy Chair, that was never an assertion, and I take offence at that - that you would even think that.

Ms O'Connor - I said it was an imputation. You read out what was given to you, honourable Leader.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Order. Order.

Ms WEBB - Clearly the Leader has taken some exception at that. I don't think it was a comment that was directed to her personally. She was reading out an answer provided by advisers.

Before the member for Hobart was rising, I was going to rise to follow up on that because I took from that answer provided a suggestion that members of this place requesting potentially confidential access to that information wouldn't reach the same standard of probity and confidence in terms of keeping that information confidential that the other staff and others who were described in the answer are obviously requested and required to provide. We have a very clear standard here in this parliament when information is provided confidentially for our oversight purposes, that it is not breached. That happens in committees. It happens in other instances across the parliament; for example, various pieces of information provided in relation to the Marinus project last year on a confidential basis to members. So, I do take exception as well.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Do you have a question?

Ms WEBB - Yes, I'm getting to a question. Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. I do also take exception that there would be a suggestion that this isn't a pathway available on the reasonable request of members of this place to have confidential information provided on this P90 assessment, that we wouldn't be able to deal with that in an appropriate confidential manner. My question is to the Leader again to reiterate the question of the member for Hobart, as a clear request here from members of this place. What is it that the government is putting forward as the objection to a clearly established arrangement for this parliament to deal with confidential information, to not provide it to us on that basis? What is the reason, if it isn't suggesting that we wouldn't be able to be trusted? Which I don't think was the intention of the previous answer but could be imputed from it.

Ms RATTRAY - I am seeking some further advice, Madam Deputy Chair.

There is currently a live procurement process underway, and the expression of interest process was the first phase. They're currently in the request for tender phase. It's an important part of probity to limit the dispersion of information to only those who require it for the assessment process and the information can be shared after that process is completed. That information will be available after the process is completed.

Ms WEBB - I want to be very clear here. Is the government undertaking to provide members of this place who wish to have access to the P90 assessment from 4 December that was signed - I think referenced in the 4 December letter to the member for Elwick - and what is the timeline on that then? There's still a problem here in my mind, because there still seems to be a suggestion that providing members with that now somehow jeopardises a process in train around the tender - the implication being we would somehow disperse it. Clearly, that is not the established and well-adhered to practice of this place when we are provided with confidential information.

To clarify, why is it that process that's in train at the moment prevents us from accessing this in our oversight capacity, given that we have a clear, demonstrated, established practice of not ever breaching that confidentiality arrangement in this parliamentary context? How is it related to what's going on in terms of the project tender, or whatever, I've forgotten the

terminology you've used? And then, what's the timeline that you're asserting it can be provided and what specifically will be provided?

Ms RATTRAY - Again, I will find some more answers for the member.

A little further to my previous answers, the request for tender process has two stages, and stage 1 closes in August and the bids will be assessed when that closes. With stage 2 commencing in October 2026, an outcome is targeted for the end of the year and the P90 report can then be provided to the Council.

Please don't be offended by this, members, but I will reiterate an important part of probity is to limit the dispersion of information to only those who require it for the assessment process. That's why it's not readily shared.

Ms O'Connor - PAC doesn't fall into that category.

Ms WEBB - It's been provided to PAC. PAC is a parliamentary committee undertaking parliamentary processes. Everything that goes on in this Chamber is a parliamentary process. If there was no problem providing it to PAC, there is equally no problem providing it to other parliamentarians in a parliamentary process here within this Chamber. So, on what basis are you saying that there is a distinction to be made between what has already occurred with its provision to PAC and acceding to the request of other members in a parliamentary setting to receive the same confidential access to that information?

There is no distinction between those two parliamentary processes, potentially, and I'd like to understand on what basis you're making that distinction other than just to inappropriately prevent other members from receiving access to that information. What's the basis?

Ms O'Connor - Good question.

Ms RATTRAY - Just seeking further clarification around that follow-up question.

The Public Accounts Committee, and this won't be lost on anybody in this place, has specific powers and requirements as part of that role, and it was requested by the committee and it was provided on the basis, obviously, of being in-confidence. Again, the Public Accounts Committee, as they call it, the all-powerful committee around here, has specific powers and requirements as part of the role.

Ms Webb - So, they subpoenaed it, did they?

Item agreed to.

Division agreed to without request and without amendment.

Division 11 - Department of State Growth
Minister for Energy and Renewables
Operating Services

Output Group 7 - Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania

Output 7.1 Energy and Renewables

Ms THOMAS - The question that was asked on notice for the reason for leaving this one open was: can you please provide an expense and an appropriation breakdown for line item 7.1 across all areas of cost met through this output group over the forward Estimates? The question specifically requested a breakdown of the appropriation, but that has not been provided in the answer. The question was specifically asking, as we did across a number of different line items: what specifically is funded through that almost \$18 million budget appropriation? Why wasn't that breakdown provided, and can it be provided now?

Mr DUIGAN - I believe we have provided a table. The information presented in the table, already provided to the Estimates committee, has a breakdown of revenue and expenditure information for the output representing key sources of income and categories and areas of expenditure. The 2026-27 Budget includes the application of operational efficiencies to departmental outputs, including the energy output, and the profile for the output declines over the budget and forward Estimates when compared with 2025-26. This is largely due to the cessation of time-limited programs and the provisional allocation of operational efficiencies. As detailed on the record during the committee hearing, the time-limited programs that cease over this time include:

- Delivering the Renewable Energy Agenda, \$1.11 million in 2026-27 and \$1 million in 2027-28, then ceases;
- Energy Saver subsidy, \$500,000 in 2026-27 and again in 2027-28, and then ceases;
- Renewable Energy Assessment Pathway, \$3.41 million in 2026-27 and 2027-28, and then ceases;
- Renewable Energy Services Hub, \$600,000 in 2026-27; \$1.3 million in 2027-28; \$1.68 million in 2028-29, then ceases;
- Tasmanian Green Hydrogen Hub, \$4 million in 2026-27, then ceases in 2027-28;
- Small Business Energy Audits, \$450,000 in 2026-27 and 2027-28, then ceases;
- Hydrogen Industry Fund has funding across the forward Estimates and it's important to recognise that budget measures in both the Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania (ReCFIT) and Treasury estimates, North West Transmission Developments and electricity concessions are dealt with in Treasury.

If that answers the question?

Ms THOMAS - I appreciate the minister providing that information. What I heard is that I think you said the Hydrogen Industry Fund is funded across the forward Estimates. All of the other things that you mentioned, if I heard correctly, are funded in 2026-27 but then cease funding across the forward Estimates, so is the Hydrogen Industry Fund the only item that is funded through the appropriation across the forward Estimates then, and then the list you read

out for 2026-27, did that incorporate every single item funded through that that makes up that \$17.978 million allocation?

Mr DUIGAN - I will seek clarification.

Yes, that's correct. The only one that continues through the entirety of the forward Estimates is the Hydrogen Industry Fund. All those other programs that I mentioned are time limited and cease in the next year, or the year following that.

Ms THOMAS - I acknowledge this is my final call, so I'll try to ask a couple of things.

Minister, in 2027-28, 2028-29 and 2029-30, those budget allocations of \$7.89 million, \$5.1 million and \$4.6 million are consumed totally by the Hydrogen Industry Fund. That's my first question. That's the only thing funded through that 7.1 budget line item -

Mr DUIGAN - In which year?

Ms THOMAS - In those out years, 2027-28, 2028-29, 2029-30.

Mr DUIGAN - There are a number of things that live in that.

Ms THOMAS - That was the question. We'd like to see a breakdown tabled of all the things that are funded through that line item. That's essentially what the question was seeking and what other ministers have tabled is a breakdown, I guess a bit like we had for Sport and Recreation. There was a breakdown tabled specifying how that appropriation is allocated to specific initiatives, so that's the question.

Mr DUIGAN - That's what I read out. There are a number of programs. They finish in the years that I mentioned. Some of them this year, some of them next year, some of them the year following. The only one that spans the length of the forward Estimates is the Hydrogen Industry Support Fund.

Ms Thomas - But what else is in that bucket? That's what you didn't read out.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - If you could stay standing - did you finish your question?

Ms Thomas - Yes, thank you.

Ms LOVELL - Following on from that answer; if I can clarify, two questions.

First of all, is the minister willing to table a breakdown of those allocations of funding or provide something in writing with the breakdown so that we're not just having a list read off here that we have to try to keep track of?

Second to that - trying to keep track of that as it was read out - can the minister confirm in that final year of the forward Estimates, 2029-30, there's \$4.66 million, and I believe there was only one program, the Hydrogen Industry Fund, that was still being funded by that stage? Is that correct? And if so, does that mean that entire \$4.66 million is going towards that program? If not, can you provide a breakdown in writing, preferably tabled so we're not wasting time here now, of what that money is allocated to across each of those forward Estimates?

Mr DUIGAN - I am seeking advice.

The hydrogen industry fund is not the entirety of the budget allocation in the out years as I understand it, and we can provide something in writing on the breakdown I've detailed there.

Ms Thomas - Today?

Mr DUIGAN - I'm not sure whether it's today or tomorrow, but by the end of the week, by the end of the sitting.

Item agreed to.

Minister for Arts and Heritage
Operating Services

Output Group 5 - Cultural and Tourism Development

Output 5.1 Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery

Output 5.2 Arts Industry Development

Items agreed to.

Output 5.3 Screen Industry Development

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - I've been told that the Screen Tasmania cultural review is a confidential departmental workforce matter and is for department purposes only. On what specific legal basis is the review confidential?

Ms RATTRAY - I acknowledge the member for Huon on her feet. It won't be long and she will be not off them, I expect. In response to the member, the department advice is that it is not to be made available because it is highly sensitive and deals with confidential staffing matters which would be inappropriate to disclose. Sharing any further information than what has been already provided, given the sensitivity and confidentiality, and noting there are several live matters currently in play, sharing outside of its intended use could have significant consequences including risk of workers compensation claims. Unfortunately, it's not publicly available because of those matters.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Without disclosing confidential details, will you commit to releasing a de-identified summary of the review and whether the review identified any systemic issues such as bullying, leadership failures or government concerns?

Ms RATTRAY - Okay, I've been able to source something for you. The department can provide a paraphrasing of the key issues for you, make that available. To provide a redacted report would potentially provide nothing, but to give you a paraphrasing of the key issues is something that can and will be provided.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - That's appreciated. Can you also report back then on what actions the department is planning to take in response to the review?

Ms RATTRAY - The answer is yes.

Item agreed to.

Grants and Subsidies

Item agreed to.

Capital Services

Capital Investment Program

Item, as read, agreed to.

Minister for Environment

Operating Services

Output Group 7 - Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania

Output 7.2 Climate Change

Ms O'CONNOR - The acting minister for Climate Change at the time, the Treasurer, Mr Abetz, said at the Estimates table - and I quote him here - after I challenged him and stated a fact, which is that the government hasn't committed to a single recommendation of the seven in the recent climate act review, not one, Mr Abetz said:

I've been told and had my attention drawn to a brief that tells me that action plan investment across whole of government equates to \$250 million.

I said to him, can we please have a detailed breakdown, because I suspect there are things in there like burning native forests for energy or accounting for Marinus in there, so could we please have a breakdown, noting that the latest report on greenhouse emissions shows that there are no emissions reductions across any sector of the Tasmanian economy and all the heavy lifting continues to be done by our native forests. I don't know if I'm missing something, but in the answers to the question on notice, an appendix was referenced and I cannot find it online. What we're looking for is some substance to the government's claim that it is investing \$250 million - we don't know across what period - in climate mitigation and adaptation. Is it possible it wasn't attached to the answer?

Ms RATTRAY - I'm on a roll, Madam Deputy Chair; I've got a fulsome answer and I'm going to be able to provide some information to the member. I've got quite a few facts. The \$250 million figure represents a point-in-time estimate of total climate-related investment across government, compiled at the time Tasmania's Climate Change Action Plan 2023-2025 was released. It was intended to provide an indicative snapshot of activity across portfolios rather than a fixed or ongoing funding allocation. As a broad indication, this investment includes both emissions reduction, mitigation and adaptation and resilience measures. As an indicative split, approximately 60 to 70 per cent relates to mitigation activities, approximately 20 to 30 per cent supports adaptation and resilience, and around 5 to 10 per cent supports cross-cutting activities such as climate science, data and capability. These figures are indicative only, as many programs deliver co-benefits across both mitigation and adaptation and cannot be cleanly separated.

Based on the program in place at the time, funding was weighted towards mitigation with a significant and growing component supporting adaptation and resilience, including risk

assessment, climate science, and disaster resilience initiatives. The mix of funding evolves over time as programs are delivered, completed, and new initiatives are developed. The government provides regular, transparent public reporting on climate change activity and investment, including the annual climate change activity statements, greenhouse gas emissions reporting through national inventory processes and agency-level disclosures through annual reports.

I go on: this reporting framework ensures an ongoing and updated picture of both emissions trends and climate-related investment across government, and in relation to the climate change budget output, targeted funding supports core policy, coordination and program delivery, including implementation of the action plan and sector-based plans.

In total, the climate change output receives \$14.3 million to deliver action plan initiatives over - and this is in addition to the broader whole-of-government investment. These investments form part of a broader cross-government program to climate action, recognising that delivery occurs across multiple portfolios, not solely through the Climate Change Office.

It's also noted that a request from the House of Assembly Estimates Committee requires an update of the whole-of-government investments since the launch of the Climate Change Action Plan, and that is currently in development. That will be coming along as well.

I can add further: there was a table showing the breakdown provided with the question on notice, and I apologise if the member didn't receive this table. It will be provided to the member and to the Council as soon as possible.

Ms O'CONNOR - I'd like a copy of that table as the basis for the next question, if possible. Was it mistakenly not attached to the letter?

Ms RATTRAY - Yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. That's good. I'm glad to have that confirmed because I thought it might be something to do with my technical and research skills.

Mr Gaffney - Or lack thereof.

Ms O'CONNOR - Or lack thereof, as Mr Gaffney has helpfully pointed out.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Member for Hobart, you just need to sit for the Leader to table the document and we can give you some leeway to stand again.

Ms RATTRAY - I'm unable to table it right this minute because we don't have a hard copy available; and yes, it was unfortunately missed off the letter, so we do apologise for that and it won't happen again, but I can't actually attest to that.

Ms O'CONNOR - Just to finish off, and I thank the Leader for the Government and her advisers at the table for just setting the record straight about the appendix to the answer to the question on notice. I listened carefully to the Leader for the Government's answer and, actually, there was no detail in the breakdown in that answer of how the government can claim it's investing a quarter of a billion dollars into climate mitigation and adaptation. I won't have the opportunity, obviously, to ask a question based on the table that was left off the answer to the

question on notice, but I can inform the Leader for the Government that I will continue with this line of questioning, at the earliest opportunity, once I have that appendix.

Ms RATTRAY - Again, I seek leave to table the document I just said I didn't have a hard copy of, because it just arrived in my hand.

Leave granted; document tabled.

Ms RATTRAY - Also in addition to, and in response to the member, I did read out that it's noted that a request from the House of Assembly Estimates Committee required an update of the whole-of-government investment since the launch of the Climate Change Action Plan, and that has been now completed. So, that will be available to the honourable member as well.

Item agreed to.

Minister for Skills and Jobs

Operating Services

Output Group 3 - Skills, Training and Workforce Growth

Output 3.1 Skills and Workforce Growth

Item agreed to.

Minister for Tourism, Hospitality and Events

Operating Services

Output Group 5 - Cultural and Tourism Development

Output 5.4 Events

Output 5.5 Visitor Economy Support

Items agreed to.

Minister for Housing and Planning

Operating Services

Output Group 8 - Housing and Planning

Output 8.1 Housing and Planning

Ms O'CONNOR - I've misplaced the answer to the question on notice, but what I was trying to do through this line of questioning was to establish the size, if you like, of the Homes Tasmania asset that is held effectively by the Director of Housing on behalf of the people of Tasmania. The question was how many houses does Homes Tasmania own, and the answer that's come back is that Homes Tasmania has 13,721 dwellings that it owns or has an interest in, recorded in the Housing Management System as of 30 April 2026.

The next question was: how many property titles for Homes Tasmania properties are held by community housing providers under tenancy management agreements? That is 6187 dwellings. But the question about property titles owned by Homes Tasmania raises another question: if Homes Tasmania has 13,721 dwellings that it owns or has an interest in - and it might be a very straightforward answer - why is it that Homes Tasmania only has

8884 distinct titles recorded against assets in the Housing Management System, which also includes dwellings and vacant land?

There's a difference there of close to 4000 dwellings where it would appear, from the information we have, that Homes Tasmania does not have the title to those properties. Who would have the title to those properties or what is the explanation?

Mr VINCENT - Thank you, and I hope this is an easy answer for it. Yes, 13,721: 6187 are with the big four-tier CHP-managed dwellings, with the number of titles being at 8884. The reason for the difference between the number of dwellings and the number of titles is because a title can have anywhere from a single dwelling on it to multiple dwellings. In some instances, over 100 dwellings are on a single title. The 8884 includes the titles which may include some vacant lands, some easements, and also the titles that the different units and homes sit on.

Ms O'CONNOR - Right.

Ms Webb - Like Stainforth Court might be one title, for example.

Ms O'CONNOR - Queens Walk.

Ms Webb - Queens Walk, sorry.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, for absolute clarity, Homes Tasmania has 8884 distinct titles. Under the arrangements with community housing providers, that number of 6187 dwellings that are managed by community housing providers, they don't actually have the titles, they don't own the titles to those dwellings, do they? Because I think we established at the table there's a relatively small number of titles that have gone to community housing providers and the government no longer secretly privatises housing assets in this way.

Mr VINCENT - The 6187 are owned by Homes Tasmania on the titles. There were 391, which relate back to 2017-18, that were actually sold, but that no longer happens anymore.

Ms O'Connor - After 2014, I think you will find, because we didn't do it when we were in government.

Mr VINCENT - The 6187 do sit with Homes Tasmania.

Output 8.2 State Planning Office

Ms LOVELL - Thank you, Chair. I had a follow-up question to the answer to the question on notice regarding how many planning matters have been lodged on the Red Tape Reduction portal, and what red tape has been addressed as a result. Part of the answer references some reforms being progressed through the Land Use Planning and Approvals (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill and other reforms being progressed as well. It talks about a further 27 submissions were received during the consultation on that bill and other reforms related to that bill. My question is: how many submissions were received in total, what issues were raised through those submissions and which of those issues are being addressed?

Mr VINCENT - A two-part answer. While I am reading out the first part, we're highlighting some of the things that we're working on. As of 23 June, there have been 21 submissions received by the State Planning Office through the Red Tape Reduction Portal. Many of the submissions received raise concerns regarding having to comply with legitimate legislation, either through the planning or building legislation or various provisions in the Tasmanian Planning Scheme.

The response to the question on notice referenced a further 27: this is a reference to the number of responses received through the consultation process on a position paper titled 'Preventing Delays in Development Assessment Timeframes' and not through the portal. It was 21 plus 27. This was included because, while these submissions were not received via the portal, they do include ideas, initiatives and suggestions on red-tape-reduction opportunities, some of which we are considering as part of our broader planning reform work, particularly in terms of reducing red tape relating to the assessment process and timeframes for development applications, including requests for additional information. That was the 21 plus 27.

I will take a moment to get further information.

As I said, a lot of them referred to normal regulatory things that had to be ticked and checked off. I won't refer to those. But these matters, along with others, have been discussed broadly in the position paper titled 'Preventing Delays in Development Assessment Timeframes', which I mentioned before, for two months, concluding on 8 May. Some of the things that they touched on were in relation to what we call granny flats, SSPs, going from 60 to 90 square metres for secondary residents, and the land use planning approvals, which is in process also for the three areas of the state. It requires council to notify applicants when the statutory clock commences following additional information requests, and two explicit examples of direct response to red-tape-reductions submissions.

A further two submissions have been considered through the Single Start-Up Permit initiative or being assisted through the Agritourism Toolkit and subsequent review of provisions relating to agritourism. That's a fair summary of what that covers.

Item agreed to.

Grants and Subsidies

Item agreed to.

Minister for Small Business, Trade and Consumer Affairs
Operating Services

Output Group 1 - Industry and Business Growth
Output 1.3 Trade

Item agreed to.

Minister for Sport
Operating Services

Output Group 5 - Cultural and Tourism Development

Output 5.6 Sport and Recreation

Item agreed to.

Ms THOMAS - Minister, that question that was taken on notice and answered in relation to the JackJumpers High Performance Training Centre lease agreement. It was mentioned that a copy of the lease could not be provided because it had not yet been finalised. My questions are, has the lease of the JackJumpers High Performance Training Centre now been finalised and, if so, can it be provided? If not, when will it be and will it be publicly available and, if not, how can Tasmanians be assured the lease was negotiated in their best interest rather than in the interests of a commercial NBL club?

Mr DUIGAN - I'm seeking advice.

The lease is not yet finalised, so we're unable to provide that to you here. Once that lease document is finalised, then there would be an assessment to ascertain whether there were any commercial constraints on its public release.

Ms THOMAS - I have another question in relation to the community access provisions. Do you know whether there were community access provisions negotiated as part of the lease, whether there's a number of hours per week the community will be able to access the courts and whether Basketball Tasmania will have access to the centre for its development programs?

If not, why not and why weren't these community access and Basketball Tasmania provisions negotiated as part of the lease?

Mr DUIGAN - Yes, at first glance I would assure you they are and have been negotiated as part of the lease, access to the high-performance centre. That will be and has been looked at through an agreed community access arrangement providing structured community access opportunities that support participation, accessibility and equitable access for the basketball community within the Kingborough municipality.

Community access is focused on basketball training and development activities delivered through recognised organisations including local basketball clubs, the JackJumpers/Jewels, Basketball Tasmania and Pathway programs. Access will be managed through organised programs rather than general public bookings, ensuring the facility continues to support its primary high-performance purpose while providing meaningful community benefit. Access arrangements will be designed to ensure fair and equitable opportunities for local basketball participants, with hire fees aligned to comparable community court hire rates.

Priority will be given to supporting the growth of basketball participation and encouraging active lifestyles across the community. The facility manager, the JackJumpers/Jewels and Kingborough Council will maintain ongoing engagement with local stakeholders to regularly review community access arrangements and ensure the facility continues to meet the needs and expectations of the basketball community.

Review mechanisms of these community access principles have been embedded in the sublease and it's also important to note that the Kingborough Sports Centre will increase to the general community, including school groups. As the JackJumpers/Jewels move out of that

facility, we would expect to see a greater level of basketball accessibility in that part of the world.

Mr EDMUNDS - Following up the comments about the lease. Is there a timeline on when that will happen, because my understanding is that the move-in date is effectively on us. Is there a date where that will be signed off on? I'm assuming it's within the next day or two.

Mr DUIGAN - I don't have an exact date for you, member for Pembroke, but we are working towards completing it by the end of the financial year, 30 June. That's our expectation.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Member for Elwick, being your last call, you have two questions. You also have one on Stadiums Tasmania, which we believe comes under - if you want to ask them all at the same time you can ask them all now.

Ms THOMAS - Thank you. I appreciate that guidance, Madam Deputy Chair.

In a follow-up to the member for Pembroke's question, will the lease be signed before the JackJumpers take occupancy of the new facility is my first question, and when is that expected to be?

My second question is in relation to another question that was left open in relation to the funding in line item 5.6, allocated to the Tasmania Devils Football Club across the forward Estimates. I appreciate the response that came back saying that 12.12 per cent of the Sport and Recreation budget across the forward Estimates is allocated to the Tasmania Devils Football Club.

I was hoping for a more specific answer on what is a proportion in each year of the forward Estimates. Can that information be provided, and can information be provided on what proportion of the Sport and Recreation budget is allocated to the other top participation sports in Tasmania, being football, soccer, basketball, cricket, netball, bowls and hockey? How does this compare to the proportion allocated to the Tasmania Devils Football Club in that line?

Mr DUIGAN - I am seeking advice.

In terms of JackJumpers moving into the new high-performance centre, our expectation is that the lease would be signed before that would occur. That lease, as I have previously mentioned, we are working towards a signing date on or before the end of the financial year, 30 June.

In terms of the number, the Tasmanian AFL team package, there's a level of detail provided in the answer which outlines that. I think we've talked about how that expresses itself as a percentage. I note that we did provide a very comprehensive breakdown of all the sport funding, and if you would like to get those answers that you're seeking, they would be available through the information that we provided. We certainly don't have the calculations that you're referring to here at the table, but I would note that you have a great deal of information on how sport is funded that would provide you with an opportunity to reach those numbers on your own.

Ms THOMAS - I was equally interested as to whether you knew what the percentages were, as minister, but that's okay, I can ask separately.

Item agreed to.

Grants and Subsidies

Item agreed to.

Capital Services

Capital Investment Program

Item, as read, agreed to.

Minister for Business, Industry and Resources

Operating Services

Output Group 1 - Industry and Business Growth

Output 1.1 Office of the Coordinator-General

Output 1.2 Industry and Business Development

Items agreed to.

Output Group 4 - Resources Policy and Regulatory Services

Output 4.1 Forest Policy

Output 4.2 Mineral Resources

Items agreed to.

Grants and Subsidies

Item agreed to.

Minister for Infrastructure and Transport

Operating Services

Output Group 2 - Infrastructure and Transport Services

Output 2.1 Infrastructure Strategy and Delivery

Output 2.2 Road User Services

Output 2.3 Passenger Transport

Items agreed to.

Output Group 6 - Subsidies and Concessions

Output 6.1 Shipping and Ferry Subsidies

Item agreed to.

Output 6.2 General Access Services

Ms THOMAS - I did ask a question, and it was information provided on notice, in relation to the timeline for the delivery of officially trained transit officers on buses, and an explanation of the reason why it has taken more than three years to have them authorised and

appointed. My question was: please provide details of the timeline for the delivery of officially trained transit officers on buses and an explanation of the reason why it has taken more than three years to have them authorised and appointed.

In response, it was a rather long answer, but didn't specifically answer the question, by saying: a pilot deployment of transit officers in southern Tasmania has been running since April 2023, over three years ago. It goes on to say a framework for appointing transit officers as authorised officers under the *Passenger Transport Services Act 2011* was approved by the Transport Commission in March 2026. The department has been preparing tender documentation for the expansion of transit officers on buses across the state and will be providing advice to the minister in relation to the potential nature, scope and timing of a tender process.

I'm not sure how it could be argued that that answers the question. I asked for the timeline for delivery, and why it is taking so long if the training package for transit officers was finalised last year: the answer says in August 2025. It took until March this year to get it approved by the Transport Commission, so it took some seven months or something for the Transport Commission to approve it. Why do we still not even have transit officers in training nearly one year on and several years since this was promised by the government? We don't even have people yet in training and no explanation as to why. Why, minister, is it taking so long and what are you doing about it?

Mr VINCENT - Thank you, and I acknowledge that some of the answer I have here is a repeat of what you've just said, so I will try not to copy that. There were certainly some of the training competencies that had to be worked through that did add extra time to it, and then the changes to the operating and the legalities in the framework in regards to appointing authorised officers, where it changes from being a transit officer to an authorised officer, brought around some legalities.

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

QUESTIONS

AI Data Centres - Community Concerns

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr DUIGAN

Minister, you would be aware, as being close to the local member, that at the Exeter Hall last Saturday, hundreds of members of the local community met to express their concern about the proposed construction of an AI data centre at George Town. The report that we have is that there was deep concern within that gathered community and a sense of frustration that they were having something imposed on them that they knew too little about. Your government has committed to building at least three Firmus data centres. Well sorry, you can answer this question rather than look shocked at me. There's three Firmus -

Mr Duigan - I don't know that the government's committed to building anything.

Ms O'CONNOR - Your government has thrown its support behind three Firmus data centres, which was confirmed across the Estimates table three weeks ago. Given the community concern about these developments, can you confirm that you, as Energy minister and local member, are listening to this community, and can you confirm the government is responsive and understands the concerns of locals about AI data centre development?

ANSWER

Mr President, I'm absolutely aware of Firmus and its plans, aware of community concerns that has inspired. We're absolutely listening. From the Energy portfolio, it does not come without its challenges. A load of that size in that timeframe - we would certainly see new load being developed on-island as a very positive thing, but it's going to be balanced with obviously new generation to support our long-term growth. It's essential that new load doesn't disadvantage or indeed cannibalise energy requirements, and we've been clear on that. I've spoken directly with our energy GBEs, making it clear that new data centre load must bring on new energy and storage to cover their share of any network costs and ensure continued grid stability.

AI data centres are a fast-growing industry, and this is a conversation that's happening here in Tasmania, but in pretty much every other jurisdiction across the country, and while it does come with some opportunity around organic load growth supporting the cost of transmission and other things, it's important that we do have the right regulatory framework.

At the last energy ministerial, we tasked the Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC) with providing national advice on regulatory design options for data centres. I've had a meeting with the chair of the AEMC the other day with regards to where that national work package is and what those options for embedding those expectations that we all share around what data centres look like within law or regulation.

The Tasmanian government is currently developing a Tasmanian statement of expectation for data centres and AI infrastructure. This will set clear guidelines for any data centres looking to establish in Tasmania, building on national expectations while recognising the Tasmanian context. A draft will be released in coming months, contained within our next 100-day plan. I look forward to that and suspect this will be something we will be talking about for some time to come.

AI Data Centres - Energy Allocation

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr DUIGAN

[2.35 p.m.]

We've just established through your answer that there is an inadequate regulatory framework around data centres at the moment and there's some national work being done. Regardless of that, your government is full steam ahead with data centre development. Quite extraordinary. Minister, can you talk us through your role as minister in securing or allocating energy to AI data centres and how that relates to the work the Office of the Coordinator-General (OCG) does with these tech companies? And what role does the Office of the Coordinator-General have in securing power for companies like Singapore-based Firmus?

What's the role between the OCG or you, as minister, who makes these decisions about the allocation of energy to data centres?

ANSWER

Mr President, I won't comment on the Office of the Coordinator-General. That's not an area for which I have responsibility. My responsibility is to the Tasmanian energy generation portfolio sector - Hydro, TasNetworks and Aurora - and obviously, as mentioned in my previous answer, we are having ongoing conversations about how new loads should be prioritised.

Ms O'Connor - That's not an answer.

Eastern Shore Basketball Facilities

Mr EDMUNDS question to MINISTER for SPORT, Mr DUIGAN

[2.37 p.m.]

Minister, you and I - and I believe most, if not all members of this Chamber - have recently received correspondence from Daniel and Angela from Dominoes Basketball, a club local to my electorate of Pembroke but taking in players from across the eastern shore and Greater Hobart. The club has raised serious concerns about basketball facilities on the eastern shore in a sport that is booming. They report having nearly four times the amount of participation of late last decade, being forced to cap registrations of children willing to play due to not being able to secure enough court time on already oversubscribed facilities, and are calling for long-term forward planning for the future of the sport on the eastern shore.

Minister, I would be interested in your response to this and when the club and other members can expect to receive it.

ANSWER

According to my advice - and the sports adviser isn't here - my office isn't necessarily aware of the correspondence to which you refer in your question. I'm not sure if my office has necessarily received that. We will follow that up. I would just take the opportunity to make the point and illustrate what we are doing in terms of delivering more basketball infrastructure around the state, because it is a substantial body of work and probably follows up on something of a gap that has been in that space.

The other point I would make is what a great thing it is that we're seeing more kids wanting to get out, play basketball, play netball, play whatever it might be, footy, football, all of those things. We are enjoying a real spike in participation and that, above all other things, is positive - and seeking to capture that and meet that demand is obviously creating something of a challenge.

I would point to work we're doing at the Clarence Sports Centre, in providing some investment there to make that facility improve and meet more expectation. There is \$12.5 million committed in the Budget for the New Town Bay basketball precinct, typically known as the Hobart Phoenix proposal. We'd really like to see some support from the federal

government for that one. We'd like to see some advocacy from the federal member for Clark, who could have a larger role to play in that. We are well advanced in our construction of the Glenorchy Sports Centre at Claremont. Four more courts are going up there - that's going to be very important. Work is about to start on phase 3 of the Northern Rec Hub for another four courts there in Launceston. Of course, work is happening in Devonport around the Devonport Sports Stadium.

In all of these cases, these are very large investments by this government in delivering more indoor sports court infrastructure into the state. As I say, it doesn't go all the way and there will be more calls. We are also doing work on a more holistic way of looking at our infrastructure - the name of which escapes me - the sports infrastructure plan. That work is coming to light as well, so we can have a more targeted and strategic look at where court facilities are required. I will check and follow up on the correspondence you refer to.

Mr EDMUNDS - I don't have another question, but the correspondence was from 4 June this year and they actually did send it to all 15 of us.

Mr PRESIDENT - Point of clarification.

Motorcycle Graduated Licensing System - Changes

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

[2.42 p.m.]

Thanks, Mr President. I want to assure everyone this is not a Dorothy Dixier. It's a genuine question, but I need to declare I do have an interest because I have a motorcycle licence; not a very used one these days, but I do have one.

I sent a letter to the minister, and I received a response back in November 2025 relating to the Motorcycle Graduated Licensing System changes. Given that it's almost seven months on, I'm really interested to see where those changes are. I have some interested motorcycle riders in my patch who want to know when they can start riding at 90kph and not at 80kph and being a nuisance on the road.

ANSWER

Thank you, Mr President. Do we need to declare an interest here as well?

Mr PRESIDENT - We should all leave.

Mr VINCENT - I thank the member. We've had many conversations over this. It is an area of great concern on the overall speed of things on the road and of course with the number of deaths - we've had an awkward reminder about that in recent days and its importance. But keeping traffic flowing is a big thing.

The answer that we have here before us is a key deliverable of the Towards Zero Action Plan of 2024, the development of an improved Motorcycle Graduated Licensing System. The Tasmanian government is committed to strengthening graduated licensing arrangements for

novice motorcycle riders under the National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030. Following extensive research and public consultation process, a package of changes has been developed, which includes raising the maximum speed limit for learner motorcycles from 80 kilometres per hour to 90 kilometres per hour and raising the maximum speed for P1 riders from 80 kilometres per hour to 100 kilometres per hour.

The Office of Parliamentary Counsel has completed drafting of the necessary subordinate legislation amendments and is now finalising quality assurance. I expect this to be finalised next month, and the package can be progressed through parliament. A comprehensive public education campaign is ready and will commence in the second half of 2026 to align with the timing of legislation. The motor registry system must also undergo changes to support the MGLS changes and due to the complexity of this work, this is not expected to be completed until early 2027.

Mr President, while on my I'm on my feet, can I seek indulgence, please, to answer two questions from previous times?

Mr PRESIDENT - Certainly.

Answer to Question - *Spirit of Tasmania* Ships - Tug Boat Assistance at Port of Devonport

[2.45 p.m.]

Mr VINCENT (Prosser - Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) - Thank you for that, and the first is to the member for Mersey, Mr Gaffney, in relation to the Port of Devonport and the dredging of the main shipping channel.

At the port of Devonport, the dredged main shipping channel from the mouth of the Mersey to the wharves and turning circle is not direct. It veers to the left and, for want of a better explanation, has a dogleg change of direction. Consequently, this restricts the length of vessels entering the port. Some ships, and those of maximum length or thereabouts, are required at times to have assistance from tugboats to navigate this section, including other areas of the port and the turning circle. *Spirits I* and *II* do not need to use tugs.

Whilst it has been confirmed that the two new larger ships, *Spirit of Tasmania IV* and *V*, will be able to navigate the river, there are some who question if the *Spirits* will be able to do so without the assistance of tugs. Will the two new ships in Tasmania require this tug assistance each time to traverse, enter and exit the port and the turning circle?

Then, the other part of the question was: when the budget for the Devonport Port operations was compiled by the management of TT-Line, was a total annual amount considered in the tug assistance? The answer to that is: the arrangements with the *Spirits of Tasmania IV* and *V* will be the same as those for *Spirit I* and *II*. This means under normal operating conditions, tugs will not be required to traverse the channel or use the swing basin.

As with the existing *Spirits*, tugs may be required in instances of severe weather, or if the vessel's propulsion or manoeuvring equipment is not fully functional. These instances are determined by the discretion of the captain of the ship at the time.

The cost associated with this ad hoc use of tugs is described within the TasPorts schedule of port charges available on the TasPorts website. For a vessel of the size of the new *Spirits*, the maximum hire rate of \$14,622 excluding GST would normally apply, plus any applicable fuel surcharge or late-order charge if the tug was ordered with less than six hours' notice. The existing *Spirits of Tasmania* also attract the maximum hire rate, and as the arrangements of the existing and the new ships is the same, the costs are accounted for in TT-Line's normal operational budget rather than additional to existing arrangements. I hope that answers those questions for you, and one more.

Mr PRESIDENT - Other members have questions, but I will allow that.

Answer to Question - Southern Outlet Widening - Cost Blowout

[2.48 p.m.]

Mr VINCENT - I appreciate that. Thank you. This is in relation to the question asked by the member for Hobart yesterday about the Southern Outlet. I will try to cut through this and make it a little bit shorter. The state government has confirmed estimates of \$95.1 million, which covers the first three stages, being Macquarie and Davey connector stage 1; the cost of \$7 million of the rockface work between Olinda Grove and Cats Eye Corner, stage 2, at a cost of \$2.8 million; and the fifth lane from Olinda Grove to Davey Street, stage 3, at \$84 million. Additionally, we are currently constructing traffic lights at the Olinda Grove roundabout at a cost of \$1.2 million, which has attracted a contribution of \$150,000 from Hobart City Council.

The state government's original commitment to the Southern Projects program, including the Southern Outlet transit lane, was made in 2017. The cost has risen for a couple of different reasons, obviously, from 2017 to now there is an escalation; the other part of that is that to minimise traffic impact, we've needed to make sure that the work is done with the minimum amount of disruption. So a lot of the work is done of an evening, which does add to the cost also.

The one thing that we have forgotten to keep talking about in this is, it's quite innovative that this is a T3 project which will allow public transport to allow for the growth of the Kingborough and Huon areas to move into Hobart. T3 is cars with three or more people in them, and buses, which will be the first time that Greater Hobart will be serviced by a concentrated line into it, and that is a huge difference. This is a major project to make sure that that will be a solid path of the growth of Kingborough and the Huon to allow for public transport into the future, and encourage carpooling and effective use of public transport; and with that, thank you for your indulgence.

TasVOCAL Legal Service

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

[2.50 p.m.]

- (1) Regarding the TasVOCAL service, which provides legal advice and support services concerning options for the National Redress Scheme, civil litigation, victims of crime compensation, police contacts, and therapeutic options for

survivors of institutional child sexual abuse in Tasmania, can the government please detail:

- (2) whether survivors have been advised TasVOCAL would be available as part of Tasmania's response to the commission of inquiry into child sexual abuse in institutional settings;
- (3) whether TasVOCAL's resourcing is reliant on a sole legal practitioner or multiple;
- (4) the current status of any TasVOCAL legal practitioners available to provide services and, for example, whether any practitioners are on leave as of 11 June 2026; the dates leave commenced and ended, or is expected to end, for any legal practitioners since and including 1 January 2025;
- (5) whether there are any contingency plans in place should any or all of TasVOCAL's legal practitioners take leave, and if so, please provide the details of any such contingency plans;
- (6) any efforts made to track whether survivors have been impacted by the lack of available TasVOCAL legal services, either by data collection, recording requests for assistance unable to be provided, or other means;
- (7) current efforts being taken by the government to ensure survivors currently have access to independent legal advice; and
- (8) whether and how the government considers the current resourcing and focus of the TasVOCAL services delivers on its undertakings to fully implement the commission of inquiry recommendations, and in accordance with the intent of those recommendations.

ANSWER

I acknowledge the honourable member's questions, Mr President.

- (1) Yes. TasVOCAL was launched on the 21 August 2024 as part of the Tasmanian Government's response to the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings.
- (2) TasVOCAL is delivered through Tasmania Legal Aid and provides free, independent and confidential legal advice.
- (3) The TasVOCAL service has one dedicated legal practitioner.
- (4) The government does not provide personal information in relation to the leave arrangements of individual state servants.
- (5) Yes. During periods of TasVOCAL practitioner absence, individuals seeking assistance are referred to the Knowmore Legal Service, a nationally funded, specialist legal service for victim/survivors of child abuse. Tasmania Legal Aid also has a range of other services and access points that can be used to ensure people

seeking assistance are not left without a pathway to legal information, advice or referral, and these include:

- Tasmania Legal Aid Legal Help telephone service, which provides free and confidential legal information on 1300 366 611, Monday to Friday, 8.45 a.m. to 5 p.m.;
 - online legal chat through the Tasmania Legal Aid website, available Monday to Friday during business hours, where members of the public can ask legal questions and receive written responses;
 - online request to call back function through which people can ask Tasmania Legal Aid to contact them at a suitable time;
 - in-person legal help through Tasmania Legal Aid's Hobart, Launceston, Devonport and Burnie offices;
 - Tasmania Legal Aid legal information resources, including TasVOCAL self-help materials about the National Redress Scheme;
 - civil claims compensation options;
 - victim support schemes;
 - access to documents and reporting child sexual abuse to police;
 - referral to other appropriate services or lawyers where Tasmania Legal Aid or TasVOCAL cannot assist, and where relevant access to other specialist Tasmania legal aid services, including Safe at Home, legal services for victim/survivors of family violence.
- (6) There is no formal data collection mechanism to track unmet demand or instances where services could not be provided.
- (7) The government remains committed to ensuring survivors have access to independent legal advice at all times. In addition to TasVOCAL and the broader services offered by Tasmania Legal Aid, there are a range of other legal services and options for people seeking assistance with legal pathways such as civil litigation, the National Redress Scheme and engagement with law enforcement agencies. Such services include: the Women's Legal Service Tasmania, Community Legal Centres and the Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service.

Furthermore, major civil law firms offer 'no win, no fee' arrangements for individuals including victim/survivors of child sexual abuse, and the Knowmore Legal Service provides free, confidential legal support nationally.

- (8) The government considers that the design of TasVOCAL is consistent with the intent of the commission of inquiry's recommendations, and the key principles reflected in the service include: independence of legal advice; accessibility and no-cost service provision; trauma-informed, survivor-centred approaches; and integration with broader redress, justice and support systems.

The government will continue to monitor the delivery of TasVOCAL through Tasmania Legal Aid to ensure it is delivering on the intent of the COI recommendations.

Offender Statistics - Caseloads for Staff

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

[2.57 p.m.]

During Estimates, I was advised that within Community Corrections in Tasmania there are 18.8 offenders per operational staff member. Could the honourable Leader please advise:

- (1) What's the average caseload specifically for probation officers in Tasmania (excluding other categories of staff)?
- (2) How was the figure of 18.8 offenders per operational staff member calculated? In particular, does this represent an average across all operational staff and all individuals supervised within Community Corrections?
- (3) Does the figure of 18.8 include operational staff who do not typically manage individual caseloads?
- (4) If the answer to question (3) is yes, can a revised figure be provided that reflects the average number of offenders per operational staff member whose duties include managing Community Corrections caseloads?

ANSWER

I acknowledge the honourable member's question.

- (1) Community Corrections officers' operational caseloads vary markedly between operational units, reflecting the degree of intervention required to manage different orders and community risks. High-risk and complex cases are allocated to more-experienced staff, and less-experienced staff are allocated the less complex cases.

Outside of court-mandated diversion teams, there is no specified maximum caseload for individual probation officers. Caseloads are closely monitored by senior management and remedial action is taken where individual workloads are judged to be too high.

In the court-mandated diversion teams, caseloads are capped at 10 to support the high-intensity case management required for the program.

Supervision teams are responsible for managing community correction orders, parole orders, home detention orders, mental health treatment orders and high-risk offender orders.

Community Corrections seeks to ensure average caseloads are below 45 offenders per FTE.

With community service, case management is less intensive and, as a result, caseloads are generally higher than in other units.

I do have a table of average caseloads per team FTE across Tasmania as at 31 March 2026. Statewide:

- court mandated diversion: 7.3
- supervision: 32.4
- community service: 85.8.

- (2) The data is drawn from the Report on Government Services 2026, produced by the Productivity Commission. That figure represents a comparison of all offenders supervised by Community Corrections as an average daily number and all operational staff as an average daily full-time equivalent position.

The Productivity Commission provides a broad framework to help each jurisdiction define 'operational staff' compared to 'non-operational staff'.

The main responsibility of operational staff involves the supervision or provision of support services directly to offenders in community corrections and these include:

- probation/parole/community corrections officers
- unit/team leaders, senior community corrections officers
- home detention officers (excluding HD officers based at head office)
- specialist community corrections officers (e.g. drug courts, domestic violence courts)
- case managers/community corrections assistants/community support officers
- community development officers
- community service orders supervisors/field supervisors
- court advice workers
- program coordinators
- psychologists/social workers, and other community corrections staff who provide psychological/therapeutic services.

Non-operational staff are those not included in this definition.

Each jurisdiction is required to apply this broad framework to determine which positions are operational staff to make this calculation.

According to the Report on Government Services 2026, in the 2024-25 financial year, Community Corrections had an average of 18.8 offenders per operational staff member. This compared to the Australian national average of 18.6 offenders per staff member. Again, another table: the offender-to-operational staff in Community Corrections unit ratio is Tasmania 18.8, Australia 18.6. Offender to other staff, the Tasmanian ratio is 108.3 to Australia 87.8, and the offender-to-total-staff is 16 in Tasmania and the Australian ratio is 15.4.

- (3) Yes. There are a number of roles in Community Corrections in Tasmania that meet the Productivity Commission's definition of 'operational staff' who would not regularly directly manage a caseload of offenders subject to community-based orders.

In Community Corrections, probation officers typically maintain responsibility for the direct supervision of offenders and management of orders. Certain operational staff, like unit managers, who directly supervise a team including probation officers or casework support officers, who provide administrative support to probation officers, would not typically directly manage offenders.

Other operational staff, like community service supervisors and senior clinicians and educators, have regular engagement with offenders and provide a level of supervision and management but would not be considered caseload managers. If these positions did not exist, however, the tasks associated with their roles would fall directly to probation officers to undertake.

- (4) The response to question (1) notes average caseloads across Community Corrections' work streams, where the officer's primary duties involve case management and offenders on caseload.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2026 (No. 18)

In Committee

Resumed from above (page 25).

Output 6.2 General Access Services

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Minister, you are responding, I believe, to a question under 6.2, to the member for Elwick.

Mr VINCENT - Thank you and I'm glad the lunchtime buzzer went for us to reassess parts of the answer for you in line with what you require. I will just read this out. Two key deliverables were required to be developed by State Growth: a training package and an authorisation framework. I acknowledge this has taken longer than initially anticipated. Although this work was delivered within existing passenger transport funding and using internal resources to ensure value for money, it has resulted in extended timelines.

I will provide a timeline for both the training package and the authorisation framework. I've been advised that State Growth started this work in September 2024, informed by outcomes from the trial. The training package was required to address the unique competencies associated with the powers available to transit officers in the Passenger Transport Services Regulations 2023. The training package was approved by the Transport Commissioner in August 2025. The authorisation framework to allow the Transport Commission to authorise transit officers was developed from late 2025 and approved by the Transport Commissioner in March 2026.

The office of the Solicitor-General is currently finalising the instrument of authorisation in line with the approved framework, and this is the legal document that grants transit officers authorisation to exercise their regulated powers. The department has been preparing tender documents to support the expansion of transit officers across the state. Advice will be provided to me in August on the scope and timing of a tender process, including opportunities and alignment with the rollout of CCTVs on Metro buses. Thank you.

Item agreed to.

Output 6.3 School Bus Services

Ms LOVELL - Minister, my question is in relation to reports of reaching or exceeding capacity on school buses. There was a question on notice asking how many reports had been received by the department as required under contracts. The answer was: in the 12 months to June 2026, school bus operators made capacity reports in relation to nine services across the state. I'm after a bit more information about those reports, whether that was nine reports, or was it more than nine reports about nine services? Were they reports about the same routes or different routes? Were they about the same or different operators? And what action has been taken as a result of those reports?

Mr VINCENT - The easiest bit to say is there were nine reports regarding nine services and that was in the 12 months to June 2026. Of these nine, one showed the service was tending towards full capacity but not operating at full capacity, and eight showed the service reached or exceeded operational and seated capacity. State Growth resolved capacity concerns by deploying backup buses and performing additional trips on three of the services. Rerouting and spreading the student loads across other bus services occurred on one of the services. The bus operator performed additional trips and rerouting of other buses for four of the services. Once student travel patterns settled in for the school year, patronage levels lowered on two of the services, which resolved the capacity issues on these services and removed the need for backup buses on these routes. One of these services continued to have intermittent capacity issues and is being monitored, and this is being managed with additional trips. One service no longer has a capacity issue and the other four continue to be managed by the operator by rerouting other services as needed.

It's important to note that the reports are not of an operational or seating capacity being exceeded but of operational seating capacity being reached. There have been no reports of buses operating beyond their permitted capacity limits.

In response to the issues raised about potential overcrowding on school buses services, the department is undertaking an audit and review to validate patronage numbers and consider appropriate actions if and as required. The department will work with the Department of Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) and bus operators and engage an independent external audit of student numbers. This review will target bus routes and schools that have been the subject of overcrowding complaints in the first instance, and this review will commence in the second term of 2026 in consultation with DECYP. An update of the review will be provided to myself in late July. To date, preliminary discussions have occurred with DECYP, and they are supportive of the approach and are happy to assist. TasBus has also been consulted.

Chair, I seek leave to table a document that has the issues of those nine there.

Leave granted; document tabled.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you, minister. That's a very thorough answer and I appreciate that. In relation to the review you said was being undertaken in term 2, I understand you will receive a report in late July. We're nearly at the end of term 2. Has that review taken place already or is it yet to be completed?

Mr VINCENT - I will seek some information. The department is in the process of appointing an auditor at the moment to do that review. They expect it's a very short review - a week or a fortnight - and that's why it would still be right for it to come to the minister in July.

Item agreed to.

Grants and Subsidies

Item agreed to.

Capital Services

Capital Investment Program

Item, as read, agreed to.

Division agreed to without request and without amendment.

Division 12 - Tourism Tasmania

Minister for Tourism, Hospitality and Events

Operating Services

Output Group 1 - Tourism

Output 1.1 Tourism

Mr GAFFNEY - I appreciate being provided with the 2025-26 breakdown of the funding, and I understand that it's not possible to give the four-year - it's just \$82 million. But I'm wondering whether you could supply us with what your funding for the 2026-27 year would be, because I would imagine that you would have that sorted? I'm wondering whether you could supply us with the 2026-27 year, for the next 12 months, so that we understand what the funding will be.

Ms RATTRAY - I already have the advice in my hand, Madam Deputy Chair. The \$82-million marketing allocation provides forward appropriation for Tourism Tasmania at similar levels to previous years. Therefore, the marketing appropriation commitment is planned to be delivered in a similar way to previous years, noting that the changing market environment, changing technology enhancements and changing consumer trends will need to be factored into annual planning cycles.

Tourism Tasmania plans their annual budget each year, while also being agile to change in consideration of the commercial environment and geopolitical trends throughout the year. This means that marketing dollars can move from one category to another to ensure the best return on investment at the time. Tourism Tasmania is currently in active planning for the

2026-27 financial year, with budget allocations being finalised in line with the draft corporate plan. The corporate plan will be launched in July of this year.

Further, the draft 2026-27 marketing budget of \$23.318 million is broken down as below and is subject to change throughout the year depending on the best return on investment at the time:

- \$11.187 million brand marketing activity, including Come Down for Air, Off Season and other campaign activity;
- \$5.352 million for trade, distribution and access partnerships;
- \$2.741 million for global PR;
- \$2.5 million for digital marketing;
- \$982,826 for research and insights;
- \$250,000 for marketing for regions' programs, responsive and tactical marketing opportunities; and finally
- \$243,936 for content development.

Item agreed to.

Division agreed to without request and without amendment.

Division 13 - Department of Treasury and Finance

Treasurer

Operating Services

Output Group 1 - Financial and Resource Management Services

Output 1.1 Budget Development and Management

Ms THOMAS - The question I asked in this line item was in relation to the cost of senior executive service in the State Service. It's a question that I've been asking repeatedly and across a number of different forums and find it very hard to get an answer to. The Treasurer kindly agreed to take it on notice after he had said to me at the table during Estimates that it was actually reasonable to expect this information to be able to be provided, but it seems he's gone away and changed his mind about that or had discussions with someone who said that it's too hard. We don't know how much our senior state servants cost or we don't really want to know, or we especially don't want Tasmanians to know, it seems, despite the fact that a number of agencies I asked in Estimates were able to come back with a figure of how much their SES positions cost each month.

The secretaries or staff at the table were able to actually come back at an individual agency level and disclose that information. It's disappointing that the government seems again reluctant to be transparent and accountable here and provide this information. My question is: is the government willing to survey agencies and gather this information? Because I certainly won't give up on this. Tasmanians deserve to know.

Ms RATTRAY - The government does not hold a consolidated system-wide dataset that would allow the total cost of SES officers for a single pay period to be produced accurately and

reliably without diverting agency resources to manually compile it. This is because remuneration for senior officers is made up of multiple components that vary by agency, role, individual circumstance and pay period. The existence of acting arrangements and these elements are not currently captured in a single central system.

This underscores the critical importance of the Human Resource Information System (HRIS) that is being progressed for all Tasmanian government agencies. The government looks forward to its introduction so that they may be able to receive workforce data as needed in the future, without the diversion of resources in agencies to reliably produce it. Notwithstanding these limitations, I am able to provide the following information from agencies to estimate the total annual contracted SES officers' salary costs as at the payroll period ending 6 June 2026.

- The Department for Education, Children and Young People: \$10.669 million
- Department of Health: \$6.271 million
- Department of Justice: \$4.194 million
- Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Tasmania: \$4.579 million
- Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management: \$1.999 million
- Department of Premier and Cabinet: \$5.8 million
- Department of State Growth: \$8.043 million
- Department of Treasury and Finance: \$3.412 million
- Environment Protection Agency: \$530,160
- Homes Tasmania: \$353,440
- Macquarie Point Development Corporation: \$463,163
- Tourism Tasmania: \$473,274.

The total estimated SES cost for agencies responded per annum is at \$47,787,037.

It's important to note the qualifications to this data. The data has not been audited and reflects salary only, excludes acting arrangements, superannuation and allowances such as vehicle allowances and other information such as vehicle leasing costs. This information also excludes long-term employee expenses, such as long service leave and recreation leave obligations.

I further note, this information excludes heads of agencies, noting that salaries are disclosed in the agency annual reports. This information also changes regularly and can fluctuate from pay period to pay period. Agencies are currently prioritising the implementation of recent State Service wage adjustments, associated back pay and end-of-financial-year processes, which, it's acknowledged, needs to be completed as a matter of priority. I trust that this information will be of assistance.

Ms THOMAS - Thank you. It's a lot of information to get my head around. I'm sure I had more questions, but thank you. I appreciate the information, at least some more information being provided on that matter. My question also on this line is in relation to the

formal review of the GST forecasting model undertaken by Treasury, which was another question. The question was: when was the last formal review of the GST forecasting model undertaken by a treasurer? The response says, 'Treasury regularly reviews its GST model', but I was hoping for a more specific answer. When was the last formal review of the whole model undertaken?

Ms RATTRAY - On behalf of the Treasury people here, they want to apologise that these last two lines you've read, the first two was left off the information that was provided, so the last external review of Treasury's GST model was conducted by Deloitte Touché Tohmatsu in October 2016, with a final report provided to Treasury in March of 2017.

Ms THOMAS - Thank you. I appreciate that information and the apology for it not having been provided with the answer. When is the next formal review planned to be undertaken?

Ms RATTRAY - Madam Deputy Chair, it appears that somebody needs to receive a call to perhaps be able to answer that. We can either provide it before we finish that particular whole output group 1. If you'd like, you could ask the next question if that was of the member's liking. If not, we can just wait.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - The member has had three calls on that one.

Ms Thomas - I might just wait, if that's okay.

Ms O'CONNOR - Can we move on to the next question?

This relates to questions that the Greens in both Houses asked all ministers, as far as I understand, at the table and this was directly to the Treasurer: was the Treasurer aware former minister Ogilvie had a matter before the Supreme Court before her resignation from the Cabinet on 28 May 2026? The Treasurer, at the time, didn't try to fob it off particularly. What he said was 'I will have to check that; I will have to take it on notice.' Which was a lot more sensible an answer than we got out of the minister for Energy, and I refer my colleagues to the minister for Energy's responses to this very question, where, to Committee A, time after time after time, when the same question was put to him, he said, 'I'm not making any comment. These are complex legal matters so I'm not making further comment.'

The second question I put to the Treasurer was: was the Treasurer aware prior to former minister Ogilvie's appearance in Legislative Council Estimates Committee A on 17 November 2025 that she'd initiated court proceedings? Again, the Treasurer said, 'Look, I will just have to take that on notice. I'd have to check back.'

The answers that came back to us, the answer to the first question was that yes, the Treasurer said he was aware that former minister Ogilvie had a matter before the Supreme Court before she resigned. Presumably that would be because a decision was made at a Cabinet level to approve the allocation of funds towards her legal costs, which now we know have come about because she took the Integrity Commission to the Supreme Court. The Treasurer was honest, he said yes. For the second question, he said, 'To the best of my recollection, no'. So, to the best of his recollection, he didn't know prior to November last year that she had matters before the Supreme Court. We have to take those answers at face value. But the minister for

Energy, who is not in the Chamber again today, and he's probably in an important meeting, given the benefit of the doubt on that.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Your question now.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes. My question has to be to the Leader for the Government. But my question to the Leader for the Government is to try to understand why the minister for Energy refused point blank to give an answer when he knew the answer. He knew the answer and it's not acceptable to say you're not making comment when you know the answer. Is there anything that the Leader for the Government can add to that, given that the minister for Energy and Parks is not here?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - I'm not sure this goes to this line item, member.

Ms O'CONNOR - It does, actually.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Does it?

Ms O'CONNOR - With respect, Madam Deputy Chair, yes, it's in there. That money comes out of the public account. It was appropriate at the table when I asked it.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - We are on line item 1.1 under the Treasurer's responsibility -

Ms O'CONNOR - Budget Development and Management. I suspect it's a bit late for a ruling like that.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - The question on notice was: was the Treasurer aware that former minister Ogilvie had a matter before the Supreme Court before her resignation from Cabinet 28 May 2026? That's the question that we actually have listed.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - But not the minister for Energy.

Ms O'CONNOR - Who also was asked the same question.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - But we're actually in the Treasurer's output.

Ms O'CONNOR - I understand that. I'm commending the Treasurer for giving an honest answer to a question on notice.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Let the Leader answer as she sees fit.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you and I certainly understand what the member is requesting, but I can only reiterate that, and as you acknowledged yourself, the Treasurer did answer the question, he said 'yes', and then to the next question he said 'to the best of my recollection, no'.

As for responding on behalf of the minister for Energy, I'm not in a position to do that and I hope that you realise I just couldn't do that.

Ms O'Connor - No, I understand that but it was a point worth making.

Ms RATTRAY - I've got an answer.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - The honourable Leader in response to a previous question?

Ms RATTRAY - To the honourable member for Elwick. The model is regularly reviewed internally and Treasury is currently considering a further external review, obviously subject to resourcing. Yes, it's under consideration.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you. The Leader spoke before about an external review that had been undertaken in 2017 and a further external review is being considered nine years later. You did say that it's reviewed internally regularly. Can you elaborate on that process? How often, how regularly is it reviewed and what are those reviews showing?

Ms RATTRAY - A more fulsome answer is on its way, thank you. Conversations with the Commonwealth Grants Commission occur during each financial year and Treasury's models to date have proven to be very accurate. However, Treasury considers it is timely to consider a further external review. It happens and they work with the Commonwealth Grants Commission and those projections have proven to have been very accurate.

Item agreed to.

Output 1.2 Financial Management and Accounting Services

Ms THOMAS - The question I asked was: what is the estimated outcome cost of election commitments in 2025-26? But apparently this information is not available. It was taken on notice but not able to be provided. The budget papers reflect the estimated cost of election commitments going forward from 2026-27 onwards. But I asked what was the cost in 2025-26 as estimated outcomes for other outputs and activities.

My question is: does the government consider it reasonable that Tasmanians ought to be able to know the cost of election commitments, and will the government undertake to gather this information? How is the government held to account if it's not reported anywhere on what election commitments cost Tasmanians?

Ms RATTRAY - There isn't a lot more to add to the response that the honourable member and the committee received in relation to the question. The only way that Treasury would be able to do that is at the end of financial year, to ask each agency to provide that information and, of course, that hasn't happened as yet, so there isn't any further information that can be added to what has already been provided now for the honourable member.

Ms THOMAS - Thank you for that additional information.

Will the government commit to providing that information, then, when it is available, asking agencies for the cost of election commitments and actually reporting so there's some accountability for what election commitments have actually cost Tasmanians?

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, Treasury will survey all agencies and ask for that information and I'll make a commitment to coming back to the honourable member and, of course, provide it to all members.

Ms Thomas - Thank you.

Ms O'CONNOR - I am extremely surprised that that information is not already held by Treasury because after the 2018 State Election, where around \$400 million in election promises were made, and then again in 2021, both times there were consolidated lists and costings for election promises that were available. They were also made available, of course, to the Integrity Commission, which undertook investigative work.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Are you going to ask a question?

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, I am going to ask a question. Thanks, Madam Deputy Chair.

We undertook investigatory work and identified this money as pork-barrelling. Treasury has identified this expenditure as a risk. Why has there been no consolidated estimated outcome cost of election commitments in the past financial year given that we had an election in July? How did this happen? Why?

Ms RATTRAY - As I've already stated, once the end of the financial year comes and goes, Treasury has made a commitment that they will seek that information from all departments and put it together. Why it hasn't been done to date, I can't answer that right here now, but I'll certainly do my best to seek that information if it's not available right now, honourable member.

Ms O'Connor - Thank you, Leader. I think that's a departure from the norm, that it's not prepared straight after the election.

Item agreed to.

Output 1.3 Shareholder Advice on Government Businesses

Ms THOMAS - This question relates to the terms of reference for the Tasracing deed working group that's been established. My question is on the terms of reference, and I appreciate them being provided to the committee on notice, but they're not clear as to whether the working group will make recommendations about the amount of funding or the funding period for the Tasracing deed, so is the expectation that the working group will provide recommendations? If not, who will advise the government on the amount of funding and the funding period for the deed beyond 2029?

Ms RATTRAY - I am seeking advice, Madam Deputy Chair.

It's suggested that the working group will provide options for the period beyond the expiration of the main funding deed in 2028-29 and it's going to be looking at including the structure, the length and approved purpose of future funding. Once the working group provides some advice to government, then it will be up to government to decide how it's funded and what they fund, is about the extent of what we can offer.

Ms THOMAS - While the leader is on her feet, I asked: will it provide recommendations on the funding period, the time and the amount?

Ms RATTRAY - Regrettably, I'm unable to source the information or even find the answers that you're looking for at this point in time. Can I provide an undertaking that as soon as those answers are available - and I know I've got a question for the member for tomorrow - so, I will endeavour to have both those answers available for the honourable member tomorrow. I do apologise.

Ms THOMAS - Thank you. I appreciate the commitment to providing some answers when you do have them available. It's disappointing the question can't be answered here, but I appreciate you following up. I wonder if you will be able to answer this one.

My other question is: the terms of reference also do not make any mention of the parliament's decision to sell the TOTE in 2012 and the corresponding commitment to fund the industry in place of the revenue previously raised through the TOTE; will the working group consider the TOTE sale bill and the *Hansard* from this debate in its assessment? What consultation will it undertake with the industry as part of its work?

Ms RATTRAY - The terms of reference don't actually refer to the TOTE's sale, but it does refer to Tasracing's existing funding deeds and options for consolidation. I would expect - and this is me expecting, and probably someone somewhere else is having an ulcer attack while I'm talking to the member - but you would look at the sale of TOTE when you were looking at the funding deed that was put in place at the time of the sale. If I'm wrong about that, I'd suggest they start working on that right now, because I've just given a commitment that that is what you would expect.

Ms Thomas - You and I would.

Ms O'Connor - Yes. You are, with respect, not the government and not the minister.

Ms RATTRAY - No.

Ms O'Connor - You can't give a commitment on the part of government without advice.

Ms RATTRAY - I'm not - I'm not giving -

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Order.

Ms RATTRAY - I'm not giving a commitment; I'm stating an expectation, it's not a commitment. I'm stating an expectation that somewhere along the line, when this working group gets together, that they will look at how the deed was put in place and that would reflect from the sale of TOTE.

Oh, and guess what, I have a real answer: there will not be a view on level of funding, but there will be views on accountability, length of funding commitment, and appropriate funding model and structure - but I still stand by my expectation.

Ms THOMAS - Thank you, Leader. It's helpful to know that there won't be a recommendation by this working group on the level of funding to be provided in the new deed.

My follow-up question that I also included to that initial question was: who will make recommendations to the government on that? But you may not have an answer to that or maybe it's just a decision for the captain. He's making a lot of those lately.

But my final question is: the terms of reference state that the assessment undertaken by the working group will have regard to the economic benefits and the community, social and animal welfare considerations as they relate to the thoroughbred and harness racing codes. Should greyhound racing not be prohibited by law, the government will still be required under the *Racing Regulation and Integrity Act* to regulate it, and given prohibition was not ascertained at the time of writing the terms of reference and still isn't, why are the terms of reference limited to these two codes? Does the government have advice about its legal requirement to regulate greyhound racing if it is not prohibited? Is this something the Treasurer is considering and the working group? How will it ensure the welfare of dogs?

Ms O'Connor - It has no legal requirement to fund it. It doesn't have to fund it.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - The member for Elwick has the Floor.

Ms O'Connor - I am just trying to help her understand.

Ms THOMAS - Does the government have advice about its legal requirement to regulate greyhound racing if it is not prohibited, and how will it ensure the welfare of dogs, because that is very important.

Ms O'Connor - Apparently, they're safer on the track.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Member for Hobart, the member for Elwick has the Floor.

Ms O'Connor - She thinks they're safer on the track.

Ms THOMAS - How will the government ensure the welfare of dogs, because I would have thought this is something that all members are concerned about if it chooses not to fund greyhound racing beyond 2029 and doesn't fund the regulation of what will be a legal activity if this parliament hasn't chosen to prohibit it. The welfare of dogs is of critical importance to people in Tasmania.

Ms O'Connor - You think they're safer on the track.

Ms THOMAS - How will the government ensure the welfare of dogs if it chooses not to fund greyhound racing beyond 2029? I'd appreciate, Madam Deputy Chair, if other members would not put words into my mouth while I'm on the Floor.

Ms O'Connor - I was quoting you back.

Ms THOMAS - It is highly offensive and point of order.

Ms O'Connor - Quoted you back.

Ms THOMAS - Standing Order 129. Member is not to interrupt another. Point of order.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms O'CONNOR - Just on the point of order, Madam Deputy Chair, I was simply quoting the member's own words on ABC Radio.

Ms THOMAS - That is not actually what I said.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Order.

Ms THOMAS - No, I'm sorry, I'm objecting to that. That is not what I said.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Both sit down, please.

Ms O'CONNOR - You just interrupted me. I quoted you on ABC Radio.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Member for Hobart, the member for Elwick had the Floor, had the question. The Leader is currently answering.

Ms RATTRAY - In regard to the funding allocation, the shareholder ministers will determine or would determine what level of funding and that would be on the advice of the steering committee. That would be the Minister for Racing and the Treasurer. But in regard to the question that was posed by the member on the rules of racing and funding that, obviously, will have to be discussed should the bill not proceed through the parliament or whatever the decision and the outcome is, I'm not able to provide that and the department people, the Treasury people I have here don't have that information either, Madam Deputy Chair.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. One last question on the work that the working group or steering committee is undertaking. What consultation is that group undertaking with industry and will the assessment of the working group be published?

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

STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT

Reminder for Members to Treat People with Respect

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, I'd just like to remind you all that it has been a long and frustrating couple of days and I know tempers can get a little frayed in here, but just to remind all members to be kind and considerate of other people. Even if you don't agree with their opinions, I think we can still treat people with respect.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2026 (No. 18)

In Committee

Resumed from above (page 46).

Output 1.2 Financial Management and Accounting Services

[4.33 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY - In response to the honourable member's question before the break: the working group is consulting with Tasracing, the Racing Integrity Commissioner, and through Tasracing the offer has been made to the codes to participate in the working group. The working group has also been approaching the breeders' association in regard to a consultation and being part of the working group. The terms of reference assume greyhound racing stops in 2029, in line with the bill and current government policy. If the bill does not pass or there is a future change in government policy, the terms of reference will be reviewed.

Ms O'CONNOR - In the same vein, we've had it confirmed that the working group has reached out to industry participants through their representative bodies. Given that rehoming organisations like RSPCA and the Dogs' Homes carry a heavy burden, a lot of which they pay for out of their own fundraising, can you confirm that animal welfare rehoming organisations, for greyhounds in particular, will be consulted as well, given that there are, according to the Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner's most recent audit, more than 1000 greyhounds in the industry now?

Ms RATTRAY - My understanding is that they are part of the working group.

Ms O'CONNOR - The RSPCA is.

Ms RATTRAY - I'm pretty sure I saw Andrea Dawkins's name as the RSPCA representative.

Ms O'Connor - The RSPCA is, but the industry is as well at the moment. The industry has a seat at the table, so what's the difference?

Ms RATTRAY - But the question was, were rehoming organisations -

Ms O'Connor - This is about the deed renegotiation -

Ms RATTRAY - No, this is the working group.

Ms O'Connor - for the funding deed, which is a different one from the Integrity Commission's.

Ms Thomas - Which funds Tasracing, it doesn't fund - yes. They're not part of -

Ms RATTRAY - I will just sit down and try and take some more - I thought you were talking about the other working group, the transition group.

Ms O'Connor - No.

Ms RATTRAY - Apologies to the honourable member. There are a lot of working groups and a lot of transition groups and there are a lot of other things all going on at the one time. We can only assume that, given the terms of reference, where it talks about community, social, and animal welfare considerations as they relate to the thoroughbred and horse racing codes, and fiscal impacts and appropriate governance and accountability measures, that will all be considered by the working group when they undertake their work. It certainly talks about social and animal welfare considerations.

Ms LOVELL - Part of my question wasn't answered, which I will repeat; I know we broke up in the middle of it, so it's understandable. The second part of the question was whether the working group assessment or report would be published.

Ms RATTRAY - We're unable to provide a definitive answer to that, because the assessment will be provided to government by no later than 31 August 2026, and obviously the government will make a decision about whether that becomes a public document or not; but I'd suggest that there will be plenty of opportunity to ask that question after 31 August and after government has had time to consider it.

Item agreed to.

Output 1.4 Government Property and Accommodation Services
Output 1.5 Government Procurement Services

Items agreed to.

Output Group 2 - Economic and Fiscal Policy Advice

Output 2.1 Economic Policy Advice
Output 2.2 Regulatory Policy
Output 2.3 Intergovernmental Financial Matters

Items agreed to.

Output Group 3 - Revenue, Superannuation and Regulatory Management Services

Output 3.1 Tax Administration and Revenue Collection
Output 3.2 Regulation and Administration of Liquor and Gaming
Output 3.4 Office of the Superannuation Commission
Output 3.5 Administration of Grants, Subsidies and Concessions

Items agreed to.

Output Group 4 - Community Assistance

Output 4.1 Public Trustee Community Service Obligation

Item agreed to.

Division agreed to without request and without amendment.

Schedule agreed to without request and without amendment.

Postponed clause 4 agreed to.

Postponed clause 5 agreed to.

Title, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported without request and without amendment.

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

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

Motion agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2026 (No. 19)

Second Reading

[4.44 p.m.]

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

That the bill be read a second time.

Bill read the second time.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2026 (No. 19)

In Committee

Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to.

Clause 4 -

Issue, application and appropriation of \$62,913,000

Ms RATTRAY - Madam Deputy Chair, I move -

That clause 4 be postponed.

Clause 4 postponed.

Clause 5 -

Purposes of appropriation

Ms RATTRAY - Madam Deputy Chair, I move -

That clause 5 be postponed.

Clause 5 postponed.

Clause 6 agreed to.

Schedule 1 - Purposes of Appropriation 2026-27

Division 1 - House of Assembly
Speaker of the House of Assembly
Operating Services

Output Group 1 - House of Assembly Support Services

Output 1.1 House of Assembly Support Services
Output 1.2 Select Committee Support Services
Output 1.3 Investigatory Committee Support Services

Items agreed to.

Output Group 2 - Payments Administered by the House of Assembly

Output 2.1 Payments Administered by the House of Assembly

Item agreed to.

Division agreed to without request and without amendment.

Division 2 - Integrity Commission
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Corrections and Rehabilitation
Operating Services

Output Group 1 - Integrity Commission

Output 1.1 Integrity Commission

Ms WEBB - This line was kept open because I had a question on notice, which was:

Please provide the number of audits the Integrity Commission has conducted of Tasmania Police investigations into complaints for each of the years 2023-24, 2024-25, and 2025-26 to date.

I appreciate that the information was provided in answer to that question on notice, but I did want to ask some further questions. The answer was that the number of audits conducted by the Integrity Commission of Tasmania into police investigations into complaints is as follows:

2023-24: four audits

2024-25: two audits

2025-26 to date, at the time of answering: zero audits

To me, that looks like that a key function of the Integrity Commission that's decreasing over time and in fact has not been undertaken at all in the 2025-26 year, certainly at the time

of answering the question. I'm looking for some more explanation about what we should be expecting to see here in terms of this activity of the Integrity Commission, and why there have been none of these audits undertaken of Tasmania Police's investigations into complaints against Tasmania Police at this stage of this financial year.

Ms RATTRAY - In 2025-26, there's one audit now being completed, and three Tasmania Police audits at present are also being undertaken.

Ms WEBB - I'm still looking for some further commentary, I believe, about what we should be expecting to see in regards to this function in each financial year. Is four a standard number that we would expect to see? The ones that are three that are ongoing, presumably they'll be completed in the next financial year because we only have a short period of this time left, or perhaps it could be clarified that they'll be completed in this financial year. If so, why were there only two in the 2024-25 financial year, for example? I'd just like a bit more commentary and explanation regarding what the figure should be expected to be, and the rationale for that, perhaps, in terms of commentary on the resourcing that's required to do this work, and if the Integrity Commission maintains that resourcing consistently, given its budget.

Ms RATTRAY - Further information is that the Integrity Commission also has an oversight program in relation to Tasmania Police, and over the course of which they will complete a certain number of audits. The three ongoing audits hope to be completed in the not-too-distant future.

Ms WEBB - I'm going to have to use my third call to repeat some of that. I'm asking for a bit more narrative about that and about the budget - what's to be expected.

Deputy MADAM CHAIR - If the Leader could stand while you're asking the question, perhaps, if you only have one call left.

Ms RATTRAY - Some more narrative on?

Ms WEBB - I can use my third call, but I'm hoping it will be answered if I have to get up and use the third call. I asked: what should we expect there to be in this space each year? Is it a function of budget constraints that there were only two last year, for example? Then why were there only two? Is it a resourcing issue if we can't maintain a consistent number each year? Some commentary around that is what I was after.

Ms RATTRAY - I'll seek further advice.

In response to those additional requests for information, the Integrity Commission has had staff departures which have impacted on the overall delivery of work. They are currently recruiting. There is no fixed number of audits that they would complete in any particular year. It would always vary. They do, however, have an audit program, which runs alongside the Tasmania Police oversight program, which also entails overall across the state sector. The Integrity Commission aims to do a number of audits each year and that will, of course, be impacted by staff resourcing at any particular time, and any complexities or other issues that may arise during the course of an audit.

Item agreed to.

Division agreed to without request and without amendment.

Division 3 - Legislative Council
President of the Legislative Council
Operating Services

Output Group 1 - Legislative Council Support Services

Output 1.1 Legislative Council Support Services

Output 1.2 Committee Support Services

Items agreed to.

Output Group 2 - Payments Administered by the Legislative Council

Output 2.1 Payments Administered by the Legislative Council

Item agreed to.

Division agreed to without request and without amendment.

Division 4 - Legislature General

President of the Legislative Council and Speaker of the House of Assembly Acting Jointly
Operating Services

Output Group 1 - Parliamentary Reporting Service

Output 1.1 Production and Printing of Parliamentary Reports

Item agreed to.

Output Group 2 - Parliamentary Library Service

Output 2.1 Parliamentary Library Service

Item agreed to.

Output Group 3 - Parliamentary Printing and Systems

Output 3.1 Parliamentary Printing

Output 3.2 Parliamentary Systems

Item agreed to.

Output Group 4 - Joint Services

Output 4.1 Buildings and Operations Management

Output 4.2 Joint Management Services

Output 4.3 Services to Members

Output 4.4 Corporate Services for Parliamentary Agencies

Item agreed to.

Capital Services

Capital Investment Program

Item agreed to.

Division agreed to without request and without amendment.

Division 5 - Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Corrections and Rehabilitation
Operating Services

Output Group 1 - The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions

Output 1.1 The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions

Item agreed to.

Division agreed to without request and without amendment.

Division 6 - Office of the Governor
Premier
Operating Services

Output Group 1 - The Office of the Governor

Output 1.1 Support for the Governor

Item agreed to.

Capital Services
Capital Investment Program

Item, as read, agreed to.

Division agreed to without request and without amendment.

Division 7 - Office of the Ombudsman
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Corrections and Rehabilitation
Operating Services

Output Group 1 - The Office of the Ombudsman

Output 1.1 Decisions on Complaints Referred to the Ombudsman and Health Complaints
Commissioner and Right to Information

Item agreed to.

Division agreed to without request and without amendment.

Division 8 - Tasmanian Audit Office
Treasurer
Operating Services

Output Group 1 - Public Sector Performance and Accountability

Output 1.1 Public Sector Performance and Accountability

Item agreed to.

Division agreed to without request and without amendment.

Schedule 1 - Purposes of Appropriation 2026-27

Schedule agreed to without request and without amendment.

Postponed clause 4 agreed to

Postponed clause 5 agreed to.

Title as read agreed to.

Bill reported without request and without amendment.

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

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

Motion agreed to.

FIRST HOME OWNER GRANT AMENDMENT BILL 2026 (No. 20)

Second Reading

[5.01 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) -
Mr President, I just want to acknowledge the last couple of days and thank all members for their contribution to the Budget Estimates scrutiny process and the finished product that we have delivered today. Thank you, sincerely.

Today, the government continues to back Tasmanians seeking to achieve the dream of home ownership by setting the First Home Owner Grant at \$20,000 for the 2026-27 financial year. For many Tasmanians, buying or building a first home is one of the biggest decisions of their lives. It is life changing; it provides security, stability and a foundation for the future.

The bill ensures that support for first home buyers of new homes does not fall back to the legislated base of \$10,000 at the end of this financial year following a boost to the First Home Owner Grant to \$30,000 for the 2025-26 year. Instead, it provides a measured and responsible extension of support at \$20,000 for a further 12 months.

This approach strikes the right balance. It recognises the fiscal constraints of the budget, while continuing to provide meaningful assistance to Tasmanians entering the housing market. Tasmanians continue to face cost-of-living pressures, and those pressures are particularly acute in the building and construction sector. The \$20,000 grant will help to offset those costs and support first home buyers to purchase a newly built home or build a new home sooner.

Importantly, this is targeted support. The First Home Owner Grant applies to new homes only, meaning it does more than assist individual buyers. It also strengthens the incentive to

build, helps to increase housing supply, supports local tradies and drives activity across Tasmania's construction industry. By setting the grant at \$20,000, this government is ensuring continued practical assistance at a time when it is needed most.

I commend the bill to the House.

Bill read the second time.

FIRST HOME OWNER GRANT AMENDMENT BILL 2026 (No. 20)

In Committee

Clauses 1 to 6 agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment.

[5.07 p.m.]

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

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

Motion agreed to.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (TARGETED REFORM) BILL 2026 (No. 10)

Second Reading

Continued from 20 May 2026 (page 82).

[5.07 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, as the Minister for Local Government is present, I respectfully notify the Council that minister Vincent will take the bill through the Committee stage. I had finished my contribution, and there were a couple of outstanding questions that will be answered through the Committee stage by minister Vincent.

Bill read the second time.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (TARGETED REFORM)
BILL 2026 (No. 10)**

In Committee

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Perhaps the minister might like to report progress while we sort out pairs and amendments?

Mr VINCENT - Thank you. In preparation for that, I would like to suggest we report progress and seek leave to sit again.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

[5.17 p.m.]

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

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

Sitting suspended from 5.17 p.m. until 5.47 p.m.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (TARGETED REFORM)
BILL 2026 (No. 10)**

In Committee

Resumed from above.

Clause 1 -
Short Title

Ms O'CONNOR - I rise on the short title to ask a threshold question of the minister and the government. As we've heard in briefings now, the sequence of events is thus: a draft bill was released towards the latter part of last year that had no reduction in councillor numbers or increase in remuneration. A discussion paper goes out late last year which floats a number of reform proposals, including a potential reduction in councillor numbers. The first draft bill that went out, as we were told in the briefing this morning, was 48 pages long. The bill that we're debating today, which was tabled in the House of Assembly in April of this year, was nearly twice as long, an extra 40 pages - an 88-page bill.

An extra 40 pages of legislation introduced to parliament without consultation - not proper process, not in line with the Centre for Public Integrity's recommendations about proper process. What I believe Council needs to understand before it embarks on this process, which will significantly undermine diversity and representation at a council level, is what happened. Why was proper process departed from in such a way as it has been here?

Given what we've seen from the submissions to the discussion paper and the opposition of many councils to the reduction in numbers, how did we get here? What was the decision-making process, if you like, that allowed for such a distortion of good process and puts us here in this Council, in the invidious and unpleasant position of being part of hollowing out local government representation and diversity? Not once in the briefings from government, not downstairs in the other place, did we hear a rationale for slipping in a cut in numbers through a process that wasn't properly consulted. I think we deserve a straight answer from the minister on this threshold question before we go any further.

Mr VINCENT - Seeking advice.

Ms O'Connor - Surely, minister, you know.

Mr VINCENT - On 15 September 2025 we released a discussion paper on councillor numbers and allowances. The Office of Local Government sent the discussion paper to councils, LGAT, LGPro and put it on their website, and we issued a media release. The media release was picked up widely across multiple news outlets. Consultation was open for eight weeks and we received 49 responses from councils, councillors, individuals and organisations - a good sign it was picked up widely.

We also released an exposure draft of the Local Government Targeted Amendment Bill 2025 on 6 October, which remained open for consultation until 17 November; in those six weeks we received 36 submissions.

On 20 March this year we released our final position on the council numbers allowance. Our final position incorporated changes as a result of the consultation period and made it clear we would introduce these changes through legislative amendments to the *Local Government Act 1993*. Given that we already had our targeted amendment bill underway, it was logical to include in it that specific relevant detail and the bill simply reflected the final policy position.

Ms O'CONNOR - Minister, I really like you. I think you're an honest and decent man and a good minister, but that answer was insufficient because it is no excuse to say that it was simply logical to include a dramatic decrease in representation and diversity at a local government level simply because you already had an exposure draft of local government reform that had come out in October last year. That exposure draft which you referenced, minister, did not contain the schedules and the clauses that lead to a reduction in representation at a local government level, and on any number of occasions, government will break up reform into two or three bills. In fact, we're having a look at that with the *Integrity Commission Act 2009*, where one bit was too hard, so the government has promised that later.

The question is: minister, given that the state government had made a commitment that it would review numbers of councillors and their remuneration after the 26 October elections of this year, what happened? Was it simply convenience? Was it simply an extension of an agenda to undermine local government? We've seen that over the last 12 years by this government.

The state government did not consult with those who are most affected by these changes, and that is everyday Tasmanians and ratepayers in municipalities across the island. You didn't consult on the cut in numbers or the remuneration that, unfortunately, you've linked to the cut in numbers. It is bad process, but it also feels underhand.

The minister, rather than reading a brief that's been given to him by the Director of Local Government, needs to stand up, I believe, and make an honest answer, because this is a political decision.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - With respect, member for Hobart, you have had a bit of latitude, so if you could ask a question and allow the minister to answer, because you can't actually prosecute a second reading.

Ms O'CONNOR - I'm not trying to prosecute a second reading. I'm trying to get an answer, with respect, Madam Deputy Chair, to a question that has never been answered by government.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Well, you've just asked the question, so allow the minister to answer.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. Does the minister understand what the question is?

You could save yourself a third speak from me on it by just saying that it was convenient for government to slide the cut in numbers into the original exposure draft of the bill.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - The minister is entitled to answer the question.

Mr VINCENT - The decision to include numbers and allowance in this bill was a practical one, and it was done transparently and announced publicly. It allows the changes to come in for the 2026 elections, and that was the main thing about it. Thank you.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 4 agreed to.

Clause 5

Section 16 amended (Municipal areas)

Ms O'CONNOR - The original amendments that I sent through to honourable members simply sought to remove the column that related to the shrinkage of representation at the local government level, and I had some feedback that that was potentially problematic because it didn't deal with remuneration.

Clause 5 is the first clause that sets the foundation for hollowing out representation and diversity at a local government level. Obviously, I'll be calling for a division on this clause, Madam Deputy Chair, but in doing this, I know people have all made up their minds. I urge honourable members to think very carefully what we're being asked to do here. That is, gouge representation out at a local government level without there having been any consultation with Tasmanians or ratepayers, or effective consultation with councils, on the proposition itself in the form of a draft bill that went out for consultation.

This is the foundational clause for the beginning of what I believe might be convenience, according to the minister, but it feels like erosion of democracy by stealth by this government, so I move that we reject this clause.

Ms WEBB - I rise in response to the member for Hobart's suggested course of action here, which is in the form of an amendment to vote against the clause, it being the first clause that relates to these matters of reduction of numbers and linking that to remuneration.

The fundamental principles here, I believe, are very clear, and I have grave concerns about the way that this has been undertaken. I do not believe that appropriate and adequate consultation was undertaken on this proposition to reduce elected representation in local government across the state in various municipalities. The minister may well say that they put out a discussion paper, separate to a bill that was put out that did not include it. The fact is: the specific way it's presented in this bill and linked in this bill has never been consulted on with the Tasmanian community.

This isn't just any policy or any policy area. It's not just any legislation that - all of which should be consulted on as an exposure draft as best practice. However, this is legislation that relates to fundamental building blocks of our democracy at the local government level, fundamental aspects of elected representation, democratic representation, at a local government level. Of all the things that should be undertaken in a best-practice way in terms of consulting with the community, consulting with voters, elements to do with their fundamental democratic right to be represented in a level of government should be at the top of the list.

That failed to happen here. It's wrong. And it's being progressed now as a matter of convenience, avoiding that appropriate consultation as a matter of convenience ahead of a local government election.

This could have been done at any point in time in the last four years leading into this. It could have been done at arm's length of an electoral period so there was no rush for us to try to contemplate it and jam it in before a particular electoral period that's coming up later in the year. It should have, in fact, been taken to an election. That would have been ideal - to utilise the fact that we have a periodic election for local government in October and this could be taken to election and part of consideration during that process.

None of that has happened. There is no rush on this. There shouldn't be a rush on this. We can excise these contentious elements that have not been appropriately and democratically consulted in a way that should have happened via exposure draft legislation, with them in it. We can excise it from this legislation and move on to contemplate it properly. The minister can actually rectify this situation, progress it separately to now; have it come in a way that's appropriate, where the community has been able to have their say on a fundamental building block of their democracy at a community level.

I am absolutely in support of these elements not being in this bill. I'll be supporting the suggested amendment here from the member for Hobart of voting against this clause, and I believe that anybody with a healthy respect for an appropriate, proper democracy and a democratic process in this state and respect of Tasmanian voters should be thinking to support this.

Ms RATTRAY - There's obviously been a lot of work put into a myriad of amendments that have been put forward and I'll appreciate the opportunity to work through them. However, I am interested, minister, in the local government review outcomes that were provided, because I know personally the chair of that review. I know that she travelled right around the state with her team, and I'm interested if there's something that can be provided to give some indication

of the support for this initiative when members and I are thinking about what's being proposed by the honourable member for Hobart. I think that would be quite useful. It's a couple of years ago now, but I know it took quite a long time. There was a lot of work and there was a lot of community engagement. Just to have something in our kit bag as we move forward, when we consider such a myriad of amendments and this bill, I think, would be useful.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - The question is that clause 5 be agreed to. The honourable member for Elwick.

Ms Webb - Well, how about if we get an answer first? Like, can we get an answer to that question, please?

Ms RATTRAY - That was a question? I hope it was a question.

Ms Webb - Yes.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Well, I wasn't sure whether the minister was going to answer them all at once or at the end or -

Ms Webb - He should answer each one bit by bit. Otherwise, we lose track.

Ms Thomas - That's what I thought, too, so apologies for assuming that.

Ms Webb - Well, that's not the way we normally do it. Otherwise, we lose track of where we're up to with the questions.

Ms RATTRAY - It's up to the Deputy Chair and the minister, I would've thought. Not the House.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - The honourable minister in response.

Mr VINCENT - Last one first, Chair, thank you.

Recommendation 34 of the review was that following the recommended phase 1 voluntary amalgamation program, the Tasmanian government would commission an independent review into councillor numbers and allowances. The board found that consideration should be given to how many elected representatives were needed to effectively serve the needs of a particular community and the merits of having fewer councillors who are remunerated at a higher level versus a greater number of councillors on relatively lower allowances. This was intended to round out the structural reset of the local government sector after any amalgamations had occurred.

However, in response to sectorial advocacy, as well as the likelihood no voluntary amalgamations will happen before the 2026 local government elections, we decided to act decisively in undertaking this review.

We were able to leverage the capacity of the Office of Local Government, the statutory office, to deliver a cost-effective and expedited review that delivers an immediate and robust outcome, which was strongly supported by the majority of the sector.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. Can I just check back with the minister? You said it was a responsive and decisive response to the review, but is that not a review - how old is that review document?

Ms Thomas - Does she have to sit down, Madam Deputy Chair?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - You need to sit down. You can't have two people on their feet.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, I am happy to do that, but I have another question.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Well, stand and finish your question.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thanks, Madam Deputy Chair. The first question is: how old is that review? I think it's at least a couple of years old, so we're not talking about decisive action. It sounds like the review is being used as kind of wallpaper for the amendments that we're debating today. For the benefit of the honourable member for McIntyre, I just refer the member back to the submissions that were made to the discussion paper.

The Devonport City Council says that it strongly disagrees with the proposition of government, and it agrees that reducing the number of councillors will likely have the opposite effect of strengthening governance and attracting diverse and skilled candidates. West Tamar Council opposes the cut in numbers. Central Highlands Council opposes the cut in numbers. Huon Valley Council opposes the cut in numbers, so did the Burnie Council, Derwent Valley Council, Devonport Council, Waratah-Wynyard Council, and Northern Midlands Council. Multiple councils oppose the cut in numbers, and they're not all the small councils - some of them are major councils.

Again, I urge honourable members to think about this: we can pass this bill, the best of the bill that retains those provisions around preventing misconduct, make sure that meetings are conducted in appropriate and standardised ways, that there's some sanction for misconduct, and the like. We can take the best of these reforms and pass them - then let the government go back to the drawing board and consult with the community and councils properly on the hollowing out of local government, because we're being put in a stinking position. It stinks to have to do this, where we're being asked to gut local government representation and diversity with no foundation of proper community consultation. The review argument that the minister just made doesn't cut the mustard. I ask members to have a think about this.

We're not saying that you mightn't at some point want to reduce the numbers on council; we're not saying, I'm not saying, the Greens are not saying that councillors shouldn't be paid better. What we're encouraging the government to do is to take this to the people and to the councils in an appropriate and robust way. We can pass reforms in this place that improve governance at a council level without hollowing out representation. We should expect government to do better on consulting on such a massive change - it's massive. They're not talking about fiddling around the edges. It's a massive change. It would cut representation by around 50 but could cut it by more in the future. We've all heard what the problems are with this, and we should be standing with our councils, which have raised serious concerns about these proposed amendments and the way they have arrived at this place.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - The question is that the amendment to the clause stand part of the bill.

Ms Thomas - So, the minister's not going to answer the question?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Learning here as well. You have an answer?

Members interjecting.

Ms Webb - We generally always revert to the Leader or the minister after that for a response if we follow that -

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Thank you for your advice, member.

Ms Webb - Well, I'm just trying to clarify, are we following that process?

Mr VINCENT - Thanks, everybody, for their patience. We're working our way through it. The government will not be supporting the proposed amendments, which would retain the status quo in relation to councillor numbers and allowances, and represent a major missed opportunity to deliver sensible reform. The numbers and allowances changes are a critical element of a broader suite of reforms aimed at lifting the professionalism of the sector and increasing the appeal of standing for office to the broader cross-section of the community. They do this by providing a meaningful uplift in allowances for all councillors to reflect the growing complexity of their role, and at no net cost overall to the Tasmanian community, while still retaining very high levels of per capita representation, particularly in our smaller regional and rural councils.

The reforms also address substantial inconsistencies and inequities in the current numbers and allowances framework by applying a logical, transparent and data-driven approach. The government does not accept the arguments that we have not consulted adequately, nor that the change will erode local democracy, for all the reasons we have already laid out in detail in our briefings.

In response to the member contributions and to my correspondence to all the members earlier today, these changes represent some of the most important structural reforms for local government in Tasmania since 1993, and we have a small window of opportunity as a parliament to bring them about ahead of the 2026 elections. Delivering this reform now does not mean we cannot make further improvements in the future; but if we kick the can down the road, we will certainly miss the chance to set up the sector for success with these changes for the start of next term. The sector is on board with this change and we have an opportunity as a parliament to deliver them for our community, and that is what we will be seeking to do.

Ms O'CONNOR - Just in response, I've got a question for the minister: if you cut representation and you have less diversity on council, how does it lift the professionalism of the sector? How can the minister claim that the sector is behind this when we know about all the councils, from large to medium to small, that object to this? It's not a factual statement. So how does it lift the professionalism of the sector if you're cutting numbers and you're discouraging people from running and you've got less diversity?

Mr VINCENT - Thank you. It's undoubtedly quite clear that the support from the sector and people involved with the sector has been very strong. Among 23 individual council submissions, 14 were supportive of the final position and eight did not support and one was neutral. It is very rare to have something so overwhelmingly supported by so many people in the sector and that is why the bill is before us at the moment.

Ms THOMAS - I thank the honourable member for Hobart for bringing these amendments for our consideration, and how wonderful it is. I start by saying that we are all here and we are able to have different views on issues and be able to voice them in this place. That's democracy. I really appreciate that we can do that respectfully. I do respect the member for Hobart's views here.

Ms O'Connor - Back at you.

Ms THOMAS - The fact that there have been some strong arguments put here, and challenging the government on the consultation, because consultation is very important on something as significant as this - absolutely it is. It's important on all significant policy changes that the government puts forward. It's critically important when you're looking to prohibit something, absolutely it is, but I will leave it at that. I rise to oppose the amendments. We're not seeking to prohibit something here tonight; I know that. We're not seeking to do that, but consultation absolutely is important. I rise to oppose, though, the amendments before the Committee.

What these amendments would ultimately do is preserve the status quo. They would retain existing councillor numbers and, Madam Deputy Chair, I seek some latitude here because I know there's a number of amendments proposed by the member for Hobart that relate to both councillor numbers and councillor allowances. I would prefer, with your indulgence, to speak just once to share my views on those amendments. Thank you. They would retain existing councillor numbers, and they would retain existing councillor allowances - and in doing so, they would ultimately reject reforms which seek to modernise and strengthen local government in Tasmania.

I indicated throughout this debate in my second reading contribution that I support increasing councillor allowances, not because being a councillor should be viewed as a career but because the expectations placed upon councillors today are significantly different to those that existed when the current remuneration framework was developed. Councillors are responsible for increasingly complex decisions involving planning, governance, financial oversight, community engagement, risk management and regulatory compliance. The workload has increased, the scrutiny has increased, ultimately the responsibility has increased, and it is entirely reasonable that remuneration better reflects these realities; but I also support reducing councillor numbers, not because I believe local democracy should be weakened: quite the opposite. I support it because I believe local government should be representative, effective, accountable and sustainable.

The current system is largely a historical patchwork of numbers. Different councils have different numbers of councillors for reasons that are often difficult to identify or justify. There has never been a particularly coherent statewide framework underpinning those arrangements, and this bill seeks to change that. It introduces a more consistent model based on objective criteria, and that is an improvement. It provides greater clarity, greater consistency and greater equity across the local government sector.

What is also missing from the arguments we've heard today is any meaningful acknowledgement of the extensive consultation that occurred over many years and ultimately led us to this point. These reforms to councillor numbers and allowances have not emerged from nowhere; they sit within a much broader body of work undertaken through the Future of Local Government Review, a review that took almost two years, a review that involved extensive community consultations, stakeholder engagement, research, public submissions, workshops, meetings, and independent analysis. In fact, it's my understanding that over 4000 Tasmanians participated in that review. Importantly, councillor numbers and councillor allowances were not peripheral during that significant consultation process; they were identified as key structural issues requiring examination.

The review considered the sustainability, capability and effectiveness of local government in Tasmania, and it specifically examined whether existing governance arrangements remained fit for purpose. Indeed, recommendation 34 of the review, which is on page 104 of the many-paged document, specifically called for an independent review of councillor numbers and allowances to support what it described as a 'structural reset' of the sector - a structural reset - not preservation of existing arrangements, not maintaining the status quo, not simply continuing with the same framework because it has existed for many years. The reason that recommendation 34 was made is because the review identified that there was no consistent methodology underpinning councillor numbers across Tasmania.

In fact, on page 103 of the final report of the Future of Local Government Review, the section 'ensuring fair and appropriate councillor remuneration' reads:

The Board's engagement throughout the Review has heard widespread agreement that current councillor allowances:

- do not support or encourage a diverse range of individuals to run for council;
- do not reflect the level of effort realistically required from councillors, given the increasing complexity of their role, community expectations, and statutory responsibilities; and
- may mean councils fail to attract and retain talented councillors and may limit the time and effort some councillors can devote for their role.

Most councils we spoke to told us there need to be reforms to improve and support the diversity, capability, and capacity of elected representatives. Improving the remuneration of elected representatives is regarded as an important first step - and had been the impetus for recent reviews of the allowances of elected representatives in Victoria and New South Wales.

It went on to say:

Consideration should be given to how many elected representatives are needed to effectively serve the needs of a particular community, and the merits of having, for example, fewer councillors who are remunerated at a higher level versus a greater number of councillors on relatively lower allowances.

Recommendation 34, as the minister has told us in response to the member for Hobart's question, talked about a review into councillor numbers and allowances and recommended that that occur, and that their review should establish a new set of allowance categories for councillors, mayors and deputy mayors, underpinned by a clear and equitable methodology that considers variations in a range of things, all of which are incorporated into the model that is presented in this bill.

These recommendations, these models, the changes that we see, the structural reset, the reform in this bill, did not come from nowhere. It was consulted on significantly. The idea of changing, structurally resetting, reforming the sector through numbers and allowances was a key recommendation of the Future of Local Government Review. The review found that councillor remuneration had not kept pace with increasing complexity and responsibility associated with the role.

The findings in the review emerge from one of the most significant examinations of local government that has been undertaken in Tasmania in recent decades, and, importantly, that wasn't the end of the consultation process. Following the review, the government undertook a further dedicated consultation process with specific focus on councillor numbers and allowances, and the minister has outlined what that process included. Discussion papers were released, submissions were sought, councils were consulted.

When members suggest these reforms have somehow not been consulted upon, I respectfully disagree. These issues have been examined, debated and consulted on extensively. Members may disagree with the conclusions reached, and that is entirely their prerogative, but disagreement with an outcome is not the same thing as lack of consultation.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Member, I believe I have allowed some latitude to discuss the flow-on effects of voting against the clause, but the point of the Committee phase is to examine each clause forensically and not to go over the policy in the second reading speech.

Ms THOMAS - Okay, so this changes the policy intent of the bill fundamentally.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - We are talking about the clause, and we did allow some latitude.

Ms THOMAS - Okay, then how do I prosecute an argument? Can I seek some clarity regarding an argument on why to support or not support a significant amendment.

Ms O'Connor - Lace it with a couple of questions.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - I guess you need to wrap up what you're actually saying and have a question, if you can, rather than doing a second reading speech. Keep more to the point of what the amendment is.

Ms THOMAS - I'm just seeking clarity. When we did second reading, we were not aware of these amendments, so how could we put forward a view in support or not in support of them? At what point? I don't quite understand how you can influence debate if you can't make a case for or against the amendment.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - I think the main thing is to not need to go over old arguments, but just to get to the point that you are actually speaking about to determine whether you're going to support or prosecute the proposed amendment.

Ms THOMAS - Okay. I've made my argument that my position is clear that I'm not going to support the bill. Even after the reforms that are proposed, Tasmania will remain one of the most heavily represented local government jurisdictions in Australia. Under the government's proposed model, Tasmania will have approximately one councillor for every 2746 residents, so I ask the honourable member for Hobart who's proposing this amendment then - can I or not? No. Only the government.

Ms O'Connor - You can definitely ask to propose a question.

Members interjecting.

Ms THOMAS - She's had her three calls, so I wonder if the honourable member knows how that compares to how many councillors per residents in other jurisdictions, because I would suggest no reasonable person could argue that Tasmania is somehow over-represented -

Ms O'Connor - Underrepresented.

Ms THOMAS - Underrepresented, thank you.

Ms O'Connor - I am not trying to argue that. It's part of the process.

Ms THOMAS - Underrepresented.

Ms O'Connor - Yes, the process.

Ms THOMAS - Okay, I might wrap it up. I have a lot more to say on this, but clearly it appears that that's not the way this process works and I've misunderstood and forgotten that.

I don't have any questions for the member for Hobart, other than that, I guess. How can you possibly argue Tasmania is not adequately represented given the numbers of councillors here per capita versus compared to other areas of Australia? Moreover, how can you possibly suggest that there hasn't been sufficient consultation on this when - yes, I acknowledge it wasn't included in the final consultation draft; however, there was a specific discussion paper on councillor numbers and allowances and there was a significant two-year review process that examined all of the issues that have led to these structural reset reforms that we find ourselves considering in this bill today.

Ms WEBB - Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. I'll run briefly through a couple of points to add in terms of my response to the suggested amendment. I don't accept that there is overwhelming support for these amendments, as asserted by the minister. That is not demonstrated by the numbers he read out in terms of the councillors for, against or neutral. It certainly isn't overwhelming support. What we're talking about, too, is not just the sector's views. The minister talked about the sector's views - that's the councils and LGAT, very valid stakeholders in this - but actually the most important stakeholders here are the Tasmanian people, the communities. They've never been presented with what's in this bill, specifically laid

out and proposed to be legislated, and had a chance to comment on it. That is absolutely, irrefutably, factually true. That is not what's happened.

They can talk about it as much as they like that this got discussed at this point or the other point or in a review or in a discussion paper. It wasn't consulting on what is in this bill specifically with the Tasmanian people in the community, who are the fundamental stakeholders here. It is their democratic representation that we're seeking to erode with this bill, potentially.

Absolutely no-one is making the argument that Tasmania is underrepresented; that's not part of the argument here, so for other members to suggest that, it's a straw man to put up and it's unfortunate to go there. The point of this amendment, in my mind, isn't even to say, 'This shouldn't happen potentially down the track if it's been consulted on and that's what the community has supported to go through.' What it's saying is, 'Don't do it now without the consultation. Pull the plug on it for the time being.' That's really important. These amendments do not preserve the status quo in perpetuity. They put pause on these particular aspects of reform and say, 'Consult on them before progressing them.' Therefore, it is not even a roadblock; it is a pause. It doesn't preserve the status quo forever. It just says do this right, and patently, it hasn't been done right to this point. We can talk as much as we like, trying to fill in the gap, the glaring gap of consultation, but you cannot fill in the gap. This legislation, as it stands, was not consulted with the Tasmanian community, full stop, and it's their democratic rights that we're seeking to undermine.

I support allowances going up; I do not think these two things should be linked. They've been artificially linked by the government here. We should be thinking of them separately and differently. We should have a standardised and structural way we begin to look at this and that should be what we talk to the Tasmanian people about and separately consider, so that's my view on that. I hope that we don't have strawman arguments put up and things being asserted - people are arguing that they're not. Tasmania has a different per capita on many issues with larger states and actually, we're not that different to many interstate jurisdictions.

This change, yes, would still bring us in line, to some extent a little bit further up the comparative ladder; but, actually, we're not that far off it right now. In a small state with a small population, there are many, many things where your per capita data puts us either at the bottom or the top; we've got more or less or whatever it might be. It's a natural thing for a small state when you compare it with big jurisdictions. That's why I'm not making an argument about that. We want to aim for the right representation and, importantly, we want to aim for our community to decide what that is. That's what this amendment provides for.

Mr VINCENT - We have worked extremely hard with the sector from day one on this, and I thank the member for Elwick for reminding me that I was one of those 4000 people, and attended 20 different sets of those functions, and sat at the back of areas outside of my direct area of concern so that I had a balanced view. I represented the local government sector right around Tasmania with various other parts of local government. I think my views are very balanced throughout the community.

Not only did we work with the local government sector, we also worked very hard with the Local Government Association of Tasmania, who helped us, nurtured, also argued and went through the process with it, and I appreciate them for their honesty in that process; but to say it hasn't been out to the community when the local councillors are the connection that we all

have with our local communities, and they are all out and about talking to clubs, at community events and everything else; I know, as I moved around the state as a person - not as a mayor anymore, I'm starting to get rid of the mayoral hat now - but in the supermarket, in the shops, at Rotary, the football on a Saturday, there were people from all walks who were raising and talking about this. It has been out in the community for a long time, and not just in my area, but right around the state.

I'd also like to mention that as I've moved around the state as Local Government minister, I gave myself the aim of visiting every council at least twice in the year; because of the election last year it fell a little bit short of that, but I probably covered 95 per cent of it, and I've tried to maintain that. I had conversations, probably not with all 263 councillors, but I think I'd be close to 180 to 200 of those councillors for and against, but the overwhelming majority has been for it all the way through the process. That's why I won't be supporting this.

Ms Webb - Less than 50 per cent is not an overwhelming majority.

Mr EDMUNDS - I will be very briefly commenting on why I will be voting with the government on this one. I think the member for Elwick spelled out a lot of the arguments about why and where I am on this issue; expectations are higher than ever for local government. The scrutiny, the expectations around governments, governance and professionalism are such that I see that they should be better remunerated because of those extra expectations. In fact, they have a similar level of expectation on them to what we do in here and indeed our federal colleagues as well.

That review was thorough and long, and I was a bit of a pest during that review and had a couple of little back and forths. I certainly might not have been popular with the chair of the board or the minister, but certainly I can't argue with the time and significant dollars that went into that consultation.

Part of this conversation about the numbers on councils, I think, is about elections; but I've taken the view it's also about the operation. There are four years for these groups to operate, and I think with higher expectation, better remuneration, we should expect better from our councils. It's funny where you see arguments. I saw a really balanced contribution from one of the outgoing Clarence councillors, who I have a lot of respect for, who really put both sides of this argument on their social media, and their expectations around if there's going to be less councillors, then the expectations should be higher, and I think they will be.

I totally agree with in terms of retaining talented councillors. Maybe six years ago this was a problem: we had a lot of younger councillors quitting councils. It was the former member for Elwick, I think, and it was yourself, and mayor Ben Shaw, Chair, a bit of an online catchup of councillors under 40. Anything we can do to keep those talented people - and they don't have to be young either - in council, I think is good.

The argument about the feedback of the sector, it can be frustrating when you're a lowly councillor and your mayor goes off and has a position that you don't necessarily agree with. It's really hard to get consensus across 500 local government representatives, or 450, as the case may be later this year. You can sort of take both sides of that. An analogy I talk about is: just like in local government itself, you've got to make a vote one way or another, and on balance, considering all the evidence before us, we will be supporting the position of government on this one.

Ms O'Connor - Again.

Mr EDMUNDS - Oh, come on, Cassy.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR (Ms Armitage) - Before I put the question of the clause, just remember that if you want the clause to stay in, vote yes; if you support the amendment, vote no. The question is that clause 5, as read, stand part of the bill.

The Committee divided -

AYES 8

Mr Duigan (Teller)
Mr Edmunds
Mr Hiscutt
Ms Lovell
Ms Palmer
Ms Rattray
Ms Thomas
Mr Vincent

NOES 4

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

PAIRS

Ms Forrest

Ms Glade-Wright

Clause 5 agreed to.

Clause 6 -

Section 17 amended (Electoral districts)

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. Obviously, I've got the vibe of the thing and know what the basic mood of Council is on this, but I'll be moving to vote against the clause. I'll just remind the minister that when he talks about such a thing as 'the sector', it's not an amorphous, monocultural blob. You can't actually purport to be representing the views of a whole sector when you're dealing with 29 councils, 29 municipalities, Local Government Association of Tasmania, and the broader Tasmanian community, who have been left out of this consultation process altogether.

This amendment in the bill amends section 17 of the principal act, which relates to the establishment of electoral districts. The reason that section 17 of the *Local Government Act* is being amended is to insert columns that relate to the reduction in numbers and increase in remuneration. Just so we don't get any more strawman arguments as we roll through this bill, it is not the Greens' position that we reject the broader reform agenda to improve governance in local government. We don't reject the reforms. As I said in my opening contribution in the Committee stage, we support the others. Obviously, there are amendments that need to be made, particularly around, for example, the Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal's (TASCAT) capacity to stop someone running for local government for seven years. However, this is an amendment that has been brought into the *Local Government Act* to enable the cutting of numbers, and that's why I'll be calling a division on this clause.

Mr VINCENT - I will respond to the comments on what I call 'the sector', just for clarification. Being a wordsmith is not my strongest point, but when I talk about the sector, it's different to talking about public. When I talk about the sector, I talk about council staff, councillors, contractors, Local Government Association, and people directly involved with the sector as a whole. When I talk about the public, I talk about the people who I meet in the street every day and who are not involved in the sector. Just if I can clarify that point, please.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Absolutely. Thank you.

Ms O'Connor - I am waiting for you to call me.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - No, thank you. It's just that if members do have questions for the honourable member for Hobart, perhaps they might want to stand first so that the honourable member has a chance to answer the questions, as she only has two calls left.

Ms O'CONNOR - In response to the minister's statement. I hear you, minister, but again, just challenge your assertion that 'the sector' is strongly supportive of these changes. You cannot know that, because there hasn't been effective consultation with local government, or the people who work with it, or the communities they represent. So, I urge caution in the use of the term 'the sector', given all the councils that I've read out that are opposed to these changes.

Mr VINCENT - I notice that the member for Hobart put 'community' back into that sector, where I had explained that that wasn't part of it. I believe I can - as I said, as I move around the state talking to so many people in both my role previously and my role now, and on pure numbers, the amount of support has been overwhelming. One of the main criticisms has probably been that it doesn't go far enough - but that's a different story. Thank you.

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

The Committee divided -

AYES 8

Mr Duigan
Mr Edmunds
Mr Hiscutt
Ms Lovell (Teller)
Ms Palmer
Ms Rattray
Ms Thomas
Mr Vincent

NOES 4

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

PAIRS

Ms Forrest

Ms Glade-Wright

Clause 6 agreed to.

Clause 7 -

Section 18 amended (Establishment of councils)

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. I won't re-prosecute all the arguments, particularly on this clause; just to note for honourable members that in the principal act this is a foundational clause 18, which establishes Tasmania's councils, but, again, in the amendment bill that we're dealing with, it has been linked to the column in the schedule that cuts councillor numbers and unfortunately links it to the remuneration question. I might just put on the record now because I haven't had a chance to: obviously, I support appropriate and increased remuneration for people who are elected to local government. They've been very poorly paid for a very long time. It's just unfortunate that these two issues have been linked. So, I will be calling a division on proposed clause 7 in the amendment bill.

Mr HISCUTT - Thank you. I'd just like to note on this particular clause that seeing that clause 5 already passed, this would make the bill make absolutely zero sense, so I can't see any reason for not supporting this clause to continue.

Ms WEBB - Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. It's not really relevant for us to comment on other people's votes on clauses, but I did want to jump up to add something that flowed on, actually, when I heard the minister's response on the last clause about apparent overwhelming support that he reports hearing, and I just want to put on the record right now: we've heard from a lot of Tasmanian people just in recent weeks, dozens and dozens and dozens of Tasmanian people in recent weeks, and I want to make sure that that's recognised, that what we have heard and I would assert - in fact, any member can dispute this if they would like to on their feet here - in excess of 95 per cent of what we've heard from the Tasmanian community on this matter has been against these changes progressing in this way, at this time, because of the process issues.

We've heard from many, many, many Tasmanians on this, overwhelmingly, by an actual overwhelming majority, in excess of 95 per cent, probably in excess of 98 to 99 per cent. That's an overwhelming majority. So, if we're going to talk about and put on the record things we've heard, I want to make sure that we recognise those Tasmanians have contacted us. I thank them for getting in touch. They do deeply feel concerned about the erosion of democracy, and the poor process leading to that, and they did want us to address that in this place. That's clearly, it would seem, not going to happen. I apologise to them for our failure to be able to halt that erosion, and the seeming endorsement of this place of poor process in what's happening here today. That's a shame, but I'm not going to say that what we've heard in recent weeks in emails is entirely reflective of the whole Tasmanian community and the voter base in the Tasmanian community; just as the minister can't say that conversations he has had about the place as he has gone about his role over the last couple of years is representative of the community either.

The fact of the matter is: in no definitive way do we know what the view of the Tasmanian people is specifically on this, on the measures legislated here in this bill. It doesn't matter what conversations were had during a review period of many broad reforms; it doesn't matter what was said in terms of the discussion paper. We don't know what the view is, and certainly no-one can make an assertion about an overwhelming view of the Tasmanian people about what we're doing here in this bill on this matter - I can't, the minister can't, none of us can, because the process didn't happen.

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

The Committee divided -

AYES 8

Mr Duigan
Mr Edmunds
Mr Hiscutt
Ms Lovell (Teller)
Ms Palmer
Ms Rattray
Ms Thomas
Mr Vincent

NOES 4

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

PAIRS

Ms Forrest

Ms Glade-Wright

Clause 7 agreed to.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

[7.00 p.m.]

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

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

This is for the purpose of a dinner break. I can indicate the bells will ring at around 7.50 p.m.

Sitting suspended from 7.01 to 7.57 p.m.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (TARGETED REFORM)
BILL 2026 (No. 10)**

In Committee

Resumed from above.

Clause 8 agreed to.

Clause 9 -

Section 25 amended (Constitution of council)

Ms O'CONNOR - I have two amendments to clause 9. I will move these sequentially for ease of discussion. I move -

First amendment

Page 15, paragraph (b).

Leave out the paragraph.

Second amendment

Same page, paragraph (c).

Leave out the paragraph.

The reason I do this is because this is the moving around of the columns that in part embeds the reduction in councillor numbers and changes to remuneration.

Members have heard my arguments for not allowing this to happen. Obviously, I haven't been entirely persuaded by them but this is what we would like to see happen to this bill. We'd like to see it cleaned up, introduce necessary reforms to council and make sure that the move to reduce representation on council is properly consulted.

Amendments negatived.

Clause 9 agreed to.

Clause 10 agreed to.

Clause 11 agreed to.

Clause 12 -

Sections 28AB and 28AC inserted

28AB. Mandatory core learning and development activities for councillors

28AC. Policy for continuing professional development

Ms RATTRAY - In relation to 28AB(2) where it talks about 'The Director may approve one or more courses of mandatory core learning and development activities for councillors', I'm interested to have an understanding of whether this is additional core learning or mandatory core learning to what already takes place now. I understand that councillors are required to undertake personal development or some development around their roles and the function of council. They can do that online, or they can also attend other events that the Local Government Association provides. I know that most of the councillors I know have done the online version - so is this additional? It says the director may approve 'one or more' courses, so I'm interested to have some understanding of 28AB(2).

Mr VINCENT - I will seek some information.

It's not mandatory to do those courses. The two parts of this will allow that to become mandatory for the module of learning. The second part of it will allow the discretion of the Director of Local Government, should somebody be returning or have done part of the courses before, to use his discretion on a secondary part of that course.

Ms WEBB - The natural question with this is - obviously it's providing for mandatory courses to be set - what is the consequence of an elected councillor not doing their mandatory courses? Would that be regarded, for example, as a violation of the code of conduct or something similar to that? Why haven't we specified here, in the legislation, what the consequence would be of not completing mandatory courses?

Mr VINCENT - I will seek some advice.

Thank you for that. Under the present circumstances, it's not mandatory and if there's not compliance, it's more of a name and shame if they've only partly finished the course - peer group pressure, I suppose you'd call it at a lot of councils these days, as I remember it. If there's continued noncompliance or lack of willingness to show sensitivity towards the training, then the director does have an option for a peer performance improvement direction to be issued to that councillor, if it was serious enough.

Mr GAFFNEY - Just further to that, 28AB(7):

The councillor must, within 12 months after the councillor's election -

I'm hearing what the minister's saying. If a councillor says, 'I'm not doing that course' because they've been voted on by their electorate, they've been going through the process and voted on it and said, 'I'm not doing that planning course. I'm not doing that course', what course of action can the minister or the director take? I would find it very difficult to understand that they could get them sacked or off council just because they refused to do a course.

Mr VINCENT - I appreciate that this is an emotive subject to many people, but it is a maturing debate on this, and I'd probably start with the Director of Local Government doing a handwriting course, I might say.

It is a statutory requirement under the act, and the director may recommend a PID, as I mentioned before, or a noncompliance can result in suspension.

Mr GAFFNEY - Has there been any consideration that when somebody is nominating for council that that is a requirement, when they nominate, to sign a form and say, 'I undertake, as part of this nomination process, that it's required for me to complete said courses, as outlined by the director'? Then there'd be no confusion and no course of action that the council could refuse, if they'd signed a form as part of the nomination process.

Mr VINCENT - I was just seeking clarification on that, because there has been a fair bit of discussion regarding this from local government. There are some pre-election training and requirements that we are looking at making a signatory for; that they have achieved or gone through some basic courses - but once they're elected, it is part of the act for them to comply after that.

Ms O'CONNOR - There's a double standard at work here. We don't apply these standards to ourselves as elected members of the state parliament, and, in fact, during the workplace culture review process, it was initially proposed that elected members undertake mandatory good behaviour or ethical conduct courses; putting aside the need for us all to have a good understanding of ethics, the notion that you can make an elected member mandatorily undertake a training course that's been put together by an unelected bureaucrat is kind of odd.

It's strange that we in here would legislate this sort of requirement on our local government peers without applying the same standard to ourselves, and I don't think we should, to be honest, because ultimately our contract in here, as it is at a local government level, is with our electors. When you have a look at the principal act, this is a whole new set of obligations on people elected to local government. There's nothing in the principal act that I can see in the preceding clause that this follows that relates to anything mandatory. It is a whole new requirement on people elected to local government. Given that, we're here voting on a different set of standards for our local government peers - standards we're not prepared to apply to ourselves.

I'd like to understand from the minister where this proposed amendment came from and whether, in the minister's understanding, or the Office of Local Government's understanding, there are similar mandatory training requirements in other jurisdictions for local councillors.

Mr VINCENT - Thanks very much. The role of councillor is highly complex these days, with responsibility for strategic decision-making around matters such as planning and management of millions of dollars' worth of community assets. They also operate with a different governance framework than state politicians without the direct accountability of the parliament. It's therefore reasonable that councillors have at least a baseline understanding of their role and responsibilities, which the mandatory core learning requirements look to provide. This has come from the sector itself that has voted on this several times over a number of years. The sector, through LGAT, has been calling for this for a long time.

It is also a recommendation of the local government report and is in, as far as I know, most states on the mainland - not all, but most. Thank you.

Ms O'CONNOR - Again, the minister used a term 'the sector', which I challenge as being valid in this context because the local government sector is complex and diverse. Minister, you didn't quite go to the substance of the question. Why, for example, isn't there some kind of induction course or process that's just an automatic part of being elected to local government that is offered to representatives of local government? How does the government feel that it is appropriate, given that the electors in a municipality have made up their mind about someone they want to represent them in local government, for then a bureaucracy to come in over the top of that and say, 'You must do this course' a course that'll be, presumably designed and selected by an unelected bureaucrat?

The minister made some comments about this being fairly common practice in other jurisdictions, but without making any reference to any other jurisdiction. The minister made a reference to local government bodies and representatives asking for this. I've never seen anything on paper that says that, and obviously that doesn't mean it didn't happen. Can we have some more detail regarding where this came from and where it happens in other jurisdictions that a government, through legislation and a bureaucracy, presumes to make mandatory a

course for someone who, in a democratic system, has already been elected by enough voters to take a position on council?

Mr VINCENT - Certainly, in the Future of Local Government Review, it was recommendation 16. The Local Government Association of Tasmania is the representative peak body of the sector; we want to empower and upskill our elected members, and so do they. That's where a lot of this has come from. The course will be approved by the director but it must be consulted on with the Local Government Association of Tasmania because they will be the body that will make sure these things are appropriate and being delivered.

Ms O'CONNOR - Minister, can a councillor who exercises their intrinsic right not to be forced to do something they don't want to do, who doesn't undertake this mandatory training course, be removed from council?

Mr VINCENT - The answer is no; they can be suspended, as I mentioned, but not removed from council.

Ms RATTRAY - Can I ask, suspended for how long? If you miss three meetings, then you have to step down. That's still the case, isn't it? Can I have some understanding of what a suspension might look like, because it might effectively be that you're standing someone down and putting them out of a job because they haven't done their training course.

Mr VINCENT - If that doesn't happen, it can be addressed through a performance improvement direction (PID) and that can be based in the PID depending on the type of refusal and behaviour of the councillor, but it can be anywhere up to six months.

Ms WEBB - Just a quick question: in response to my initial question raised about this and about consequence, the minister did mention potentially in the first instance you have that sort of public visibility, naming-and-shaming-type consequence that could apply before any other further more formal consequences. Is the expectation, then, that there is public reporting in a formal and regular way about the status of councillors and their participation in training?

Mr VINCENT - Yes. It is a requirement for the annual report of each council to report on these training mechanisms.

Clause 12 agreed to.

Clause 13 -

Part 3, Division 3AAA inserted

Division 3AAA – *Councillor allowances and numbers*

28JAA. Allowances

28JAB. Review of councillor allowances and numbers

28JAC. Requests for reduction of councillor numbers

28JAD. Order to amend Schedule 3

Ms WEBB - I have amendments to move on clause 13 in my name. I'd better read them both in because they can be dealt with together. I move -

First amendment

Page 21, proposed new Division 3AAA, section 28JAC.

Leave out that section.

Second amendment

Page 23, same proposed new Division, section 28JAD, subsection (2).

Leave out that subsection.

Insert instead the following subsection.

- (2) A recommendation under subsection (1) may be made as a result of a review under section 28JAB.

Those amendments are linked because in essence, just in terms of practically what effect this amendment has, it's to take out 28JAC altogether and then adjust 28JAD to remove the reference to JAC, because if JAC was deleted, we need to just readjust subsection (2) of JAD to make sure it doesn't refer to the deleted section.

To speak to the substance of the amendment that I'm proposing here - and I guess I'm asking us to just take a breath - clearly, there's not an interest in the Chamber to interrupt the intention to reduce councillor numbers, in some instances via the mechanisms in this bill; however, I'm going to ask us now to turn our minds to a particular aspect of that, which is where the bill provides for there to be, in some instances, on certain categories of council, a potential ability to reduce numbers further from seven to five, and it provides the mechanism for that to happen.

I'm inviting members to consider that we could responsibly not proceed with this particular element of the reduction in numbers aspect at this point in time and give it more consideration, because it has been raised as potentially problematic by a whole range of stakeholders that reducing the number of elected representatives to as low as five can present a potential range of concerns and issues. I think many of us would inherently understand some of those concerns being raised: that five is a small number of people to sit around a table and to be the elected representatives of a particular area. A majority of five is only three, so potentially you have three people able to make significant decisions for their local community as the majority of five, and the diversity, of course, is compromised. If you're coming down to as low as five, you're certainly going to be less likely to see a diverse array of people around a table when five is the number that you are looking at.

Even just today, in an email I think members would have seen come through from the TCCI, it referenced the fact that they'd had some concerns when they responded to the discussion paper last year about a potential reduction to five, because I think the term they used was 'the loss of critical mass'. I think we can see the bill is going through with the other elements of reduction of numbers of councillors; it's not predicated on there absolutely having to be a reduction to five, but this element of the bill, I think, warrants and could do with more consideration and more time. We know that the minister has told us he's progressing further reforms not far down the track on electoral matters relating to the local government sector, so this element could be considered in that next round and next step, once it has had a chance to be thought about a bit more, potentially put out in an exposure draft with that next-round bill,

to get the broadest possible input on it. So, I'm just encouraging members to err on the side of caution here, because once we put this - if this stays in the bill, it's much, much harder to take it out later. The consequences are quite high if councils, under this provision that's here in the bill, proceed down this path.

The bill has very light requirements on how that then occurs, in that it doesn't even particularly mandate what level of community consultation has to happen; it's just going to be the councillors elected at the time - the seven councillors around that particular council's table at that time - deciding by an ordinary majority that they're going to put forward to the minister that they'd like to reduce their council to five elected reps; and as much as the minister might say, of course there's an expectation that community consultation will have occurred, there's nothing to mandate that or what the level of that community consultation and community agreement should be. So, for all these reasons, I think we have to be really cautious here about providing for this in this way in the bill.

We don't have to close the door on it altogether; by not including it in this bill, we can leave the door open for further consideration for it to be in the next bill. There doesn't need to be a rush. We've got four years between our local government elections in October this year and the next round of local government elections. There are four years to be progressing the next iteration of these reforms and for this to be given more consideration to. So, just to point members' eyes to the fact that the way it's laid out here, for a reduction to five to occur, is very light on in terms of requirements and accountability, and that concerns me; and I think it would concern a lot of us, and we don't have to rush into it. That's my first speak on the amendment.

I'm going to encourage members to think about supporting this particular amendment as a precaution, and just as a 'let's leave this particular aspect for another day', knowing that the general intent of the bill in terms of reduction of councillor numbers and the allowances that are tied to it is clearly being supported in the Chamber and is going to go through; but on this, we could exercise a further degree of caution and pause.

Mr VINCENT - Thank you, and I do thank the member for her comments there. There certainly have been some points raised about this, but there has been consultation done. The government does not support removing the flexibility in the bill for certain councils to voluntarily reduce their elected member numbers into the future. We acknowledge there was strong consultation feedback in opposition to the proposal for some councils to automatically reduce to five elected members, and the government accepts these concerns. That is why we have moved away from that proposal.

However, some councils have nonetheless expressed an interest in reducing their numbers to five. In response to this, and to provide flexibility for those councils and their communities into the future, the government is seeking to prescribe a legislative pathway for the minister to recommend to the Governor such a reduction in response to formal requests supported by resolution passed by the council. It must be emphasised that this option is only open to Tasmania's five smallest councils, two of which have expressed a level of informal interest in taking up this option. In passing such a resolution, there would be an expectation by the Office of Local Government and the minister of clear community consultation and support for the proposal.

The minister has the discretion to approve a request from a council and any evidence of deficient engagement or a lack of community support, generally would be taken into account

in exercising this discretion. Where approved, such an order would have the effect of automatically amending the schedule in the act dealing with councillor numbers, avoiding the need to bring the amendment back to parliament. The pathway would also allow for councils which moved to five members to later return to seven using the same process. These provisions would, however, be subject to several important guardrails; namely, only the five smallest councils initially recommended to reduce to five would be able to make a request for a numbers change. Such a request would need to be made no later than six months before the notice of election for the next ordinary council election. The requested change would take effect from the next ordinary election of the council, and once the request is made and put in force, no further requests would be able to be made by the same council within the next two terms of council. Thank you.

Ms O'CONNOR - I hope honourable members will very seriously consider supporting the honourable member for Nelson's amendment. It's just sensible to do so. I am disappointed to hear that the government isn't prepared to shift on this in good faith. I don't think the government has made the argument, notwithstanding what the minister has just said then. Five is a very small number for a local government body to be overseeing development applications and the like. If you don't have a requirement for community consultation embedded in your legislation, it's all subjective. You can have an application from one of the smaller councils to reduce to five and the director of local government and/or the minister could, through whatever mental computations they want to make, satisfy themselves that there's been some conversations at a community level, but there's nothing in the legislation that requires it. Therefore, we mandate training for councillors, but we're not prepared to mandate community consultation to shrink a council to five, where there is a critical mass issue.

I simply point people to the obvious potential for misconduct and underhand dealings and even corruption at the local government level if you have what could be reduced to a quorum of three making really significant decisions that impact on a whole municipality. I'm very surprised that the government has persisted with this element of the legislation. It is not necessary to achieve the objectives that you state as your objectives and it is severely undermining the capacity of our smaller rural and regional councils to have the quality and the diversity and the capacity of enough people on the council to be there to properly represent their communities and make good evidence-based decisions and practise good governance and to be accountable to the extent that local government can.

I would be surprised if enough honourable members in this place thought that reducing councils - giving them the capacity to reduce to five and then a quorum could be three - I'd be surprised if people thought that was a good idea, particularly given that more than half of the members in this place have come out of local government. Doesn't that tell us something about the importance of having quality and diversity of people representing their communities and local governments? It should tell us something. I hope enough of Council supports the honourable member for Nelson's amendment. It's a really important improvement to this amendment bill.

Mr HISCUTT - I rise to give the honourable member my reasons for not supporting this amendment. I think there comes a point where we need to remember how local councillors are elected. They are elected by the people to represent the people. I think it's a bit disingenuous to say that they're going to get in there and they're all going to do these terrible things.

Ms O'Connor - I didn't say that. Please don't misrepresent me.

Mr HISCUTT - Sorry, that they 'may' do those things.

Ms O'Connor - There is a potential there, is what I said. That's an obvious observation.

Mr HISCUTT - Yes, potential. Okay. But we have to remember that to say that is also an imputation on the people who put those councillors into that position.

Ms O'Connor - They're not people at the moment; they're a number.

Mr HISCUTT - Councillors. I'm assured by the fact that it is only those who are assessed versus the assessment criteria who are on that lowest band and who will be put into this position where they can do that. It will require a ministerial order for that to come about, which there is plenty of scrutiny able to be put on the minister if actions are taken that are against what the will of the people would be. Then again, the will of the people is expressed through the council who will have the decision to make this by absolute majority - at least four members of a seven-member council would need to be there. If only four were there and that vote was taken, I'm fairly sure the minister at that time would say, well, that's clearly not an expression of what's happening. There's some level, here, saying the people are given the opportunity to determine their own destiny with autonomy. We trust the people who put those elected members into that position have the right to potentially go down this path, if they wish to.

Ms RATTRAY - I share the concerns that have been raised by the honourable member for Hobart and the honourable member for Nelson, in the reduction without having a very clear community consultation process. No, it's not written into the legislation, but I'm asking the minister if there could be - and I take on board what the honourable member for Montgomery has just added to the debate around this. But I would feel a lot more comfortable if there was a guarantee that there would be genuine community consultation that was presented to the minister before any decision is made in that regard.

Obviously, one of those councils is a council that I have a privilege to represent and we know that, from time to time, people are off-island for various reasons, so it might not always be possible to have a full contingent of councillors available at the council table. That reduction is quite significant for those smaller councils, and just to have three or four sitting around a table and a majority of three making those decisions. I'm interested if the minister - if it's not in the legislation - would give us a secure guarantee that there wouldn't be -

Ms Webb - It can't be a guarantee.

Ms RATTRAY - Well, it can be.

Ms Webb - It can't be.

Ms RATTRAY - We've given guarantees in this place and ministers have provided -

Ms Webb - Can't bind future ministers.

Ms Thomas - Read it into the *Hansard*.

Ms RATTRAY - guarantees in this place before -

Ms Webb - Can't bind future ministers.

Ms RATTRAY - that it's in the *Hansard* and that's part of the process. I'm just interested in what the honourable minister thinks about that, to provide some comfort, because I can see some of the issues around very small numbers, but I would want to be very assured that the community had input before an application was made to the minister.

Mr VINCENT - It is the government's expectation that any council making such a request would first undertake genuine community consultation and had considered how it would manage any potential challenges in respect to maintaining a quorum. The Office of Local Government would work with councils to formulate a communication plan that would see them through this challenge of moving from seven to five, if they so wished.

Mr GAFFNEY - I appreciate the comments from other honourable members. I suppose I come from an area where, when I was president of the Local Government Association I travelled to all of the councils, the smaller ones as well. Even with the VAD, when I travelled to the smaller - and wonderful people, wonderful groups - small and I think very well connected to each other. That's a good thing. On the other hand, somebody wanting to relocate to go to an island and take up a position of responsibility as a councillor and as an elected member may not get that opportunity if we narrow it from seven to five - even with a good expectation for eight years down the track. But further down the track we want those islands to have a greater variety, diversity of opinion, to give an opportunity for someone new to the island to bring in different ideas. They're not going to get that opportunity because the networks, the families, the friends on the island are so much so that it would be very hard to break into that leadership role.

Very few sporting groups, or very few organisations that I know, have a board of five or less - they're usually greater than that - to be able to run the netball association or the cricket. Here, the councils have quite a large infrastructure, they have a large spend. It's important. I think that by going to five, and you're leaving three, more than likely they'll be related by marriage or by birthright because of the nature of it. You know, Uncle Joe was the mayor and now I'm a councillor and my brother or sister also. It does create that sort of concern for me. And somebody coming from another place to relocate to that island or that small local government won't get a look-in because they won't have those family connections and the friends. So, I err on the side of caution for this. I think seven is fine. I also think, let's run with it for four or five years and then let them come back and have a good consultation about it. I would support the amendment as proposed by the member for Nelson.

Mr VINCENT - I just recognise the member for Mersey's experience with local government over many years of service. It's not 'we' that are deciding five - it is the council that decides whether it's five, if they see fit.

It has to be worked through with consultation to start with, but councillors are not left by themselves to make decisions. They have, by statutory and regulatory authorities, a CEO, or a GM in the old days. They're gradually changing to CEOs now. They have an array of professional staff that also help them in their process on what they need to do, so they're not left sitting idle trying to make decisions without the experience. I would just like to point that out. Thank you.

Ms WEBB - I appreciate the contributions of other members on the amendment. I will respond to a couple of matters that have been raised to share my thoughts on them. Just to clarify, and potentially to correct the facts of something the minister has just said: it isn't the council that is deciding, it's the minister who's deciding to put that - an application is made to the minister, the minister's discretion comes into play, and the minister decides whether that can go ahead and be put through as a direction to make the change. The decision point isn't with the council. Yes, the council is the one who can put the proposal up - again, with no actual requirement for consultation with its community. And I take on board some comments from the member for Montgomery that yes, voters do vote these people in; they are there to represent the community. But unless those people have run on a platform that they intend to be part of a decision-making group in the council that reduce the number to five, then voters haven't known that that's what they're supporting on that matter for that person.

If we have a little bit more time to think about how this might happen - I'm not even closing the door on it happening down the track. All I'm saying is I think this needs more time and thought, because we need to think through what checks and balances we put in place, and what appropriate process matters might be put in place if we were to allow this to go forward.

Absolutely, if people were elected to councils having run on a platform to their community that once in council they would support a reduction in numbers on that council, and enough of them to give effect to that, that would be the voice of the community and the voter, sure.

As it stands in the bill now, that's not what is required. It's not even required for those seven council members who are making the decision here to put this proposal to the minister, that they have to reach any threshold test for consultation with community. It's simply not there. It doesn't matter what assertion the government makes here. It doesn't matter what guarantee the minister may wish to give at the table here - none of that counts. It's not always going to be this minister. We're talking about future ministers here who have this power and this discretion - so we have to be really clear.

Checks and balances in a system of governance, and a democratic system of governance, are not slurs on voters. Yes, voters have a job in a democracy to vote in their elected representatives into whatever body that is - whether it's local council, whether it's here in the state parliament or a federal parliament or wherever. Yes, they do have that role to vote them in, but we don't then say that gives them the mandate to do whatever they like because they're good people who've been voted in. We put checks and balances in place, we put process in place, we put rules in place. It's entirely appropriate to recognise where there might be risks or concerns that might warrant a check or balance be put in place. It is absolutely factual that anybody with interests in or with an examination of ethics in governance would recognise that a decision-making body of five on matters of serious consequence for their community like this has risks involved, because three people is a majority to make a significant decision.

Local councils make significant decisions particularly in the planning area and the approval of developments and things, where it's recognised a significant risk of potential corruption could occur. That's not a slur on anybody who's in local government or has been in local government. It's not a slur on people who elected them there. It's a factual, structural risk. That's why we say great, let's assist anybody who happens to find themselves in that role by putting checks and balances in place to help manage that risk in the structure that they are

entering into. It's actually irresponsible not to have thought, in a structural sense, about risks, and put those checks and balances in place.

Five councils are now, as the bill stands, in a position to be able to put themselves forward for this sort of reduction down to five elected representatives. That's not to say that there couldn't be more councils down the track that move into that category, because there are reviews that occur, so we could be talking about more than the existing five. That's by the bye. All I'm saying now is: let's put this on pause. I'm not saying it can never happen. I'm not saying there isn't a way we should look to make it happen appropriately. I'm saying at this point in time, there are enough questions and clouds hanging over this that we can afford to take it out of the bill without disrupting anything to do with this bill's intent and principles and outcomes. All the other reductions of numbers that are structurally built into the bill are there. The 50 councillors less across the state, the allowances, go forward in the bill as it stands. Nothing is disrupted about that and the immediate impacts for this year's elections - any of that, it stands. This is just to say, let's think about this element a little bit more.

We do have an issue around diversity being lost if we reduce to five, and that is going to be a consideration that deserves more discussion. I'm not making a judgment about this at this point in time. It was an interesting point raised by the member for Mersey in relation to small communities, connections and the difficulty, potentially, of newcomers breaking in. That hadn't occurred to me to the same degree. Again, there's more to think about here.

While the minister may say that there have already been a couple of councils who've indicated an interest in this, it's the councils and the councillors who have indicated that. Have their communities indicated that? Of those two councils who've indicated their interest, have those communities indicated the communities' interest in it? The council may have, the elected members may have. I don't believe we've had a process which has allowed those communities yet to do that, and we, certainly in this bill, aren't guaranteeing that they will have a certain level of opportunity to have a say. We have an assertion of it; we don't have a requirement for it.

I am sad to think that we might not be able to make this adjustment to this bill in the interests of careful governance without disrupting anything about the fundamental changes the bill is bringing through, and people's interest in supporting those changes, which is clear in the Chamber. I hope members will give it some more thought and support this amendment. It's precautionary; it doesn't close any doors permanently. It simply puts into the next stage of reforms and thought some more time for us to consider this more fully and ensure that the right checks and balances are there. I really encourage members to give this some thought. It does no harm in this first instance. It potentially provides appropriate protection against harm.

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

The Committee divided -

AYES 6

Ms Armitage
Mr Gaffney
Mr Glade-Wright

NOES 6

Mr Duigan
Mr Edmunds (Teller)
Mr Hiscutt

Ms O'Connor
Ms Rattray
Ms Webb (Teller)

Ms Palmer
Ms Thomas
Mr Vincent

PAIRS

Ms Forrest

Ms Lovell

Amendments negated.

Mr HISCUTT - A quick question: if an application is made to the minister, is there any restriction on the timeline on when the minister is expected to reply to that application? I couldn't see anything that is legislated for that.

Mr VINCENT - There is no set time prescribed for that, but the Office of Local Government has suggested that it would be done as quickly as sensible because of the matter being live, but there is not a determined amount of time for that. There is certainly a need to check that community consultation and the reasons are valid and everything, so -

Ms WEBB - Just to be clear and correct the minister on that statement: the minister does not have to check community consultation as per this bill; the minister may wish to do so and satisfy themselves about it, and I know a good minister like this one would do that. The minister does not have to do that under this bill. Let's just be really clear and factual if we're describing this process. My question then, on this clause still, and just to be clear, too, because it was raised in a discussion on my amendment, I didn't address it in my final speak on it when I did speak to it, it was suggested that there are checks and balances for the minister in relation to this decision, which is also wrong - factually wrong. There is no check or balance for the minister in relation to this decision. If the minister could clarify and confirm, it does not bring this decision back to parliament. It is not in any way scrutinisable or disallowable or even questionable in the parliament. There is no check or balance on the minister's decision once the minister has exercised his discretion and takes this to the Governor. Can you just confirm that for us, please, minister?

Mr VINCENT - I express some satisfaction with the member's comments towards my attitude or my focus on my position; but it's correct, it doesn't have to come back through parliament, but it does have to go to the Governor, and there is, as I've read all the way through, an expectation that community consultation will take place all the way through, and good governance would allow for that, even though it's not written there in black and white. Thank you.

Ms Webb - No requirement.

Ms O'CONNOR - Clause 13 is also the clause that provides for the review mechanism that applies the methodology that's in Schedule 4, and there is in the amendment to the clause 13, 28JAD insertion, allows the minister to present an order to the Governor that omits, inserts, or substitutes one or more numbers specified in column 4, 5 or 8 of that Schedule. There, two of the columns relate to councillor numbers and remuneration. Under usual circumstances, an order could be subordinate legislation or a disallowable instrument. What's in this legislation here basically allows a minister of the day to present to the Governor a whole redesign of the numbers and remuneration of councils without any recourse to parliament.

It's so highly regrettable, given how substantial some of these changes could be. I put to you an example of that: the maths, the methodology in Schedule 4 might spit out that Kentish Council, for example, has shrunk, its population has declined, and therefore under the methodology within the order that the minister presents to the Governor, the Kentish community could be completely disenfranchised because there's been no capacity for parliament to scrutinise that order, for the local members in that area to represent and be the voice of their community in preventing that from happening.

I do wonder why the government did not make this order subordinate legislation under the acts administration act, or did not insert a disallowable instrument provision here. To me it's quite shocking that we could enable a process that allows a methodology to determine what kind of representation a community might get and for them that to become final through the handing of an order between a minister and the Governor of the day.

Why wasn't there some provision for this to have some kind of parliamentary oversight, either by affirming that it's subordinate legislation order or inserting a specific disallowable instrument clause. In answering that question, perhaps the minister could tell the Council what he understands - what is that order? What weight does it have in law other than being the vehicle for changing the make-up of a council? What is that order?

Mr VINCENT - Thank you. The bill does set out a process which requires the minister to undertake a four-yearly review of councillor allowances and numbers by applying the methodology set out in Schedule 4. The minister will be bound to consider and recommend changes to council numbers and allowance only as they are determined by the application of that methodology. This means the minister may only determine the council sits in one of the three number categories with either nine or seven elected representatives and one of the six allowance bands. This also means it is not possible under the process established by the bill that the minister could recommend that a council was reduced to, say, four elected members or any other number not provided for under the methodology of Schedule 4.

Ms O'Connor - Straw man. Big straw man.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Order.

Mr VINCENT - The bill also provides that, subject to certain conditions, Tasmania's five smallest councils - and only those councils - may request a reduction in numbers from seven to five and to subsequently restore their numbers to seven. The process for making any changes to council numbers and allowances is by the order of the Governor, on recommendation by the minister, which may only be made within the constraints that apply under the relevant provisions, which originally is a recommendation from the council to do so.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Deputy Chair. I seek your counsel here. I specifically asked the minister what statutory weight that order has. What is it other than something that's named in this amendment bill? What is that order? It's not subordinate legislation. It's not a disallowable instrument, apparently. What is it? Madam Deputy Chair, I'm sorry to be disorderly on the matter of the order, but to have that answered, I think would be really helpful to Council.

Mr VINCENT - It is the same mechanism that applies now under any mechanism from a board of review in local government and is by order of the Governor.

Ms WEBB - I'm just trying to clarify here that the minister, in his answer, seemed to be linking the action of the minister that's available here to make this recommendation to the Governor, who, of course, by convention, isn't going to say no and will do it. It's a recommendation by and decision of the minister, essentially. Linking that to the four-year review, I understand that the bill does provide for these numbers and things to have a regular four-year review, but where is the link between that four-year review and then this action taken here in this clause 28JAD? This doesn't appear to constrain the minister to only act as per the review, or only in response to a review, or, in some sense, directed by the outcome of that review. In making that link in your answer, minister, can you make it here in the legislation for us, please, specifically point to that link?

Mr VINCENT - The clear intention is under 28JAD in point (2), which ties the process back through to Schedule 3 with the Governor's order, which is also the same as a board of review.

Ms Webb - 'May be' made; it doesn't link it. It 'may be' made. There's no firm link there, just to be clear. Let's be factual.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - The question is that the clause be agreed to.

The Committee divided -

AYES 7

Mr Duigan
Mr Edmunds
Mr Hiscutt (Teller)
Ms Lovell
Ms Palmer
Mr Thomas
Mr Vincent

NOES 5

Ms Armitage
Mr Gaffney
Ms O'Connor (Teller)
Ms Rattray
Ms Webb

PAIRS

Ms Forrest

Ms Glade-Wright

Clause 13 agreed to.

Clause 14 agreed to.

Clause 15 -

Section 28ZBA inserted

Ms WEBB - Just a question on this one and, again, it's the sort of topic we often talk about here in terms of legislative language, but I just wanted an explanation. In 28ZBA, Referral of code of conduct complaint, on initial assessment, to Director, where it says, 'The initial assessor for a code of conduct complaint on an initial assessment may refer a code of conduct complaint or part of it, to the Director,' et cetera, in terms of the use of the word 'may'

there, under what circumstances may they choose not to do that or do that? Just to be really clear why we're using the word 'may' there, I guess.

Mr VINCENT - Thank you, Chair. The term 'may': the initial assessor does have the option of referring it or moving it back out, or being handled under the normal code process. The word 'may' gives discretion to the initial assessor to make those decisions. Thank you.

Ms WEBB - Yes, thank you. Just to be really clear, though: the initial assessor may have assessed the complaint to possibly include conduct that's capable of amounting to serious councillor misconduct but has chosen not to refer it or part of it to the director, and on that basis, their course of action then is to put it through the other available process. Under what circumstances would it be considered appropriate to not refer something that was regarded to be, or initially assessed to be, potentially serious misconduct, to not send that through to the director?

Mr VINCENT - The initial assessor has regard to the threshold test established in consideration under the bill in 28ZR subclause (2). Thank you.

Clause 15 agreed to.

Clause 16 agreed to.

Clause 17 agreed to.

Clause 18 -

Part 3, Division 3B inserted

Mr HISCUTT - Madam Deputy Chair, I move an amendment to clause 18 -

Page 39, proposed new Division 3B, Subdivision 3, section 28ZX, subsection (1), paragraph (d), after 'period not exceeding'.

Leave out '7 years'

Insert instead '4 years'.

Thank you for the opportunity. I will speak only briefly to this amendment that I'm proposing. I acknowledge that the power exists elsewhere in the act enabling a councillor to be suspended for up to seven years. However, I will note that this power is only able to be used by a court of law. Although TASCAT is a tribunal, the evidence required to satisfy outcomes is not at the same bar as a court, and therefore I am proposing that the bill be amended to only four years instead of seven. If seven years were to occur with local government election timing, this could mean 11 years before someone could run again. With a reduction to four years, this would mean that at a maximum only one term will be missed due to suspension. I'm happy to hear others' thoughts.

Ms RATTRAY - I rise to place my support on the record for the member's amendment. I think it's a reasonable approach and I thank him for bringing it forward and with your indulgence, Madam Deputy Chair, most honourable members may have seen an email from Councillor Ben Lohberger. It was from three or four days ago and I have to apologise, I totally

missed the email, possibly looked at the 'Hobart' and thought 'not mine', but it was a request for a briefing and, of course, unfortunately we weren't able to facilitate that because we went into the bill. I want to place on the public record my apologies to Mr Lohberger for not seeing that request earlier and attempting to facilitate that. That's not how we work around here, and certainly the Leader's office has phoned Mr Lohberger and passed on my apologies. If he is watching, which I think perhaps he may be, I do apologise, Mr Lohberger.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Not relevant to the amendment, but you've made your point clear. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

Ms Webb - Sorry, we haven't heard from the minister in response to the amendment and I was waiting because I thought the minister would offer a response and I was getting ready to stand, too. If we could, I think the minister did want -

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Slow down a bit.

Mr VINCENT - I'm sorry for not jumping quick enough there for you. The government is willing to support the proposed amendment to reduce the period from seven to four years, and I thank the member for bringing that forward with discussion, for which TASCAT may make an order barring a councillor for standing for office where they are found to have engaged in serious councillor misconduct. The overriding objective here is to send a clear message to the community and sector that councillor misconduct will not be tolerated and acts as a strong deterrent for those who may consider engaging in such conduct. The Local Government Association of Tasmania has been clear that it is crucial these new provisions provide this deterrent.

While the government still believes seven years is appropriate for the reasons it has put forward, having a barring period of four years at least guarantees that elected members are barred from standing for an entire term of council and to the extent it achieves a better balance in the view of the council, we are willing to accept this adjustment.

Ms WEBB - I'm just rising to put on the record my support for the amendment. It was excessive, I think, to have a period of seven years being there for all the reasons that the honourable member for Montgomery put forward when he was speaking to his amendment. I agree that one cycle of local government is sufficient to be barred from if we're going to recognise the right of voters to be able to exercise their discretion and choice; it's appropriate that it's only for a limited time that they are prevented from doing that. If the person does wish to run again, they'll have to run on their record and their merits. I'm glad the government is supporting that amendment and I, too, support it.

Amendment agreed to.

Ms WEBB - I have an amendment on this clause to move in my name, also. I move -

Clause 18, page 39, same proposed new Division, same Subdivision, same section, same subsection, paragraph (e).

Leave out that paragraph.

Here is some similar thinking to the previous amendment in the sense that this is a tribunal; it's not a court. For the same reasons that we don't necessarily want to replicate the same powers the court has to dismiss a councillor in some of these circumstances, or other mechanisms that the bill has, providing the tribunal with the opportunity to dismiss a councillor from office is a really significant one. This is someone who was voted in by the people, and dismissing someone who's duly elected by their community is a really significant act to take.

What we have also introduced here, in this same section, are some new ways to provide sanction that's available to the tribunal. As we just had on the previous discussion with paragraph (d), they can be prohibited from running for a period of four years. This is new too, in relation to what can be brought as a sanction, they can also be fined as well as suspended. Before, there were some behaviour management processes that could provide for suspensions. This provides for being able to be suspended but also fined for certain breaches of certain behaviours that breach codes of conduct and the like.

The tribunal, under this new provision here being brought into play is sensible. It's very needed to be able to address poor behaviour. It provides for a range of ways of doing that. It will be more timely than the current processes. It addresses some of those active concerns and merited concerns about the lack of responsiveness under the current system. The tribunal can step in and do a range of things, including prohibiting the councillor from nominating for a period of now four years, including suspending them for potentially not less than three months, not more than six months, and by imposing a fine on them potentially as well under G in this clause.

I'm suggesting to members to bring into play the principle of proportionality here and see that (e) here, 'dismissing the councillor from office', is a significantly big jump in sanction for a tribunal to wield in this instance and may not be necessary. Given that the tribunal element is entirely new, again, what I'm encouraging members to do is to act in a precautionary way. Let's introduce this new element, see how it fares with the sanctions that are available to it other than (e), and leave this particular opportunity for sanction, the dismissing of a councillor, out of the equation, noting that it is fundamentally against the democratic principle that that person has been put there by their community. We may at a later time, when it's time to review how well this new system with the tribunal is working, come back and insert that when it has been shown to be required to have such a serious sanction available.

It's proportional, it's precautionary against things being seen to be undemocratic. If you are a member of the community who had voted somebody in who was going through this process and still maintained your support for them and saw them literally dismissed from their elected role, not just sanctioned or otherwise, I think you'd be potentially pretty upset. In saying this, I'm in no way suggesting the tribunal would do this lightly. In fact, I think the tribunal would be incredibly reluctant to do it, but even so, I don't believe it's appropriate in this first instance, with this new mechanism being put in, to provide that as an option to the tribunal. I don't think it's needed. I think we should be precautionary about jeopardising fundamental democratic principles of elected representatives being put there by their community.

Mr VINCENT - The government does not support the proposed amendment to remove entirely from the bill the ability for TASCAT to make an order dismissing a councillor and/or barring them from nominating for office for a specific period where they are found to have engaged in serious misconduct. To do so would fundamentally erode the core policy objectives of the provision, which is to augment the current regulatory framework to deal swiftly and

proportionately with breaches of the code of conduct and to signal to the sector and the community that harmful and damaging conduct will not be tolerated.

The proposed amendment would mean the only difference in sanctions available to TASCAT compared to a code of conduct panel would be a suspension of up to six months.

Ms Webb - No, you are responding to an earlier version of my amendments, minister.

Mr VINCENT - ... and a fine of 50 penalty units. Providing the authority to dismiss the council of serious misconduct has a recommendation of the 2020 Local Government Legislation Review agreed by government and was further supported through a recommendation on the recent Future of Local Government. I'll just check.

The sector has lobbied for and strongly supports the proposed serious misconduct provisions in the bill, and dismissal is a key element of this. The only ways for a councillor to be dismissed currently are if they are convicted of a crime, if they are suspended three times for code of conduct breaches, or if they are convicted of misuse of public office or improper use of information. The state cannot presently dismiss a councillor if they are convicted of an offence that is not a crime. Examples of the offences that are not crimes include: prohibited behaviour; common and aggravated assault; motor vehicle stealing; possession of stolen property; stealing with force; computer-related fraud; and supply of alcohol to minors.

There is also no way of dismissing a councillor for deliberately undermining the functioning of council, such as aggressively and repeatedly disrupting council meetings or intentionally bullying or harassing other members of council or council staff. The concept of serious councillor misconduct creates an avenue to respond to serious breaches of the councillor code of conduct involving conduct that falls so far short of community expectation that it warrants potential dismissal of an elected member of office. Presently, the most serious sanction that can be issued by the code of conduct panel is a three-month suspension. The serious misconduct provisions are intended as a circuit breaker that would likely be used on very rare occasions but are also intended to act as a clear signal and deterrent that serious misconduct will not be tolerated. All other states and territories can refer a councillor to the tribunal that has the authority to dismiss a councillor. Thank you.

Ms WEBB - To respond to a couple of those things: it doesn't look like anybody else is going to express their view on it on the record, but the fact of the matter is dismissing a councillor from office is an enormous thing. We're not comparing what I'm suggesting be amended here to the current circumstances; we're comparing it to what's still in the bill here, even if we take (e) out. Even if (e) isn't there and the dismissal of a councillor isn't available to the tribunal, there are still other avenues in the bill where that can be contemplated, and the tribunal still has significantly improved powers on the current arrangements here available in the bill. They can suspend for up to a period of six months; they can impose a significant fine. There are all sorts of sanctions there available beyond what the current circumstance is.

We're not comparing what I'm suggesting to the current circumstances, we're comparing it to what else is still left in the bill, even if we take (e) out and that ability to dismiss the councillor from office. It's a fundamental principle of a democracy that voters have put that person there. It should never be done lightly, and given that we're putting these new powers in already for the tribunal, in the principle of protecting democracy, it warrants to see how well they work before we put in the nuclear option, as it were, of allowing for the dismissal of a

councillor via a tribunal, which is not going to be necessarily requiring that same standard that the courts need to provide or that other mechanisms might need to provide. It's interesting to me that people might defend the rights of voters and their choices of people who represent them on the one hand but then allow them to be dismissed so lightly on another clause.

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

The Committee divided -

AYES 3

Mr Gaffney (Teller)
Ms O'Connor
Ms Webb

NOES 9

Mr Duigan
Mr Edmunds
Ms Glade-Wright
Mr Hiscutt
Ms Lovell (Teller)
Ms Palmer
Ms Rattray
Ms Thomas
Mr Vincent

PAIRS

Ms Armitage

Ms Forrest

Amendment negatived.

Clause 18, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 19 agreed to.

Clauses 20 and 21 agreed to.

Clauses 22 and 23 agreed to.

Clauses 24 and 25 agreed to.

Clauses 26 and 27 agreed to.

Clause 28 agreed to.

Clause 29 agreed to.

Clauses 30 and 31 agreed to.

Clause 32 -
Part 12C inserted

Ms WEBB - I have an amendment to this clause in my name, so I will read my amendment. I move -

Page 54, proposed new Part 12C, section 214S, after subsection (2).

Insert the following subsection.

- (3) Within 5 sitting-days after receiving a final report under subsection (1), the Minister is to lay before each House of Parliament -
 - (a) a copy of the final report; or
 - (b) a statement that the final report has been received by the Minister, if the Minister is satisfied, on reasonable grounds, that the tabling of the report may -
 - (i) disadvantage or cause damage to a council, whether directly or indirectly; or
 - (ii) constitute a breach of confidentiality; or
 - (iii) disclose information relating to the personal affairs of any person; or
 - (iv) prejudice an investigation into the council or a person specified in the report.

To speak briefly to that amendment, clause 32 - which is the one we're talking about - my amendment comes right at the end of it, essentially. This is about the temporary advisers that can be appointed by the minister in relation to emerging governance issues. The temporary advisers are to then make some assessments and analysis and provide advice about sorting those issues out.

A report is made to the minister by the temporary adviser at a certain point. My amendment is simply to put some transparency and accountability around that. This is pretty significant work that's being done on behalf of, essentially, the broader community, particularly of the municipality in question. The temporary adviser is being brought in to address something serious like going astray in a governance sense. The advice back to the minister in the report should be a matter of public record where appropriate.

What this does is allow for the tabling of that report as a requirement from the minister, but it recognises that there are going to be instances that may not be an appropriate thing to do, so it provides the minister with the ability to not table under certain circumstances but simply to table a statement that he or she has received the report. It's not disallowable, it's not an instrument of parliament or anything like that. This is purely about accountability and transparency in a public way via the parliament for the work that has been done by the temporary adviser.

I encourage members to support the amendment in an effort to encourage the idea that transparency should be there on behalf of the community around work being done relating to governance at the local government level for them.

Mr VINCENT - The government does not support this amendment. The government is willing to commit to publish a summary of outcomes from the temporary adviser's process, i.e. the report to the minister, wherever it is activated, having regard to relevant privacy and confidential considerations. This would mirror the arrangements in play for board of inquiry reports, and it is also expected that councils would similarly publish a summary on their website, as councils have in recent times, and they have engaged advisers on a voluntary basis.

However, the government is of the view the requirement to table reports in parliament introduces a level of formality that is not intended for this particular intervention, which is aimed at supporting councils getting back on track and would exceed even the publication requirements that are in place in respect to boards of inquiry and local government board reports. Thank you.

Mr GAFFNEY - I can possibly understand how the government hasn't supported some of the other amendments. I'm surprised that the government has taken this path. This only allows more flexibility; it only allows the minister to exercise their judgment to a better degree to protect both the council, the councillor and whatever. I'm so surprised that the minister hasn't said this is a terrific amendment. To me, it's a terrific amendment. It gives flexibility. It gives a greater surety that the process is going to be undertaken properly and that nobody is going to be damaged, whether it be the councillor or the council. I'm very surprised that the government thinks that this is not a good idea and, if I were the minister, I would love to have this capacity in legislation. I'm definitely surprised that the government has taken that stance. I hope they may reflect more on what this amendment actually means and what it gives the flexibility and the capacity for. I'm gobsmacked, actually.

Mr VINCENT - This allows for mandating tabling in parliament, and we don't think that's more flexible at all, when we've seen the system work very well as it is.

Mr HISCUTT - I'd just like to throw my support upon the comments from the member for Mersey. It just seems like a clear transparency. Transparency allows you to know that it's going to be visible and so that people can make judgments on the actions that are taken from that report. I would just put my support behind that amendment.

Mr EDMUNDS - In short, me too.

Ms O'Connor - Does that mean Labor, too?

Ms WEBB - Thank you, members, for those who've expressed support for the amendment. I think it is a sensible one. If this isn't a standard that is expected to be met, for example, for reports of the boards of inquiry, I think perhaps we set this standard here and they should be brought up to meet this standard, quite frankly, with the same provisos around it; but under any reasonable circumstances that it's not appropriate to put the full report in the public domain, this provides for that to happen but, where it is appropriate and able to be done, not against those provisos, then this is transparency and it's accountability back to the community, delivered by the parliament.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 32, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 33 -

Section 291 substituted

291. Assistance to electors

Mr VINCENT - I'd like to move an amendment to this clause. I move -

Page 54, proposed new section 291, subsection (1).

Leave out that subsection.

Insert instead the following subsections:

- (x) The Electoral Commissioner may approve any procedures that are reasonable and appropriate to assist an elector who is unable to vote without assistance.
- (y) If an elector is to be assisted in voting in an election, an electoral officer for that election is to advise any scrutineers for that election of the approved procedure by which the elector will be voting.

Ms WEBB - I'm really pleased that the minister was open to working with me on these amendments and I appreciate -

Mr Vincent - Sorry for not recognising that.

Ms WEBB - Thank you, minister. These are amendments that I brought to the minister to consider, and it was a constructive process to work with the minister and his office on ensuring that we got the outcome because in intent, they don't change what is in the bill, but they have addressed some concerns by key stakeholders. Having said that, I think it's definitely worthwhile briefly pointing out to the Chamber that in terms of the genesis of these amendments, the need for the amendments arose when my office contacted key stakeholders, particularly Disability Voices Tasmania and the former Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, Dr Robin Banks, in May, as the bill was scheduled to be debated in May by our Chamber.

I wanted to check with them as key stakeholders in relation to these particular parts of the bill and whether they were happy with the proposed alternative voting procedures in the bill as it stands. Surprise, surprise, they actually hadn't seen a draft of the bill. They weren't aware the provisions were being included. They hadn't been directly consulted on the bill. It was interesting that the CEO of Disability Voices Tasmania said this to us that afternoon of the bill's scheduled debate in May:

Beyond submitting to the initial consultation, DVT has not been involved. We have attempted on numerous occasions to find out what is happening but to no avail.

Later that same day, once I'd had the opportunity to briefly consider the clauses in the bill that we're considering, they were deeply concerned about it and so I'm really pleased that the minister and his office had been receptive to hearing these concerns and acting to address them, as we see given the effect in this amendment, but it's disappointing that this was actually another key example of directly impacted stakeholders not being proactively consulted by government on this bill. I think, actually, it's worth me just putting that on the record here because we've heard from those other key stakeholders, PMAT and TCT (Tasmanian Conservation Trust), also finding it difficult to feel that they had been effectively consulted on this bill. It is a pattern of behaviour.

Back to these amendments: I think we do need to recognise these as a really positive way forward. The intent of them is to align pieces of legislation that relate to voting, namely, this *Local Government Act* with the *Electoral Act* and make sure that the way alternative voting provisions are treated is aligned and consistent across both. I'm very supportive of these amendments.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 33, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 34 -

Section 296 substituted

Mr VINCENT - Thank you, and I do apologise for not acknowledging that in the first part of that. Clause 34 is also something that the member for Nelson worked very closely on with my staff and office to make sure this was correct. I'd like to acknowledge that properly this time. Thank you.

Clause 34 - to vote against the clause. New clause A to follow clause 33A, section 296 substituted.

Ms WEBB - Did the minister want to speak to that first before I -

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - Just for clarity, the minister is proposing that members vote against this clause and proposing that a new clause be inserted.

Ms WEBB - I can speak to that if you like. Just talk us through that, if that's helpful.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR - We're not voting on the new clause yet.

Ms WEBB - We're not voting on the new clause yet. We're just providing an explanation as to why we're going to strike that clause out as it stands now in anticipation of inserting a new clause A later. That would be the natural consequence of voting against this clause now.

The reason for that is that in our *Electoral Act 2004* that relates to our state parliament elections, we've fairly recently updated parts of that act relating to alternative voting procedures - procedures that relate to different ways of voting for people who might find it difficult to access the standard voting procedures. We've done that in a way that's positive, more inclusive, more accessible and appropriate. That was agreed to by key stakeholders. We've got that in our *Electoral Act 2004*.

What was in this bill didn't quite line up entirely with that. This bill will take out the section of this bill that contains the stuff that isn't quite properly aligned to do with alternative voting procedures. When we get to new clause A, it essentially says in relation to alternative voting procedures, have a look at the *Electoral Act 2004* and apply that - adjusted, if necessary, because of the different ways that we vote in local government elections. Basically, what it says in the *Electoral Act 2004* will apply in the local government context as well. That's the gist of it. It's pretty straightforward.

It helps with consistency across the two acts. It should also mean that if we do make adjustments to alternative voting procedures down the track and it's adjusted in the *Electoral Act 2004*, it automatically, by virtue of the way new clause A reads, then also applies in the local government setting. So, we don't necessarily have to fiddle with two acts at once. That's the gist of it.

Again, I thank the minister for working with us to give effect to that. It doesn't change the intent of what's in this bill, but it aligns us better across the two key pieces of legislation that relate to how we vote in this state.

Clause 34 negatived.

Clause 35 agreed to.

Clauses 36 and 37 agreed to.

Clauses 38 and 39 agreed to.

Clause 40 agreed to.

Clauses 41 and 42 agreed to.

Clause 43 agreed to.

Clause 44 agreed to.

Clause 45 agreed to.

Clauses 46 and 47 agreed to.

Clause 48 agreed to.

Clause 49 agreed to.

Clause 50 agreed to.

Clauses 51 and 52 agreed to.

Clauses 53 and 54 agreed to.

Clause 55 agreed to.

New clause A -
Section 296 substituted

New clause A to follow clause 33A, section 296 substituted. Section 296 of the principal act is repealed and the following division is substituted:

Division 7 - Alternative voting

296. Application of alternative voting provisions

- (1) Subject to this Act, Divisions 9A and 10 of Part 5 of the Electoral Act 2004 apply in relation to an election under this Act as if -
 - (a) a reference in those Divisions to an election were a reference to an election under Part 15 of this Act; and
 - (b) a reference in those Divisions to an elector were a reference to an elector under Part 15 of this Act; and
 - (c) a reference in those Divisions to the Electoral Act 2004 were a reference to this Act; and
 - (d) such other changes are made as the context requires.
- (2) The regulations may prescribe further modifications of, or exclude the operation of, any of the provisions of Divisions 9A or 10 of Part 5 of the Electoral Act 2004 for the purposes of the application of those Divisions under this section.

Mr VINCENT - I move -

That new clause A be read the second time.

I choose not to speak to it. The member for Nelson spoke very well to the changes required.

New clause A read the second time.

New clause A agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported with amendment.

Mr VINCENT (Prosser - Minister for Local Government) - Mr President, nice to see you back in the Chamber. I move -

That the bill, as amended, be taken into consideration tomorrow.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

[10.12 p.m.]

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

That at its rising the Council adjourn to 11.00 a.m. Thursday 25 June 2026.

Before you put that question, a couple of matters. The briefing that was scheduled for 9.30 has been changed to another briefing, but there's still that 9.30 briefing; it's for the Mt Lyell Acid Drainage Reduction (Repeal) Bill. That's a briefing for 9.30.

Motion agreed to.

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

That the Council do now adjourn.

I will make my way to the lectern at your convenience.

Attitude of the Government to the Legislative Council - Government Response

Ms RATTRAY - Mr President, I'm making a response tonight, following the Adjournment speech of the member for Nelson last evening; also in my mind are some of the comments and some of the matters that have been raised previously.

The government notes the concerns expressed within the Chamber and is very grateful to members. On behalf of the government, I would like to reassure all members of the ongoing commitment to engaging with the Council in a constructive and respectful way. In relation to the practice of responding to Adjournment matters, the government does not consider that there has been any fundamental change in approach, and the role and functions of the Leader remain as they have been.

However, recognising the views that have been put forward, the government is very willing to engage in good faith with members to work towards a shared and practical understanding of how matters raised on the Adjournment can best be considered and, where appropriate, addressed.

The Adjournment remains an important and valued avenue for members to bring issues to the government's attention, and the government encourages members to continue making use of this process, consistent with established conventions, as well as the range of other pathways available to raise matters with the executive. The Premier and his government look forward to continuing to work constructively with all members of this Chamber and I wholeheartedly support that statement.

TasTAFE - Funding Cuts

[10.15 p.m.]

Mr GAFFNEY (Mersey) - I rise on adjournment to highlight the harm in making \$45 million worth of cuts to TasTAFE, cuts that will mean the loss of 12 courses and at least 44 jobs. The recent debate, however, has focused on the loss of nine courses relating to the arts, a move that appears to align with the view from the government that arts courses outside of UTAS have no value, an abhorrent decision that has been widely and rightfully criticised.

The remainder is the loss of three courses relating to meat safety and laboratory operations. The minister has stated he had no choice but to kill off the meat safety and the nine creative courses at the end of last year. That leaves us with a Certificate IV in Laboratory Techniques and the Diploma of Laboratory Technology. The trouble is that the 14 affected students in these two courses will be taught out by the end of the year and then both courses will cease to be.

To highlight the importance of these courses I heard from Margie Law, who is deeply concerned about their loss, which would undermine the need of key industries including technically skilled staff for pathology services and analytical laboratories and for UTAS, college and school science departments and government departments that rely on these services. Since it came to light that the laboratory operations courses will be cut entirely, Margie stated:

I read the reporting about the wait time for elective surgery, ABC report by Josh Duggan, 9 June 2026. I already knew this. It is common knowledge and is not just a long wait for public surgery. Private surgeons can have a long wait time also. I know people have gone interstate to get surgery done, but what shocked me in the article was that a woman who had a double mastectomy was told she might have to wait six to 10 weeks for pathology results. This is incredible, shocking. I hope you agree it's not good enough.

The same article reported the Department of Health were committed to improving timely access to pathology and was in the process of recruiting four additional full-time pathologist positions, which is good to know, but will they have the skilled staff teams to support their work? Margie wrote:

When I met with Dr Norman Baker, the CEO of TasTAFE, at my daughter's Certificate 4 graduation in March this year, he told me that the lab tech courses were cut because TAFE had their budget cut and the lab tech courses do not fit the priority areas of health and high-vis vest jobs. Despite my arguments that pathology is health, he stuck to his position. People working in labs might not care directly for patients, but their work cares for patients and is essential work. It is a furphy to say laboratory tech is not essential to health.

Margie further impressed that:

There were so many options for the minister and the TAFE CEO in looking for budget cuts or efficiency. Cutting the only two science courses in the state that are not university level is not clever. Cutting the only two technical

science courses in the state is not clever. Claiming that laboratory technicians are not health workers is not clever.

As we know, the Tasmanian healthcare system is under more pressure than ever before and significant government spending cuts in the budget can only increase this pressure with no hope of relief. Margie's correspondence went on to say:

Regular Tasmanians are waiting for six to 10 weeks for important pathology results because our health system is falling short of normal community expectations. Or, like my work colleague and like my partner, they go interstate to pay for timely medical assistance and test results. I must ask how the decision was made in the face of this obvious growing demand for people with technical skills in laboratory operations.

Of course, it does not have to be this way. I will close with some of the suggestions Margie proposed in her email:

If you want young Tasmanians to be employed to run the tests in our health system, we need these courses. The course is also needed for any high school and college to run science classes. Science teachers need lab technicians. It is not too late. The lab is still there at TAFE, fully stocked with machines and chemicals needed to learn. The teachers are still there. We could just reinstall the courses beyond this year and if we do this, we could ensure all colleges know about the course, which would ensure it is well attended by young Tasmanians. We could extend the labs so that more than 18 students could be enrolled.

In closing, there is an increasingly loud chorus of disapproval from our community with the government and its actions. The current trajectory of TasTAFE will hurt our state, our healthcare services, our students and most of all, our community. I call upon the government to reconsider its decimation of vocational education and reinstate both laboratory operations courses. The end result is that we will have to import those professionals from the mainland to fulfil those positions because we are not offering them here in Tasmania. That is very disappointing.

The Council adjourned at 10.20 p.m.