

Meg Webb MLC:- Reply Speech to the Premier's State of the State Address 2023

Parliament of Tasmania HANSARD Legislative Council Thursday 1 June 2023

Excerpt:

MOTION

Premier's Address - Noting

Continued from Thursday 30 March 2023 (page 64).

[4.05 p.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - I rise to make my reply to the Premier's Address. It is not what I was necessarily expecting to do this week and I note that just yesterday I gave a substantial contribution on the Budget. I have been frantically trying to adjust and rejig the draft I had for my Premier's Address-in-reply so I am not repeating common ground. I have not had as much opportunity to do that as I may have wished.

Ms Forrest - You could have spoken on the other bill and taken a bit longer.

Ms WEBB - I was hoping those other bills might take a bit longer so I would have more of an opportunity. It is quite a serious responsibility to provide a response to these key flagpole addresses that the government of the day provides in parliament. They are in order to express the Government's agenda and its plans and intention for the state. Here we are as elected representatives also then invited to respond to that and to what has been laid out by the premier on behalf of the government of the day and to express some of our own thoughts and reflections in relation to that larger agenda for our state going forward. It is not something that I want to dispense with, even though I now feel that I am doing it a bit more on the hop than I might have wished.

I will try to adjust as I read to make sure I am not referring to things as if I were back in March when we would have expected to make this address. Hopefully, potentially the Government's scheduling of parliament in future and management of its agenda can accommodate it so that we all have an opportunity to do it in March when it is timely.

Had I made the address-in-reply in March, it would have been quite soon after International Women's Day, which is celebrated on 8 March. I had reflected on that timing in preparing my response to the Premier's Address. I had noted with great pleasure that during this year's celebrations related to International Women's Day that new people were being inducted into the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women, with the posthumous induction of Jessie Rooke to that honour roll.

As members may know, particularly my colleagues from the state's north-west, Jessie Rooke was a Burnie suffragette visionary. She travelled around Tasmania campaigning for women's right to vote. Jessie Rooke travelled to every Tasmanian town and village seeking signatures to a petition supporting women's right to vote, only to have that petition then rejected

by the parliament of the day. What did Jessie do? She turned around and did the same journey all over again, re-collecting signatures to resubmit the petition. This determination, tenacity and dedication to see her cause through places Jessie in the vanguard of women's inclusion and involvement in Tasmanian political life. She was a quiet achiever, although I imagine in person she might not have been much of a quiet one, but she is an inspiration. I noted Rodney Croome's comments from 13 March in *The Advocate* newspaper, where he said:

Jessie should have been one of the first women on the honour roll but we are glad she is there now.

I echo those sentiments. Travel around the state back in those days would not have been very easy or comfortable in the early 1900s when she undertook that campaign. It would have been a relatively uncomfortable time to be travelling around the state, I imagine. That effort, to demonstrate popular community support for including those left out, half of the adult population, in the right to vote, on what was no doubt a protracted, bumpy and exhausting effort, to undertake the tour not only once but twice, demonstrates real determination and resilience.

Those are the qualities that I latched onto as being important things to frame up reflections for the vision for our state that was being presented by the Premier in the Premier's Address. I wanted to bring to my thoughts on both the Premier's Address and also my thoughts on both the direction and agenda for our state determination and resilience.

Jessie Rooke's resilience in the face of having her extraordinary signature-collecting efforts knocked back in the first instance and then the resilience to pick herself up and do it all over again, to benefit and strengthen inclusion in the Tasmanian population as a whole, is a salutary effort. Those linked concepts of inclusion and resilience are something that I will come back to at different points in my contribution today. They were threads that helped me string together some ideas and reflections.

To begin with, let me note my surprise that the Premier's Address - when we cast our minds back to it - made only a single mention of COVID-19. That was interesting, I thought, that in the context of the address the mention of COVID-19 was in relation to retaining 97 additional temporary Ambulance Tasmania positions. Which was a welcome decision, perhaps, and topical today.

Mr Willie - It was a good Labor call.

Ms WEBB - Although that was the only one mentioned in the Premier's Address, we know that COVID-19 is still very present in the community and the figures that we can access regarding infections and hospitalisations and deaths at still at concerning levels for our state. People in the community, some people in particular, are feeling very impacted by that ongoing situation.

The figures serve to remind us that while they are an improvement on the situation we all faced at the height of the pandemic, we are not entirely out of the woods yet. They also serve to place the spotlight on whether and how we have learned the lessons that were thrust on us during that COVID-19 pandemic - in particular, the importance of resilience and the need to aim not simply to return to the way things were before the COVID-19 pandemic.

We saw civil society, unions, think tanks and many others pointing out that there were already pre-pandemic growing social and economic inequalities, both here locally but also nationally and globally. The cost-of-living crisis was apparent well before Tasmania closed its borders to COVID-19. In the three years since that time, pressures on affordable housing access and growing food insecurity were also serious concerns. A concern over inadequate climate change responses was already escalating.

It was identified that the challenges the pandemic posed in keeping Tasmania afloat also provided opportunities by which we could make our social infrastructure more robust, fairer and more resilient beyond the pandemic. We were warned that not to seize that opportunity, to shift the trajectory that was already playing out, was to risk the entrenchment of social inequalities, inequities and deep fissures. While the focus on economy and fiscal buffers is one way of building resilience, community infrastructure, health and wellbeing measures and social safety nets are also integral to help people bounce back from unemployment, sickness or poverty, making them more resilient to a broad set of challenges and any future shocks.

The Premier's Address is an opportune occasion by which to take stock of our state's efforts to invest in not just economic resilience but social, community, ecological and wellbeing resilience equitably for all Tasmanians. To assess the plan to keep investing in and maintaining that necessary resilience and wellbeing and wellbeing capacity to contend with the known and the potential shocks of this shock-prone era that we live in.

I am concerned that there is not a coherent plan for our state for building resilience in an equitable manner. Instead, we are teetering on a precipice which sees two Tasmanias solidifying, separated by an ever-growing chasm. I spoke about that in more detail yesterday, in my Budget reply.

I found it odd that the Premier of a third-term government began his state of the state Address not with an optimistic vision, but looked backwards - to highlight the poor state of health, education and housing a decade ago. After nine years of Liberal Government, the outcomes in those same areas are either no better or, in numerous cases, substantially worse. I also note that he has had portfolio responsibilities for two of those areas for much of the time across those periods of government.

Halfway through the third term of this Liberal Government, I see a Tasmania that remains firmly divided between those who are living a good life and can aspire to even more, and those tens of thousands of Tasmanians who continue to be left behind, longing for a fair chance to access the basics. We know about those 120 000 Tasmanians currently living in poverty. A record number of Tasmanians - over 4000 now - are on our social housing waiting list, and they are waiting for up to 80 weeks. Half of Tasmania's population is trying to progress in life while being functionally illiterate, and our educational outcomes have had minimal real improvement.

When a government has to pour money into emergency relief and crisis housing year after year, that tells you that things are not moving in the right direction for those who are most vulnerable. The resilience of our Tasmanian community is fading, as more of those who are most vulnerable fall further behind. This fails our community and cruels the opportunity for success for our fellow Tasmanians in the short term. It also fails to equip and strengthen our community for the future shocks and challenges that we will all face.

I was going to speak about the foundational importance of housing in terms of resilience. However, I spoke in detail about housing in my Budget speech yesterday, so I refer people to that and will move on to another area.

An inclusive community celebrates and welcomes diversity, provides safety and promotes resilience and wellbeing for everyone. Given that, I was disappointed that the Premier's Address earlier this year neglected to include any clear indication of progress on key LGBTIQ+ law reform matters identified as important to increase inclusion, safety and wellbeing for all Tasmanians.

For example, many Tasmanians and their families are waiting to hear that tangible progress is being made on legislation to ban conversion practices. It has now been about 13 months since the Government made a commitment to bring forward such legislation, but there is no clear sign that it is being progressed.

Also keenly awaited is legislation to ban surgery on children with variations of sex characteristics, sometimes referred to as intersex. I note that the ACT has tabled legislation on this - I have not checked; they may also have passed legislation - while in Tasmania, advocates are still asking for progress. And yet, Commonwealth data indicates that surgery such as this appears to be occurring in Tasmania every year.

A further important area for reform in this area is hate crime reform. Currently, Tasmania Police does not document when there is an instance of hate crime against a member of LGBTIQ+ community. It is an assault, but it is not necessarily noted that it is an assault related to the person being a member of that community and related to their sexual orientation, for example. We need recognition of this form of hate crime so that we can more effectively address it, and work towards positive cultural change to help to prevent it. Measuring and recording it is a starting point. I hope to see further progress on that. I know advocates in the community are also keenly waiting for it.

I was saddened that, in his Address, the Premier did not mention any of what I consider to be positive things that his Government is implementing for the LGBTIQ+ community - such as increased funding for LGBTIQ+ inclusion in schools; the first steps towards the development of an LGBTIQ+ mental health service; the development of LGBTIQ+ training modules for health workers; increased funding for LGBTIQ+ community projects; and the laudable, nation-leading survey of that community that was done here, from which a whole-of-government action plan is now being developed.

These are all positive things that I believe need to be celebrated. It was quite sad and curious to see that they did not even get a passing mention in the Premier's Address earlier this year. Are they not things, I wonder, that the Government is proud of and keen to acknowledge?

Madam ACTING PRESIDENT - There is probably a press release being prepared right now.

Ms WEBB - I am not sure it draws in those who have recently departed the party.

History tells us, quite graphically sometimes, how readily democratic institutions can be exposed as vulnerable when fissures and fractures dividing communities are allowed to calcify and increase. There are plenty of examples globally that serve as a salutary reminder that we

must not take for granted the integrity and robustness of our democracy. It is the lifeblood not only of our political life, but also our fundamental freedoms, our culture and quality of life. Sadly, the Premier's Address this year appeared to miss the opportunity to speak about and invest in our democracy's resilience by addressing some long outstanding gaps in its integrity and accountability mechanisms.

Without wanting to comment in detail on an order of the day, I need to acknowledge that progress has been made on providing the long-overdue state-based political donations disclosure reform. I look forward to that debate when it commences in this Chamber. However, I suggest that it would be a shame to have so low an aspiration for improving this aspect of our democracy that we would go from a total absence of state laws on political donations and election funding, to putting laws in place that were still leaving us the worst in the nation.

There are other reforms which would make our democracy and participation in our democracy more inclusive and equitable, and would also strengthen people's confidence and trust in the integrity and robustness of our democratic systems of government. A key reform, I believe, would be the introduction of fixed-term elections for the lower House. Periodic election cycles for the Council's elections here provide one Chamber with fixed-term elections. It should not be considered such an untoward or untested concept for consideration for our general state elections. I note that, other than the Commonwealth, Tasmania is the outlier among other jurisdictions in not having fixed-term elections for the general elections.

As we now know, we will be electing 35 Assembly members at the next general state election. That poll could also be the first to establish a fixed-term cycle. Potentially moving to a fixed-term election cycle would also address the problematic scenario of holding general and upper House elections concurrently, which I believe remains an unresolved matter of debate that needs to be addressed.

The Premier's Address would also have been a welcome opportunity to provide an in-principle commitment to accepting and implementing reforms proposed by the Integrity Commission review regarding the weak and lacklustre lobbyist register and rules about lobbyists. This publicly consulted process is underway. I understand we are yet to see the Integrity Commission's final report.

However, an in-principle commitment from the Government would demonstrate much needed political leadership in this area of democratic accountability.

A further omission from the Premier's Address was an update on the review of the Integrity Commission Act 2009. Consultation on the legislative reform discussion paper closed on 16 September 2022 and last time I checked - I did have another quick look this afternoon - the Justice department's website still did not have the submissions received uploaded there and we do not have an update on time frames around next steps to be taken in that process. Hopefully, an update on that important component of our accountability and integrity architecture of the Integrity Commission itself is imminent, Madam Acting President.

Transparency is essential for accountability in our democracy and yet we still languish with a dysfunctional right to information system in this state, despite having a good legislative basis for it. Our system is woefully inadequate in practice with noncompliant responses from departments, far too many requests forced to seek appropriate response through reviews by the

Ombudsman's office, where a continuing significant backlog sees citizens waiting years for a review outcome. While additional funding has been provided by the Government to the Ombudsman's office to address that backlog to some extent, due to staffing issues it is still not fully utilised.

The Government must focus on stopping that problem at its source rather than having to fund the backlog. Stopping it at the source would mean it would address the fact that the requests for review keep piling up because of spurious refusals by public authorities in the first instance who clearly are either not appropriately trained in the act or have adopted a culture under the Government that they are to withhold information to the greatest extent possible, which, as we know, is completely opposite to the objective of our RTI legislation.

Of 19 public review decisions completed by the Ombudsman's office in 2021-22, only three cases affirmed the decision by the public authority. A significant majority, 16 out of 19, either varied or set aside that decision and remade it. Public authorities are getting these wrong. We stop the backlog in the Ombudsman's office if they start getting it right, both by undertaking to give effect to the intent of our RTI legislation, which is very robust and good, and perhaps addressing any cultural issues there about an inclination to withhold information.

Testing and investing in the ongoing robustness and resilience of our democratic institutions is about investing in inclusiveness, in equality, in equity and also in futureproofing our state.

Madam Acting President, I see a profound and long-outstanding unsettled debt of our Tasmanian history for our nation and also as a whole: it is one that for our Tasmanian Aboriginal community, the custodians of this island, lutruwita/Tasmania, crucially, historic unsettled debts tend to compound. Hence, the Pathway to the Truth-Telling and Treaty Report undertaken by Professor Kate Warner, Professor Tim McCormack and Fauve Kurnadi, which was tabled in this parliament on 25 November 2021, provided a vital ground-breaking step forward in our understanding of the depth and longevity of those unsettled debts.

Amongst a range of other considerations, this 2021 report places front and centre the implications of intergenerational trauma, which is defined on page 8 of the report as 'including the past, present and future impacts of colonisation and dispossession on Tasmanian Aboriginal people'.

This sets a clear and urgent imperative for action, which I recognise has been widely acknowledged by members in this parliament and in the broader community. Therefore, I welcome Mr Rockcliff's reiteration of the Government's commitment to a Pathway to Truth-Telling and Treaty in the Premier's Address this year. It was also heartening to receive a brief update on the Aboriginal Advisory group's work thus far and again, the Government's commitment to continuing to support that advisory group's work.

Further, the Premier's Address promised long-outstanding commitments to stronger Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural heritage legislation and amendments to the Aboriginal Lands Act 1995, to facilitate the return of more land.

While I understand and accept the need to provide the advisory group with as much time as it takes for them to work through with their own communities' time frames, priorities and processes, I expected more detail from the Government regarding its own responsibilities in

progressing the Pathway to Truth-Telling and Treaty, as well as the long-outstanding legislative reforms surrounding the cultural heritage protection and land returns.

Recognising there may be complex sensitivities surrounding cultural heritage reforms and land returns, both within the Tasmanian Aboriginal community and the broader communities, more detail on the Government's process to consult and develop new Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural heritage legislation, particularly since the 2021 Pathway to Truth-Telling and Treaty Report's recommendation 19 states this. That recommendation is titled 'Reform of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1975 (Tas) as a matter of urgency', and it specifically states under that recommendation: 'Reform should not wait for a truth-telling or treaty process.'

There was a real prompt there to get moving with it. Also, I wonder where the Government is progressing with other recommendations from the 2021 pathway report. For example, increasing the joint management of crown land, parks and reserves, as proposed by recommendation 15, as well as the creation of kunanyi/Mt Wellington as an Aboriginal protected area, as per recommendation 13. Perhaps, the implementation of recommendation 13 gets a little complicated now given the Premier's public support for a cable car on kunanyi. Maybe, maybe not, but that should be clarified. Or another example, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Art and Cultural Centre, as detailed in recommendation 20. Does it need to wait for a truth-telling process and if so, why? Perhaps there is sensitivity there, given that Macquarie Point was a proposed site for such a centre. Perhaps the Premier's pursuit of a stadium on that site now has displaced the realisation of that recommendation from the report.

I wonder also about the recommendation to reconstitute the Aboriginal and Dual Naming Reference Group and the recommendation to establish a Tasmanian Indigenous Education Consultative Body. What is their respective status? What is the Government doing about implementing these and other recommendations which possibly could be progressed partially or wholly independent of the advisory group's current work on identifying the truth-telling and treaty process? It would be good to understand which ones are reliant on that work first.

I have mentioned earlier the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women inductee, Jessie Rooke, honoured on International Women's Day this year. That day has been celebrated since it was first held on 8 March 1911. Yet, over a century later we still have a long way to go before we achieve gender equality. I note the release of the Tasmanian 2022-27 Women's Strategy in December last year. Again, it is disappointing it did not warrant a mention in the Premier's Address as a good news story. Valuable and considerable work has gone into the development of that strategy and here now is not the place to provide a thorough analysis of it, but there are a couple of points I want to make as I illustrate key themes during this contribution that relate to that report.

The 2022-27 Women's Strategy makes a first good step towards acknowledging the complexities surrounding and the need for an understanding of the impacts of intersectionality upon systemic disadvantage and barriers to full participation and equality. These intersectionalities may involve the multiple impacts not only of gender but of sexuality, religion, ethnicity, age and disability. The intersectionality picture is far from complete here in the state and we have work to do, which the strategy acknowledges. There needs to be a concerted effort to collate data, to develop an appropriate framework by which to interrogate that data and then to use it to help us drive strategies consistently across government, to dismantle any systemic barriers that are experienced.

Gender equality has long been recognised as both a human rights issue and an economic issue and I note in her press club speech on International Women's Day this year, Sam Mostyn, the Chair of the national Women's Economic Equality Taskforce, highlighted that while the national full-time gender pay gap may now be at a record low, women still earn less on average on every indicator. She further pointed to the gender segregation and segmentation in how we work, with workforce segmentation then influencing the distribution of take-home salary, superannuation and other economic security considerations. A key point that Sam Mostyn emphasised while discussing economic gender segmentation is the potential untapped contribution due to gender inequality. She stated this and I will quote:

Smart policy that will unlock multiple contributions of women to Australian society, including as people, partners, parents, employees, entrepreneurs, employers and change-makers and provide them with the visibility, confidence, skills and opportunity they need to maximise their economic contribution.

This goes to resilience and bridging that yawning gap between, potentially, the two Tasmanias, which may also have a gender aspect to it. Addressing the systemic areas of disadvantage and bias that continue to hold women and girls and gender-fluid Tasmanians from participating fully, not just in economic spheres but in all areas of their lives, invests in both individual resilience as well as broader resilience for our society and our economy.

It invests in the wellbeing of our people, our communities and our businesses. There are many ways we can all be gender champions. Nationally, the federal government has committed to releasing an annual status of women report card every International Women's Day. I urge the Tasmanian Government to follow suit in some similar manner to provide current data by which Tasmanians can evaluate in a meaningful manner how we are going in meeting our gender equality goal. Also, how we are countering systemic barriers, impeding future participation and realisation of potential for Tasmanian women and girls and members of our community who identify as gender-fluid. It would be a companion piece, probably already there in the work that goes towards putting together the gender snapshot for the Budget so quite complementary.

Consideration could also be given to providing a similar status of men report card every International Men's Day, which is 19 November. That would also be a valuable way to highlight current data to assist in evaluating how well Tasmanian men are being supported, especially in areas that we know are of particular vulnerability or challenge to Tasmanian men. That is something we can consider across the gender spectrum.

It will come as no surprise to many members that I regard a key outstanding piece of any legislative agenda for this parliamentary year to be the introduction of a long-overdue Tasmanian human rights act. I will not miss any opportunity to speak about that in this place. In fact, on 22 November 2022, in this Chamber, we voted in support of a motion calling for the Government to, and I quote:

Consider marking the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by initiating consultation on a Human Rights Act for Tasmania.

This year, 2023, is that 75th anniversary.

Mr Valentine - It is worth noting that it was an Australian who was in the chair when that declaration was made in 1948.

Ms WEBB - Dr Evatt, yes. The Premier's Address, this year, would have been a wonderful and appropriate time and place for the Government to respond to the call that our Chamber made. We know that the Tasmania Law Reform Institute is currently reviewing its 2007 seminal report which strongly recommended Tasmania introduce a human rights act. They are looking to update and contemporise that recommendation within a current context, almost two decades following their initial research consultation and findings.

The formal recognition of human rights for all Tasmanians would provide a tangible and significant mechanism by which we could begin bridging the divide and bring together the two Tasmanias that we risk seeing cemented in their fractured state. Significantly, it would provide a framework by which policy decisions can be evaluated and assessed in a coherent and inclusive manner, prior to and during their implementation. A human rights act provides a clear opportunity by which to invest in the robustness and resilience of our community's human and civil rights, a fundamental area to seek to future shock-proof us as a state and our community, you would think.

Hopefully, the updated TLRI report will be released in the near future and the Government is on notice that there is an expectation that they will engage with that report thoroughly and genuinely, and most importantly, act to progress recommendations towards a Tasmanian human rights act in a manner that truly respects and delivers on the intent of that report.

Another puzzling area of silence in the Premier's Address this year relates to climate change and the status of Tasmania's preparation to tackle this widely recognised, great public policy challenge of our time. I was contemplating the theme of resilience when I was thinking about the Premier's Address this year and my response to it. A natural area that came up was climate change resilience. At the time when I was first preparing this response, noting it was a few months ago now, the latest salutary Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, the sixth assessment report, was released. That latest report states unequivocally the situation is worse than previously evaluated and warns there is a rapidly closing time window to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all.

A further summary point delivered by this latest IPCC report states this, and I quote:

Climate change has caused widespread adverse impacts and related losses and damages to nature and people that are unequally distributed across systems, regions and sectors. Economic damages from climate change have been detected in climate-exposed sectors, such as agriculture, forestry, fishery, energy and tourism. Individual livelihoods have been affected through, for example, destruction of homes and infrastructure and loss of property and income, human health and food security, with adverse effects on gender and social equity.

Clearly, it is no longer a radical but rather a sensible and responsible approach to acknowledge that climate change poses huge and long-lasting, if not irrevocable, challenges to our human rights, to equal inclusivity and accessibility, to our food security and also to our

economy. As detailed by that IPCC report, it also poses huge and long-lasting challenges to a range of our economic sectors, to our capacity to maintain essential infrastructure, to our ecological security and biodiversity, to the health of our oceans - no small thing for an island state - and to our sense of wellbeing individually and collectively.

The climate change challenge is a human rights challenge. To put it simply, climate change impacts everything we take for granted and virtually everything we rely upon as we go about our daily lives. This latest clarion call made by the IPCC reiterates the situation will not improve on its own. It therefore needs to be integrated consistently, comprehensively through the myriad of policy decisions made by all tiers of government.

I acknowledge the minister responsible released the next Climate Change Action Plan draft at the beginning of March this year and public consultation has occurred on that. I believe just today the final version of that Climate Change Action Plan has been released. I am yet to have an opportunity to take a look at that plan released today. However, I know that people want and expect not just a Climate Action Plan that hangs off the sides of other government decisions, policies and action plans but one that is central to and drives the focus of a whole-of-government approach. I hope to see that when I look at the plan released today.

It would be a shame if Tasmanians felt that instead there was a default business as usual approach in play. It would have been reassuring to hear in the annual agenda-setting Premier's Address, the Premier seizing the opportunity to present a clearly articulated vision of how the Government intends to apply climate change mitigation and adaptation across all aspects of the governance of our state. Maybe next year.

I noted in the Premier's Address comments relating to population growth for our state and the desire that people who migrate here will have a home, access to great education, world-class health care, skills and training and career pathways. Those are laudable aspirations.

There were accompanying comments about a focus on regional demography work, which would need to be done to plan for the needs of the Tasmanian population as it grows over the longer term. I was particularly interested, my ears pricked up, in the Premier's Address, at the proposal to establish a role of state demographer. I have not seen that brought to reality in the state Budget presented last week. Perhaps, I missed it. It may be there and we may have more detail of it from Estimates.

I am fairly supportive of strategic evidence-based approaches. I can see how the role of the state demographer could make a valuable contribution of expert advice and leadership to feed through into government decision-making, a sense of slightly independent advice that could be relied on regardless of the government of the day. I also see a real opportunity for synergy with that new state demographer role, to also establish a complementary role that would operate alongside in the area of community wellbeing, equity and inclusion. Somebody similarly, who could provide that expert advice and leadership and bring evidence-based strategic thinking to the challenges that we face when we are forward-looking for our state on those matters. The tandem approach to that would be a significant investment in forward-looking resilience building for our state.

In summary, when I first considered this year's state of the state Address by Premier Rockliff, I found myself wondering whether there is another imminent state election around the corner. Surprisingly here I am, a few months down the track delivering my response. I am

even more curious that was my potentially first impressions on hearing the Address back at the end of February. Some may consider that a little cynical, but for the opportunity presented by the annual Premier's Address to deliver a coherent vision for Tasmania's future measured against an equally coherent report card measuring progress and an energetic legislative agenda by which to tackle the work still to do. To not seize that opportunity raises fair questions over where the Government is at and what its priorities are.

Quite frankly, that was my assessment of this Premier's Address, that it did not seize that opportunity in a fulsome way we would expect. Instead, what we heard in the Premier's Address this year was more about the state of the Government rather than the State of Tasmania. It is not unusual for governments of any stripe to slip into conflating their perceived particular political interests with the state's interests. However, history tells us when the rhetoric is amped up in this area, when there is this degree of an emphasis on flag-waving, highlighting, look at what we have done compared to our political opponents almost a decade ago, instead of an emphasis on here is what still needs to be done in our state, here is our plan to achieve it and here is how we are going to take you forward, it is not surprising that people may detect a government sliding potentially into an electioneering mode, or perhaps sliding into some complacency.

I will conclude my remarks there. They have been a little bit edited on the fly as I delivered them today. I still feel they represent what my reflections were when the Premier delivered his Premier's Address earlier in the year. Certainly, that sense of resilience we need in this state as we emerge from the pandemic, but also as we continue to tackle our longstanding and enduring, and worsening in some ways, divisions and slipping in equity - we really need to be all focussed on resilience building. I hope to see a better expression of that as we go forward, perhaps even in next year's Premier's Address. I note the Address.