

Extra 200 to receive rental subsidies

David Killick

Another 200 households will benefit from government rental subsidies aimed at keeping rents down, Housing and Planning Minister Felix Ellis said on Wednesday.

Speaking during a visit to New Norfolk, Mr Ellis said the Rockliff government was determined to unlock more affordable rentals by boosting the Private Rental Incentive Scheme.

Mr Ellis said the government would deliver an election promise to expand the scheme.

“As part of this scheme, the Tasmanian community can see subsidised rentals that reduce the cost by about 25 to 30 per cent below the median rate and those people looking to invest in property can receive a subsidy from the government so that they can bring on those affordable rentals into the market,” he said.

“Now, as part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania’s future that we took to the election, we will be delivering an extra 200 homes as part of that program, so an expansion from 300 currently to 500.

“That’s going to be a huge opportunity for families right around Tasmania to get into an affordable rental, because we know how much of a difference that can make in terms of family’s cost of living.”

Landlord David Bayne said the scheme would help him to keep a lid on rents.

“We built in 2010 as an affordable rental property for a scheme called NRAS, which ran out after 10 years and that would have meant a major increase in rent for our tenants,” he said.

“But then the state government stepped in and continued the subsidy almost as generous – not quite – but almost as generous as the commonwealth NRAS one, which has enabled us to keep the rents down to a little over half market.”

MLC ‘stunned’ at questions left unresolved



Webb call to retract Blake report

Independent MLC for Nelson Meg Webb holds a dossier of evidence that was not available to the Blake Review. She wants Premier Jeremy Rockliff to retract the findings of the report, which was delivered last Friday. Picture: David Killick

David Killick

The Blake Report into the conduct of senior public servants should be withdrawn because it was based on staggeringly deficient evidence, an independent MLC says.

Former Tasmanian Auditor-General Mike Blake examined whether any public sector department bosses breached the State Service Code of Conduct in relation to matters raised in the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government’s Response to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings.

In his final report, released last Friday, Mr Blake identified no failures by those covered by his terms of reference.

But he did not have access to commission transcripts, did not inquire about a list of pub-

lic servants potentially involved in misconduct, did not know of a critical prior report and did not have access to the head of the state service.

Brandishing a dossier of evidence Mr Blake could not access, the independent member for Nelson Meg Webb called for the report to be urgently retracted.

“Following an MPs-only briefing provided today by the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the reviewer Mr Blake, I can only come to the conclusion that the urgent and responsible course of action is for the Premier, Jeremy Rockliff, to immediately withdraw and retract the Blake Review report,” Ms Webb said.

“I do not make that call lightly. It came to light in today’s briefing that the reviewer was unaware of the existence of pertinent Com-

mission of Inquiry transcripts and statements, which have been removed from the current documentation available on the commission website,” she said.

“Further, despite referencing two earlier reports into complaints involving department heads at the time, the reviewer was unaware there were three such reports, one involving a separate head of agency additional to those reports cited by Mr Blake.

“It also defies comprehension that the review cannot confirm nor deny whether the list of 22 recipients of section 18 misconduct notices by the commission contains any former or current public sector secretaries, due to that question not being asked.

“Despite accessing an unredacted version of the Commission of Inquiry’s report, the

failure to be provided all relevant transcripts and statements instead of only relying on those currently on the public website, automatically renders this review incomplete as it does not scrutinise all relevant material.”

Ms Webb intends to move for the re-establishment of the Legislative Council Select Committee into the Government’s Response to the Commission of Inquiry Recommendations at the earliest opportunity once parliament resumes.

That committee was due to hear from the Premier and other ministers, but was dissolved when the election was called.

Ms Webb said given the seriousness of the issue, the depth and strength of ongoing community disquiet, the government should have provided

all relevant materials to Mr Blake’s inquiry.

“The reviewer should never have been put in the position of having to know or guess what materials may exist relevant to his review in order to know what documents to request,” she said.

“While I appreciate the fact the briefing was offered and provided, I am stunned and gravely concerned over the number and range of serious and outstanding questions left unresolved.”

A government spokesman said there was nothing wrong with the report.

“The government has accepted Mike Blake’s findings and is considering his recommendations,” the spokesman said. “We thank Mr Blake for his work and his generous offer to brief MPs.”

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Tech sector warns Tassie jobs at risk

Tasmania’s technology sector has called on the state government to reinstate a dedicated technology minister or risk the erosion of tech investment and jobs in the state.

Several positions disappeared in the new Rockliff government cabinet – including the science and technology portfolio formerly held by Madeleine Ogilvie.

TasICT president David Mills said it was the first time in more than a decade Tasmania had no science or technology minister.

“Tasmania has joined the ACT as the only jurisdiction without a science or technology minister – and even in the ACT they have a ministry focused on the science of climate change,” he said.

“It leaves the state government’s technology focus back where it was in 2010 – and we’ve come so far with government, we don’t want to turn back the clock.”

Government backs action on abattoirs

The government has defended its response to calls for reform in the state’s abattoirs after criticism from the Greens.

After the release of shocking CCTV footage taken by animal welfare groups, former minister for primary industries Jo Palmer promised swift action when announcing the Livestock Processing Taskforce on December 19.

Primary Industries and Water Minister Jane Howlett said the taskforce continued to meet fortnightly.

“All abattoirs were notified in March that mandatory video surveillance must be operating within three months and the taskforce distributed guidelines to all Tasmanian abattoirs and knackeries,” she said.

“The taskforce is also developing guidelines for livestock processing facilities, including facility design, pre-slaughter care and handling, and emergency killing.”

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