

Governor's Address: First Session, Fifty-First Parliament of Tasmania

SPEECH-in-REPLY

Delivered by the Hon. Meg Webb MLC

Tuesday 21 May 2024

** Please Check against Delivery*

Mr President/Madam Deputy President, as this is my first contribution in this 51st Parliament, I would like to acknowledge the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the original and traditional custodians of this land, lutruwita/Tasmania.

I pay my respects to the muwininna people of this land on which we are meeting, nipaluna/Hobart, who did not survive European invasion and dispossession.

I pay my respects to Tasmanian Aboriginal Elders past and present, and to any Tasmanian Aboriginal people here today or watching today.

I respect and value the connection to land and culture that is held and nurtured by the Tasmanian Aboriginal people, and I express my gratitude for the opportunities extended to me to learn about, share and benefit from that connection and culture.

Mr President/Madam Deputy President, I would also take this opportunity to welcome new members to this chamber – the new Members for Elwick, Prosser and Hobart.

Congratulations on your election to the Legislative Council – I know you will all work hard for your communities, and I hope you also enjoy your time in this place and the work we do here as much as I do.

I also congratulate our previous Members for Elwick and Prosser on their election to the other place, and wish them well in their new roles, along with the other 33 members of that place, many of them brand new to their roles.

And, while I know we will have a more formal opportunity to do so at another time, I would also recognise the former Member for Hobart, Rob Valentine – whose absence many of us will be feeling.

However, I trust he is watching today from afar and will be critiquing our contributions. We miss you, Rob.

Mr President/Madam Deputy President, as stated in the Governor's Address,

"This Parliament will be different to previous years".

"This Parliament will require a collaborative and consultative approach, though there will be times where views differ."

I couldn't agree more, Mr President, and I am excited and optimistic about the opportunities presented by this new Parliament, particularly the opportunity to work in more collaborative ways.

The *"collaborative and consultative approach"* referenced in the Governor's Address will take courage and conviction from all those involved, but particularly from the government as it learns to lead without relying on the brute strength of majority.

I think this moment of opportunity to work differently, to lead differently, has come at an especially pivotal moment for our state.

It presents incredible possibilities for transformative progress, but on the flip side, there may be serious consequences if we fail to seize this moment.

Because, Mr President/Madam Deputy President, while our political environment may be changed and feel different, the challenges faced by many Tasmanians, and the grim realities our state faces which hold back our ability to thrive, remain alarmingly unchanged or, in fact, are escalating.

We know our challenges: cost of living, the housing crisis, food insecurity, literacy and educational standards, increasing inequity; poor health outcomes, a failing justice and corrections system; abhorrent abuse of children in this state, within institutions and in our communities; the climate emergency which we are roundly failing to respond to; and many more.

The challenge now is to not allow ourselves, or decision-makers to become desensitised to those challenges, to become immune to that suffering, to explain it away as 'that is just how it is'.

Presented as we are in this 51st Parliament with a significantly altered political environment, it must be seen as an exceptionally precious opportunity for positive progress, for new solutions.

If ever there was a time to work against a tendency to regress to business as usual, this is it.

Mr President/Madam Deputy President, I listened closely to the Governor's Address delivered in this place last Tuesday, and this statement early on in her Excellency's Address caught my ear:

"Tasmania is now a growing state with a story to tell..."

As our Tasmanian Aboriginal fellow-citizens, and others, would tell us: story-telling provides an important and powerful thread linking past, present and future.

Storytelling provides opportunities to reflect, learn and share experiences, sorrows, joys, fears and aspirations.

Some people's and sectors' stories are well-reflected in the Premier's agenda as set out in the Governor's Address, but others not so much.

We need to seize this opportunity to also hear and tell the diverse ranges of stories of those not represented by the government's priorities outlined in last week's speech.

I cannot claim to do so comprehensively here and now, but I can make a start, and all of us in this place can accept responsibility for ensuring, as best we can, that all Tasmanian stories are heard and represented in this place.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

I shall start with stories of **Unfinished Business**.

Mr President/Madam Deputy President, I have spoken in this place on many occasions about the ongoing, profound and long-outstanding unsettled debt of Tasmanian history to our Tasmanian Aboriginal Community, the custodians of this island, lutruwita/Tasmania.

Given that, it is with great sadness and disappointment to note the government's agenda as outlined by Her Excellency last week did not once mention Reconciliation with the Tasmanian Aboriginal people, no mention of Truth-Telling nor Treaty in Lutruwita.

A shocking silence that spoke volumes.

Almost exactly three years ago, in the Governors Address made in this place in June 2021 at the opening of the 50th Parliament of Tasmania, it was announced Professor Kate Warner AC would lead a process to understand directly from Aboriginal people themselves how best to take Tasmania's next step towards reconciliation.

It has now been two and a half years since the *Pathway to Truth-telling and Treaty Report* undertaken by Professor Kate Warner, Professor Tim McCormack and Fauve Kurnadi was tabled in this Parliament on 25 November 2021.

As we will all recall, this important report provided a vital ground-breaking step forward in our understanding of the depth and longevity of those unsettled debts of our state.

The report sets a clear and urgent imperative for action. Clear and urgent.

Which makes it even more astonishing to note that in the current context of continued stalled progress on measures in Closing the Gap, coupled with the profoundly disappointing and hurtful result of the Voice to Parliament referendum in October last year, we have been presented with an echoing absence of mention of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people in either the Liberal Government's 2030 Plan or the government agenda outlined in the Governor's Address to open this 51st Parliament.

Last year's Premier's Address reiterated the government's commitment to a Pathway to Truth-telling and Treaty including providing a brief update on progress.

Yet here we are, over twelve months later, with the government's agenda presented in the Governor's Address, with not even a mention of Treaty and Truth-telling, let alone an update on progress.

Mr President/Madam Deputy President, it appears very difficult to find any public update on the government's progress on the recommendations of the 2021 Pathway to Truth-Telling and Treaty Report.

The government has had this report since November 2021, and I think that two and a half years later all Tasmanians deserve clear and accountable public reporting on implementation underway of the Pathway to Truth-telling and Treaty report's 23 recommendations.

Many in this 51st Parliament, across both chambers, are committed to progressing Truth-telling and Treaty with the Tasmanian Aboriginal people of lutruwita/Tasmania.

I see an opportunity for real engagement and progress, and I invite the Rockliff minority government to embrace that opportunity.

Further to that Mr President, I recall that while Premier Rockliff accepted and eventually acted upon a 2020 Assembly Select Committee recommendation to restore the numbers of the other place – and I acknowledge the work by the current Member for Hobart in chairing that committee in her former capacity – there was a second recommendation in that same report which stated:

“Recommendation 2: That a Joint Parliamentary Inquiry be established in this term of Parliament to develop a preferred model that provides for dedicated seats for Tasmanian Aboriginal people in the Parliament.”

That particular term of parliament has long gone – however it is clearly Unfinished Business that this current parliament must address, along with the ongoing Unfinished Business of Truth-Telling and Treaty.

Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings

Moving on Mr President/Madam Deputy President, to other Unfinished Business.

Although it did receive one cursory sentence in last week's speech, the Commission of Inquiry is still very much a story of Unfinished Business for so many Tasmanians.

Particularly those still seeking answers when it comes to the responsibility and accountability of those who either enabled, or perpetrated horrific abuse against our most vulnerable - our children and young Tasmanians.

It is unacceptable to now seek to solely focus upon the government's Implementation Plan in the absence of those answers so desperately needed.

We are hearing a lot about 'healing and moving forward', but for many Tasmanians that cannot happen without the answers, without knowing that those responsible for their pain and trauma, and the pain and trauma of their loved ones, has been clearly identified and accountability taken.

The failure to provide straight and comprehensive answers is to leave victims/survivors – who bravely came forward to tell their stories – with the last pages cruelly left blank.

Answers, transparency and accountability form the foundations required before healing can truly begin.

And surely, Tasmanian victims, survivors and their supporters deserve that?

Despite its intentions, the Blake Review did not provide the State service with a clean bill of health, and in fact raised more questions than it answered.

The Woolcott Review is currently seeking public submissions, so may not be in a position to provide its initial report for some time.

The Tatarka Review into whether legal fee payments to state servants appearing before the Commission were warranted or not, is apparently underway but no update has been forthcoming from government.

The Weiss Review into the Paul Reynolds matter is scheduled to be made public by the end of June, and when it is made public I hope it is in its entirety with as little as possible redacted.

Yet, there remain many gaps the government could be filling in the meantime.

The most glaring being that Ashley youth Detention Centre should be closed now – not 2026.

In August last year, the Commissioners' closing statement asserted the following, *“It is our view that the Ashley Youth Detention Centre should be closed as a matter of urgency.”*

Three years to deliver is **not** acting as a matter of urgency.

Climate Change Emergency

Mr President/Madame Deputy President, another clanging silence amongst the government's stated list of priorities in the Governor's Address was **climate change**.

I'm sorry, but I just cannot fathom the government's apparent ostrich head-in-sand approach to the climate change emergency, Mr President/Madam Deputy President.

Somebody needs to tell the ostrich that the seas are rising and that insulating sandbank may not be there for much longer.

A recent article published by the Guardian, on the 8th of May this year, reported that, and I quote:

"Hundreds of the world's leading climate scientists expect global temperatures to rise to at least 2.5C (4.5F) above preindustrial levels this century, blasting past internationally agreed targets and causing catastrophic consequences for humanity and the planet."

Mr President/Madame Deputy President, I have previously stated in this place that the climate change emergency is a social justice issue as much as it is an ecological one – they are intrinsically entwined.

In fact, the United Nations refer to **climate justice**, which recognises how climate change will exacerbate and entrench structural and socioeconomic inequalities, and intergenerational inequity.

For example, things many of us take for granted - access to nutritious healthy food, clean water, heating, cooling, will become more expensive for those who can afford it least.

According to the same Guardian article of 8th May, climate scientists are angry and scared at government inaction globally, and I quote:

"Many of the scientists envisage a "semi-dystopian" future, with famines, conflicts and mass migration, driven by heatwaves, wildfires, floods and storms of an intensity and frequency far beyond those that have already struck.

Numerous experts [said they had been left feeling hopeless, infuriated and scared by the failure of governments to act](#) despite the clear scientific evidence provided.

'I think we are headed for major societal disruption within the next five years,' said Gretta Pecl, at the University of Tasmania. "[Authorities] will be overwhelmed by extreme event after extreme event, food production will be disrupted. I could not feel greater despair over the future'."

Five years, Mr President/Madam Deputy President. Five years before *major societal disruption*.

If that is not an emergency, then I do not know what is.

Do we honestly believe we are prepared for that prediction?

That could be the next term of government, presuming the current one goes full term.

I call on the government to urgently reconsider and reinstate a dedicated Minister for Climate Change.

Further, we need to incorporate climate change benchmarks into reportable dashboards across all sectors applicable: environment and biodiversity; agriculture; marine and fresh water ecosystems; forestry;

housing and construction; transport; energy and waste; domestic water supplies; planning; liveable urban environments; food security and cost of living – to mention a few examples.

Mr President/Madam Deputy President, the climate science is in.

A key takeaway from that science is that an immediate way Tasmania could and should be acting on the climate emergency is by protecting our unique native forests.

As respected Professor David Lindenmayer AO, who is based at the ANU in Canberra and is a world-leading expert in forest and woodland ecology, resource management, conservation science, and biodiversity said

“While there are many sources of emissions, it is only native forests that can remove carbon from the atmosphere at the scale and time required. Protecting and restoring native forests is a critical mitigation action if Australia is to meet its net zero emissions targets within the critical one to three decades.” (The Canberra Times, 14 October 2022).

In one fell swoop of a pen ceasing the senseless logging of our native forests means we immediately protect our vital carbon banks, our life-blood waterways, many threatened species from extinction, as well as reduce cataclysmic bushfires we have seen escalate over previous decades.

Additionally, I reiterate my earlier call – along with a range of community stakeholders – for a comprehensive, independent root-and-branch inquiry into the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Tasmania, to ensure it is effectively delivering on its statutory roles and also meeting community expectations in protecting and preserving lutruwita/Tasmania’s treasured natural environment.

Much more could, and should, be said on this.

Suffice to say the climate change story is being written whether we turn a blind eye to it or not.

If we want to play a constructive part in that narrative – and I hope we all do – then we need to seize this rapidly shrinking moment and make up for lost time. Urgently.

DEMOCRACY RENEWED

Mr President/Madam Deputy President, I spoke earlier on the unique milestone which has undoubtedly strengthened our Parliament – the restoration of the Assembly to 35 MPs.

As stated in the Governor’s Address, *“This Parliament will be different to previous years”*.

Manifestly so, on so many levels.

To quote again from the Her Excellency’s Address:

“Tasmanians are fortunate to live in a democracy.

Where they are free to speak, free to believe, and free to vote – without fear.”

Nobody could argue with that. We are indeed very fortunate.

However, as events around the globe have thrown into stark relief – we cannot afford to take such good fortune for granted.

Democracy can be surprisingly fragile.

As the current custodians of this place, we have a collective responsibility to not just ensure this Parliament proves functional and effective, we must also invest in strengthening our democratic frameworks and good governance systems.

And Mr President/Madam Deputy President – community stakeholders have made it clear they expect this parliament to undertake those strengthening measures.

As Members may be aware earlier this month the Susan McKinnon Foundation, a non-partisan public interest entity, released its *Charter of Tasmanian Government and Parliamentary Reform 2024* document.

It makes 9 recommendations spanning more rigorous political donations disclosures, strengthening our RTI laws and introducing truth-in-political advertising to mention a few of its proposed reforms.

The Australia Institute Tasmania also released this month its Discussion Paper, *Democracy Agenda for the 51st Tasmanian Parliament Options for reform*.

This Paper presents 16 key areas for reform.

The CPSU Tasmanian Branch also released its *Integrity Road Map for the Tasmanian Public Sector*.

This report offers seven recommendations by which to address eroding public trust.

The fact we have multiple entities coming forward to provide guidance on strengthening the integrity of our democracy and governance is a clear expression of the both the need and the appetite that is there in the community to do so.

Mr President/Madam Deputy President I wish to take the opportunity now to flag that at the conclusion of my contribution I will seek leave to table these three documents.

I believe that it is appropriate to do so as they are all addressed to this parliament for action by this parliament.

There are certain key areas of democratic reforms I believe we must seize the opportunities presented by this new collaborative parliament to prioritise, including the following.

The first I will mention is ***Political donations disclosures laws***

Boosting the rigour of the political donations disclosures laws passed last year being a key area of unfinished business.

We must move to reduce the disclosure amount to \$1000, introduce donations and expenditure caps for Assembly elections, as well as introduce truth-in-advertising laws.

Both the Australia Institute and the McKinnon Foundation reports emphasise the need for these reforms.

Additionally, we need to address the lack of equity in the provision of public funding provided for in the current laws across both Chambers.

A democratic flaw also identified in the Australia Institute report.

A second essential democratic reform I will highlight is ***Fixed Term Elections***

I have previously called for the introduction of Fixed Four-Year Terms for the Assembly.

Tasmania is the only state without this provision – despite former Premier Ray Groom introducing it for one term in the early 1990s.

As a matter of interest, both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition have indicated their in-principle support for fixed four-year terms for the Commonwealth Parliament, which would leave Tasmania as the national outlier in this regard.

As stated by the recent McKinnon Foundation Charter document, the introduction of fixed four-year terms would promote certainty, support longer-term policy development, and remove the advantage that incumbents have in choosing an election date for partisan purposes.

The third reform to prioritise is the establishment of a ***Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters***

Members will be aware, I have long called for this Parliament to have a *Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters* as occurs in the Commonwealth Parliament, as well as both the NSW and Victorian parliaments respectively.

I will not go into further detail now as I have tabled a motion today to that effect.

However, it is worth pointing out that this reform is called for by the Australia Institute in its Democracy Agenda report, and is publicly supported by other election experts and analysts.

And finally, ***Other Integrity Measures:***

Other integrity measures which should be – as per the colloquialism – a no-brainer include:

- Legislating the Lobbyist Register and Code of Conduct as recommended by the Integrity Commission
- Implementing the grants reforms recommended by the Integrity Commission
- Implementation of the EDO's 12 recommendations to strengthen our Right to Information Laws

I am also calling for an immediate review of our so-called whistleblower laws, the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2002*.

Mr President/Madam Deputy President, while this may seem a big agenda of democratic reforms, this 51st Parliament presents the opportunity and the appetite to undertake them.

Indeed, having restored the numbers in our House of Assembly to provide for a more functional Parliament and stronger democracy, it is a natural extension to attend to these structural mechanisms to ensure such an outcome is delivered.

Independent Integrity Entities

Integrity Commission

Mr President/Madam Deputy President – also on the topic of integrity,

There has clearly been growing disquiet regarding the effectiveness – or otherwise – of the Integrity Commission’s capacity to deliver on community expectations of what it should or could do.

I do not intend to repeat those concerns here now in great detail.

However, I place on the record that I do share some of those concerns and do believe it is timely for there to be an independent and comprehensive review of the Integrity Commission’s current legal framework and whether it is fit for purpose.

Independent Police Oversight Authority

Of equal importance to restore public confidence and trust, is strengthening transparency and accountability of complaints and potential misconduct within Tasmania Police.

I am calling for an appropriately resourced and empowered Independent Police Oversight Authority to be established within the life of this parliament.

Such an Authority should have the mandate of holding police accountable for potential criminality and misconduct, and driving cultural change through that accountability.

I acknowledge the hard work undertaken by our police force, and often in tricky if not dangerous circumstances.

However, recent episodes including but not limited to, the Paul Reynolds matter have raised serious concerns and crisis of confidence within both the community as well as for some serving police officers.

Internal investigation is now perceived as self-regulation.

And that does not cut it for many people, further entrenching distrust and eroding confidence.

This in itself is unfair to the many police officers with unblemished records.

The time of self-regulation is long over.

It is in the public interest and in the interest of all police officers for there to be an Independent Police Oversight Authority in this state.

Public Service Commission

Mr President/Madam Deputy President, in February this year I undertook a study tour of new Zealand’s parliament, with a specific interest in its integrity and ethics models and frameworks.

This was an incredibly interesting and informative process.

A key takeaway for me was the role and contribution made by their independent Public Service Commission.

There are lessons in that model for Tasmania, as there are also from models in other states, such as the WA Public Sector Commission.

Of course, Tasmania previously had an Office of the State Service Commissioner, which was abolished in 2013.

I do note that in the recently released Blake Review, Recommendation 9 states:

That Government, or the Head of the State Service, initiate a review of the decision to abolish the State Service Commissioner model in 2013. (p.34)

I cannot claim an in depth understanding of why the Commission was abolished, but Blake notes it was a policy decision of the government at that time.

I have heard reflections that abolishment was perhaps the easier option pursued, rather than a re-examination of the appropriate functions of such a Commission and re-commitment to appropriate funding of those functions.

However, I fear the decision may have been a false economy, and we may have thrown the baby out with the bathwater.

Given the considerable governance failures and poor practice identified by the COI, I second the comment made by Mr Blake that:

“It has now been more than 10 years since this change was made and I believe it timely for the success or otherwise of this to be evaluated and comparison made with practices in other jurisdictions.” (p.34)

This echoes comments also made by Dr Watt AO in his Independent Review of the Tasmanian State Service, where in relation to the abolished Office of the State Service Commissioner, he noted

“The option (of reinstatement) should, however, be kept under consideration.”

Mr President/Madam Deputy President, I'll move on from integrity matters, but do wish to state that I am also looking forward to attending in July this year, the Australian Public Sector Anti-Corruption Conference, hosted in Darwin by the Northern Territory's Independent Commissioner Against Corruption.

This conference will hear from Australian and international anti-corruption experts on risk identification and management, emerging trends and innovative approaches to combat corruption and heighten workplace integrity systems.

There'll be plenty to learn from there, I'm sure.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR REFORM

Mr President/Madam Deputy President, so far in my contribution, I've covered some key matters of Unfinished Business, opportunities to strengthen our democracy and governance, and now I move on some areas for reform I'd like to highlight as opportunities in this 51st Parliament.

As coincidence would have it, this week we are celebrating Law Week.

Yet, it is surprising how silent the government is on its legislative agenda going forward.

I've already mentioned some key areas of law reform but others I would hope are also on the government's top priority list include:

- Moving on its promised **Expungement of Historical Offences Amendment Bill**.

This was a significant acknowledgment of the serious impacts of past laws which criminalised male-male homosexuality, the discriminative nature of these laws and the harms caused.

Expungement is important to set an appropriately inclusive tone for all Tasmanians.

Crucially though, these laws must also include the financial redress recommended in the 2020 *Independent Review of Expungement of Historical Offences Act 2017*.

- Another long overdue law reform I am hoping the government is prioritising is its redrafting of its proposed laws to implement the promised **ban on conversion practices**, as recommended by the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute Report no 32 released in April 2022.

Human Rights Act

Speaking of the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute, Members may recall that late April this year, the TLRI released its *Update Report on a Charter of Human Rights for Tasmania*.

This timely report recommends that, and I quote:

“the laws in Tasmania be reformed to provide and promote specific, better and accessible protection for human rights through the enactment of a Tasmanian Charter of Human Rights or a human Rights Act.”

This is the second time the TLRI has made this strong recommendation – the first time being in 2007.

The latest report also recommends, amongst its 21 recommendations, the establishment of a Parliamentary Human Rights Scrutiny Committee, a Human Rights Unit, and a Human Rights Commissioner.

I will not detail all 21 recommendations here now, but it is clear this Parliament must seize the opportunity to write this part of our history – it is long overdue, 17 years since we were first told Tasmanians deserve to have their human rights formally protected via legislation.

I also flag, Mr President/Madam Deputy President, my intention to seek to table at the conclusion of my contribution, the TLRI’s *Update Report on a Charter of Human Rights for Tasmania*, dated April 2024.

Tax Reform

To move on to another topic Mr President/Madam Deputy President, which is not just opportunity for reform, but given its urgency could as easily have been discussed as Unfinished Business.

Lutruwita/Tasmania faces significant fiscal challenges which are now looming.

We have been alerted to this by independent experts such as Saul Eslake, and by Members in this place, such as the Member for Murchison.

We know that our state cannot rely on business as usual to meet the significant fiscal challenges we face – we will need to take the politically awkward action of reforming Tasmania’s taxation and revenue base.

Therefore, we have an opportunity, in this 51st Parliament, to plan and take those politically awkward actions together, as a product of collaboration – we can seek to share the political risk, rather than seek to avoid it, or use it as a weapon for political self-advantage.

The call for structural reform of the state’s taxation base and revenue streams is not new, nor is it a challenge only faced by Tasmania.

We know clearly from the Treasury's own modelling the need for reform is pressing, and we cannot continue to keep putting this fundamental work in the too-hard basket.

We all know that we cannot rely upon pulling the same tax and revenue levers just a little harder, when those levers cannot currently keep up with the needs and priorities of Tasmanians.

We all know in this place - plain as day - that robust taxation reform for our state is now desperately overdue and necessary to ensure the sustainability of Tasmania's overall fiscal position.

Many, many times, we have been warned by economist Mr Saul Eslake and others that fiscal sustainability for our state can not be attained solely by relying on economic growth or by any other single solution such as constraining health expenditure, or public sector efficiency dividends.

It is certainly a nonsense for any government claiming to have a 2030 strong plan for our state, that such a plan appears completely devoid of thorough structural reform of state taxation and revenue.

I reiterate the call I made in this place after the 2021/22 State Budget – that we must have a comprehensive independent review into our state taxation and revenue system to ensure it is as robust as possible and pulling appropriate levers to drive necessary sustainability reforms while improving its fairness and efficiency.

I propose, in this 51st Parliament with its new collaborative atmosphere, that there is an opportunity to establish an independent expert panel commissioned by Parliament, to undertake a review into state taxation and revenue reform.

It's finally time to pull the bandaid off.

Privacy Laws Review

Mr President/Madam Deputy President, I will move on to another topic of which I am fond, and I believe presents us with a significant opportunity for reform – one that I am happy to be an active contributor to progressing – and that is the topic of our privacy legislation and protections in lutruwita/Tasmania.

In late 2019, I made a referral to the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute, which was accepted by the TLRI Board in December 2019.

I asked that the TLRI inquire into and review and report on:

- the current protections of privacy and of the right to privacy in Tasmania and any need to enhance or extend protections for privacy in Tasmania
- the extent to which the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004* and related laws continue to provide an effective framework for the protection of privacy in Tasmania and the need for any reform to that Act, and
- models that enhance and protect privacy in other jurisdictions (in Australia and overseas).

I would like to thank the TLRI for continuing with the referred project, especially through a difficult time of constrained funding which delayed progress for a while.

After the release by the TLRI of an excellent Issues Paper for comment on this topic in March 2023, I very much look forward to the culmination of their work in a Final Report.

The Issues Paper identified that:

“...there is no comprehensive privacy regulation in Tasmania. Rather, privacy protection is fragmented across different laws that protect different types of privacy in different specific circumstances.” (p.ix)

And further, that despite Tasmania’s *Personal Information Protection Act 2004* being the state’s primary privacy framework, *“...there are multiple gaps in its scope, operation, and enforcement that can jeopardise privacy.” (p.x)*

Mr President/Madam Deputy President, I anticipate that the Final Report from the TLRI will provide an excellent road map for reform and improvement in our legislative architecture relating to privacy, addressing those noted gaps and fragmentation, and be an opportunity for better privacy protection for our fellow Tasmanians.

Gender Lens

Mr President/Madam Deputy President , another area which some Members here will recall I’ve raised and will continue to raise, is the need to incorporate as an automatic part of any assessment of government policy making is the rigorous and informed use of the gender lens.

Whether it’s in a discussion of whether or not to cut regional public library hours, limited public transport routes, or emphasising a construction-prioritised investment boost over other workforces.

An effective, rigorous and consistent application of a gender lens on all areas of policy is integral to a just, fair and equitable Tasmania.

Currently, Tasmania’s chapter in this regard is looking a bit like the least liked part of the government’s homework – it’s a bit tatty, a few scribbled notes in the margins of an unformed draft, where an assessor would comment ‘more application required’.

WELCOME GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

Mr President/Madam Deputy President, I welcome the commitment made by the Premier – as referred to in the Governor’s Address – that, and I quote

“the new Government’s decision and actions to be taken in the best interests of the State and to be a government that listens to all Tasmanians.”

I welcome that commitment – very much so.

Too often over the last few iterations of government, we have seen deaf ears turned to many sectors and groups within our society, notably many vulnerable Tasmanians.

Too often we saw decisions made which were arguably in the best interests of the government, and more specifically the Party in government.

I am focussed in my contribution today on opportunities presented by this new 51st Parliament, and I am not going to get bogged down in detailed critique of the government’s 2030 plan – there will be a Budget Reply speech later in the year for that.

In the spirit of optimism on the opportunities before us, I would like to acknowledge and welcome a range of government initiatives and commitments outlined in the Governors Address, which I see as positive and welcome for the Tasmanian community, including the electorate of Nelson.

The **Energy bill relief** for households and small businesses to be provided this winter will be a tangible assistance for those struggling to cover the basics.

The **halving of bus and Derwent ferry fares** from 1 June will be an important support for those on low incomes relying on public transport, but also a welcome incentive to make public transport a more attractive option for all, and assist in reducing transport emissions.

Having mentioned ferries, I note the exciting announcement of three additional ferry terminals, including one in Sandy Bay, which is of course at the one end of the Nelson electorate.

We will look forward to the future expansion of a Derwent River ferry service to also link Kingston, at the other end of the Nelson electorate, into the current routes.

I welcome and applaud the continued support and extension of the **Healthy School Lunch** program in schools.

This is a basic and essential way we can support the educational outcomes and overall well-being of Tasmanian children, especially those who are experiencing disadvantage.

The continued commitment to building **10,000 more social and affordable homes by 2032** is an ongoing move in the right direction, in particular the target of at least 2000 'social-housing only' homes by 30 June 2027.

Other housing initiatives that are a positive include the **enhanced MyHome Program** to provide home ownership opportunities, the **Private Rental Incentive Scheme being boosted** by 200 additional rentals, and incentives to switch properties from short stay to private rental.

These efforts are not enough, and it is unfortunate that other housing policies will work to exacerbate, rather than ameliorate the housing crisis in lutruwita/Tasmania, but I am not delving into detailed criticism today.

It is excellent to see **four new Child and Family Learning Centres** being added to the existing network.

These are beautiful facilities and effective community-based supports for families and children during the early years.

We are certainly excited to see the **Saltbush Child and Family Learning Centre being built in Kingston** and due to open this year. It will be a wonderful addition to the Kingborough community.

Staying on the topic of supporting Tasmanian children, I welcome the announced **Early Years Workforce Fund**, which includes scholarships and incentives to attract and retain early childhood workers, speech pathologists and psychologists – these are sorely needed.

And it is excellent to see the commitment to implement evidence based structured literacy in all schools, which includes phonics and a Year 1 Phonics check for all Year 1 students.

This provides the opportunity to make a generational change in our literacy levels in lutruwita/Tasmania.

Health is an enormous task for any government in this state, and I note this government continues to seek new initiatives and solutions to tackle the multitude of challenges it presents.

I particularly note efforts to **improve access to GPs**, which we all know is an urgent issue.

While health announcements overall still have the feeling that we are desperately sticking our fingers into the cracks in the damn wall, I know there are many with expert knowledge and experience working to develop better policy and investment approaches in this area.

At Budget time we will certainly delve more deeply into this area.

This government continues to focus on **developing vocational education and training opportunities**, with the need to ensure workforce availability in our state.

This aligns with the future infrastructure plans laid out, and both these areas are important in planning for a future in which lutruwita/Tasmania can thrive.

Mr President/Madam Deputy President, before I conclude, I would like to seek leave to table the four reports I mentioned earlier in my remarks...

Thank you, Mr President/Madam Deputy President.

Clearly there are many other areas I wish I could include, however I am aware of time.

Instead I will conclude my comments by reiterating the optimistic welcome I give to this new 51st Parliament.

I genuinely hope to see and contribute to positive opportunities in the term of this Parliament, especially to opportunity to progress reforms that require collaboration and may otherwise be too politically challenging,

We are all involved in writing history here, writing the next chapter of lutruwita/Tasmania's story.

Posterity will judge us if we continue to write in the same old preferential treatments, silencings and absences.

I hope we may seize this moment, in all its potential, for the benefit of all Tasmanians.

I note the Governor's Address.