

**Legislative Council
Hansard**

Tuesday 21 May 2024

[excerpt...]

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Thank you, Mr President. I have the honour to second the motion that the Governor's Address be noted or perhaps it is agreed. I cannot quite remember the motion itself, but either or both.

As this is my first contribution in this 51st Parliament, I acknowledge the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the original and traditional custodians of this land, lutruwita, Tasmania.

I pay my respects to the muwinina [tbc] 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 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.

I also take this opportunity to welcome new members to this Chamber, the members for Elwick, Prosser and Hobart. Congratulations on your election to the Legislative Council. I know you will work hard for your communities and I hope that you enjoy your time here in this Chamber as much as I do and find the work as fulfilling and purposeful, as I think all members here do. Welcome and good luck.

I congratulate our previous members for Elwick and Prosser on their election to the other place and wish them well in their new roles there, along with the other 33 members of that place who have been successful in the recent election. Many of them are new to the roles that they hold. While I hope we will have a more formal opportunity at another time, I also recognise the former member for Hobart, Rob Valentine, whose absence many of us will be feeling. However, I trust that he is watching today from afar and he will be critiquing our contributions, no doubt. We miss you, Rob.

Ms Forrest - He should have better things to do with his time.

Ms WEBB - I am sure he is tuned in.

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 when views differ. I could not agree more with these sentiments. I am excited and optimistic about the opportunities presented by this new 51st 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 a majority. This moment of opportunity to work and lead differently has come at an especially pivotal moment for our state. It presents incredible possibilities for transformative progress but on the flipside, there may be serious consequences if we fail to seize this moment. While our political environment may have 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, in some cases are escalating.

We know our challenges: cost of living, the housing crisis, food insecurity, literacy and educational standards, increasing inequity, poor health outcomes, 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 around us to become desensitised to those challenges, to become immune to that suffering, to explain it away, as that is just how it is. We are presented 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 there was ever a time to work against a tendency to regress to business as usual, this is it.

I listened closely to the Governor's Address delivered in this place last Tuesday and this sentiment early on in Her Excellency's address caught my ear. She said -

Tasmania is now a growing state with a story to tell and as our Tasmanian Aboriginal fellow citizens and others would tell us, storytelling provides an important and powerful thread, linking past, present and future. Storytelling provides opportunities to reflect, to learn and to share experiences, sorrows, joys, fears and aspirations.

Some people's and some sector's stories are well reflected in the Premier's agenda 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 in the government's priorities outlined in last week's speech. I cannot claim to do so comprehensively here and now. However, I can make a start. All of us in this place can accept responsibility for ensuring as best we can all Tasmanian stories are heard and represented here.

I shall start with stories perhaps of unfinished business. I have spoken in this place on many occasions about the ongoing, profound and long-standing unsettled debt of Tasmanian history with our Tasmanian Aboriginal community and the custodians of this island, lutruwita/Tasmania. Given that, it is with great sadness and disappointment to note that the government's agenda, 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/Tasmania. It was a shocking silence that spoke volumes.

Almost exactly three years ago, in the Governor's 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 steps towards reconciliation. It has now been two and a half years since the Pathway to Truth-Telling and Treaty report undertaken by Professor Warner, Professor Tim McCormack and Fauve Kurnadi was tabled in this parliament on 25 November

2021. As we will all recall, the important report provided a vital ground-breaking step forward in our understanding of the depths and longevity of those unsettled debts in our state.

The report set out a clear and urgent imperative action, 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, in the Premier's address we heard reiterated the government's commitment to the Pathway to Truth-Telling and Treaty report, including a brief update on progress. Yet, here we are 12 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. It appears very difficult to find any public update on the government's progress on those recommendations from the Pathway to Truth Telling and Treaty Report.

I would hope that we all deserve an update on that front and that we hear from the Government soon in some manner to update us on progress being made on the 23 recommendations from that report.

I know many in this 51st Parliament, Mr. President, across both Chambers are committed to progressing Truth Telling a Treaty with the Tasmanian Aboriginal people of Lutruwita/Tasmania. I see an opportunity for real engagement and progress and I invite the Rockcliff minority government to embrace that opportunity.

Further, Mr. President, I recall that while Premier Rockcliff accepted and eventually acted upon the 2020 House of Assembly Select Committee recommending the restoration of numbers in 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.

Mr. President, 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.

Moving on, Mr. President, to other unfinished business that I would like to touch on, 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 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 on 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 certain 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 victim 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 victim 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 submission, so may not be in a position to provide its initial report for some time.

The Tataka Review into whether legal fee payments to State Servants appearing before the Commission.

Sitting suspended from 1 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

[3.04 p.m]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Before the break, I was speaking about the Tataka review into whether legal fee payments to state servants appearing before the commission were warranted or not. It is apparently underway, but no update has been forthcoming from the government. Although, I received some belated answers to questions just now during question time, we are still not sure when the report will be completed.

The Weiss review also into the Paul Reynolds matter is scheduled to be made public by the end of June. I hope when it is made public 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 in 2026. In August last year, the commissioner's 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 that outcome is not acting as a matter of urgency.

Another glaring silence amongst the government's stated list of priorities in the Governor's Address was climate change. I am sorry, but I just cannot fathom the government's apparent ostrich head-in-the-sand approach to the climate change emergency. Somebody needs to tell the ostrich that the seas are rising and that insulating sandbank may not be there for very much longer. A recent article published in *The Guardian* on 8 May 2024 reported that, and I quote:

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

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 intertwined. In fact, the United Nations refers to climate justice, which recognises how climate change will exacerbate and

entrench structural and socio-economic inequalities and intergenerational inequality. For example, things many of us take for granted - access to healthy food, clean water, heating, cooling - will all become more expensive for those who can afford it least. According to the same article in *The Guardian* from 8 May, climate scientists are angry and scared at government inaction globally:

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 Greta 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, before there is 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 a full term.

I call on the government to urgently reconsider and reinstate a dedicated minister for climate change as a standalone portfolio. Further, we need to incorporate climate change benchmarks into reportable dashboards across all applicable sectors, and that includes: environment and biodiversity; agriculture, marine and freshwater 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.

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

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

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, 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 urgently make up for lost time.

Mr 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 and manifestly so, on so many levels. To quote again from Her Excellency's Speech:

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.

Community stakeholders have made it very 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 nine 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.

Similarly, the CPSU Tasmanian Branch released its *Integrity Roadmap* for the Tasmanian public sector. This report offers seven recommendations by which to address eroding public trust.

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

Mr President, I will take the opportunity now to flag that at the conclusion of my contribution, I will seek leave to table the three documents I have just mentioned. I believe 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 reform that I believe we must seize the opportunity presented by this new collaborative parliament to prioritise, including the following that I will briefly mention:

Firstly, political donation disclosure laws and boosting the rigour of political donations disclosure laws passed last year, being a key area of unfinished business in this place. We must now move to reduce the disclosure amount to \$1000, introduce donations and expenditure caps for assembly elections, as well as introduce truth in political 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.

The second essential democratic reform I would highlight is around fixed-term elections. I previously called for the introduction of fixed four-year terms for the House of 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 that I will briefly mention is to prioritise the establishment of a joint standing committee on electoral matters. Members will be aware I have a long called for this parliament to have a joint standing committee on electoral matters, as occurs at the Commonwealth parliament as well as both NSW and Victorian parliaments.

I will not go into further detail now as I have tabled a motion to that effect in this place and am in discussions with members about it. 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.

A final measure to mention under this democracy banner is some further integrity measures which would shore up public trust and also the structures of our democracy. The ones I will point to most pertinently and which I would regard as no-brainers, as per the colloquialism, include: legislating the lobbyist register and code of conduct as recommended by the Integrity Commission and developed carefully by the commission over the last couple of years; implementing the grants reforms recommended by the Integrity Commission and the work that they have put into the research papers on that topic in order to prevent pork barrelling at election time; and the implementation of the Environmental Defenders Office's 12 recommendations to strengthen our right to information laws presented in the report that they prepared last year.

I am also calling for an immediate review of our so-called whistleblower laws, the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2002*. This is brought into sharp relief by activities at a federal level at the moment where whistleblowers are being jailed. We should be protecting whistleblowers and our laws are in need of review and updating.

While this may seem a big agenda of democratic reforms, this 51st Parliament presents opportunity and also exists within an appetite in the community and in members of this place to undertake this work. Indeed, having restored the numbers of the House of Assembly to provide a more functional parliament and stronger democracy, it is a natural extension to attend to these structural mechanisms to ensure that outcome is delivered.

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 that 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.

Of equal importance to restoring public confidence and trust is to strengthen transparency and accountability of complaints and potential misconduct within Tasmania Police. I note here that, relevant to this topic, just today in the other place, the Bugg report, the independent review of the use of surveillance devices in prisons, has now been tabled. I have not yet had the opportunity to read that report in detail, but I welcome its completion and its publication. It is being made public today. We will look forward to seeing what lessons can be learned from that investigation.

Ms Forrest - It was tabled here, too.

Ms WEBB - Was it?

Ms Forrest - Yes. I have a copy of it.

Ms WEBB - Regarding restoring that public confidence and trust about complaints and potential misconduct within Tasmania Police, I am calling for an appropriately resourced, empowered and independent police oversight authority to be established within the life of this parliament. Such an authority should have a mandate for 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, often in tricky, if not dangerous, circumstances. However, recent episodes, including but not limited to the Paul Reynolds matter, have raised serious concerns and crises of confidence within both the community and 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 for self-regulation of police is long over. It is in the public interest and it is in the interest of all police officers for there to be an independent police oversight authority in this state.

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 in models from other states, such as the Western Australia public sector commission.

Of course, Tasmania previously had an office of the state service commissioner, which was abolished in 2013. I note that in the recently released Blake Review, recommendation 9 of that review 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. I cannot claim an in-depth understanding of why the commission was abolished in 2013, but Blake notes that it was a

policy decision of the government at the time. I have heard reflections that that abolition was perhaps the easier option pursued at the time rather than a re-examination of the appropriate functions of such a commission and a recommitment to appropriate funding of those functions. However, the decision may have been a false economy and we may have thrown the baby out with the bathwater in abolishing the commission. Given the considerable governance failures and poor practice identified by the commission of inquiry, I second the comment that's made by Mr Blake in his report 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 in comparison made with practices in other jurisdictions.

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'.

Before I move on from integrity matters I am looking forward to attending in July this year, the Australian Public Sector Anti-Corruption Conference hosted in Darwin by 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, innovative approaches to combat corruption and heightened workplace integrity systems. There will be plenty to learn from there and you can be sure I will bring some of that back for discussion.

I have covered some key matters of unfinished business, some opportunities to strengthen our democracy and governance. Now to highlight some areas for reform 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. I have 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 is a significant acknowledgement of the serious impacts of past laws were criminalised male to male homosexuality. The discriminative nature of these laws and the harms they caused. Expungement is important to set an appropriately inclusive time for all Tasmanians, crucially through these laws we must also include 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 the proposed laws to implement the promised ban on conversion practises, as recommended by the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute Report No. 32, released in April 2022. I hope we see a response to the community consternation at the draft bill proposed so far, and a reassessment and redrafting of that bill more in line with the TLRI report.

Speaking of the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute, members may recall in late April this year the TLRI released its update report on a *Charter of Human Rights for Tasmania*. This timely report recommends that:

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 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. It has been 17 years since we were first told Tasmanians deserve to have their human rights formally protected via legislation. I also flag my intention to seek to table, at the conclusion of my contribution, the TLRI's update report on *the Charter of Human Rights to Tasmania*, dated April 2024.

Another topic which is not just an opportunity to 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 strongly by members in this place, such as the member for Murchison who speaks on it regularly. We know 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 these 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 from Treasury's own modelling that the need for reform is pressing. We cannot continue to keep putting this fundamental work into the 'too hard basket.' We all know we cannot rely upon pulling the same tax and revenue levers just a little harder, when those levers cannot keep up with the needs and the 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 times we have been warned by economist, Mr Saul Eslake and others, that fiscal sustainability for our state cannot be attained solely by relying on economic growth or by other single solutions such as constraining health expenditure, or public sector efficiency, dividends, and the like.

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

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

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 in fact, 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 of that year. I asked the TLRI to inquire into and review and report on:

- The current protections of privacy and 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 thank the TLRI for continuing with that referred project, especially through a difficult time of constrained funding in recent years, which delayed the progress for a while. After the release by the TLRI of an excellent issues paper for comment on the 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. Further, that despite Tasmania's Personal Information Protection Act being the state's primary privacy framework, it said 'there are multiple gaps in its scope, operation and enforcement that can jeopardise privacy.'

I anticipate the final report from the TLRI will provide an excellent roadmap for reform and improvement in our legislative architecture relating to privacy, addressing those noted gaps and fragmentation and bringing an opportunity for better privacy protection for our fellow Tasmanians.

Another area which some members here will recall I have raised and will continue to raise is the need to incorporate, as an automatic part of any assessment of government policy-making, the rigorous and informed use of a gender lens. Whether it is in discussions on matters ranging from public transport routes, through to construction, prioritised investments or boosting our workforce - an effective, rigorous and consistent application of a gender lens on all areas of policy is an integral to a just, fair and equitable Tasmania.

Currently, Tasmania's chapter in this regard looks a bit like the least liked part of the government's homework. It is a bit tatty - a scribbled note in the margin of an unformed draft, where an assessor would comment 'more application is required.'

There is lots of opportunity for collaborative work on improving this area. I believe there are members across both houses of this place that would be more than happy to look at contributing to that work.

Mr President, I welcome the commitment made by the Premier as referred to in the Governor's Address, that:

...the new government's decisions 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. 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 focused 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 during the year for that.

In the spirit of optimism on opportunities before us, I acknowledge and welcome a range of government initiatives and commitments outlined in the Governor's Address, which I see as positive and welcome for the Tasmanian community, including the electorate of Nelson. For example, 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 fees and fares and Derwent River ferry fares from 1 June will be an important support to those on low incomes relying on public transport. It is also a welcome incentive to make public transport a more attractive option for all and assist us 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 one end of the Nelson electorate. I look forward one day to celebrating an announcement of a further expansion of the Derwent River ferry service to also link Kingston, the other end of the Nelson electorate, into the current routes. I hope that is part of the planning.

I welcome and applaud the continued support and extension of the Healthy School Lunches Program in schools. This may seem a small matter, but it is an essential. It is a matter of not just supporting the educational outcomes of children attending school by ensuring that they have full bellies while they are there, but it is also especially important for overall wellbeing and will flow back into families and into communities as a positive impact.

I also celebrate the continued commitment to building 10,000 more social and affordable homes by 2032. That is an ongoing move in the right direction - in particular, the target of at least 2000 specifically social housing homes by 30 June 2027.

Other housing initiatives that are positive include the enhanced MyHome program, around home ownership; the Private Rental Incentive Scheme being boosted by an extra 200 properties, and incentives to switch properties from the short stay market into the private rental market. These efforts are not enough, and it is unfortunate that other housing policies will work to exacerbate from the other side rather than ameliorate the housing crisis in lutruwita/Tasmania, but I am not delving into detailed criticism today. There are some good initiatives there.

It is excellent to see four new Child and Family Learning Centres being added to the existing network across the state. These are beautiful facilities and effective community-based support for families and children during 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 Tassie 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 positions in this state.

It is excellent to see the commitment to implement evidence based structured literacy in all schools, including phonics and a year one phonics check for all year one 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. I note this government continues to seek new initiatives and solutions to tackle the multitude of challenges it presents. I particularly note efforts announced in the Governor's Address 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 dam wall, I know there are many with expert knowledge and experience working to develop better policy and investment approaches in this area. I hope and trust that the government is listening to those experts. At budget time we will certainly delve more deeply into that space.

This government continues to focus on developing vocational education and training opportunities. With the need to ensure workforce availability in our state, that aligns with the government's future infrastructure plans, which they also layout in the Governor's Address. Both these areas important in planning for a future in which lutruwita/Tasmania can thrive. Before I conclude, I seek leave to table the reports I mentioned earlier in my remarks.

Mr PRESIDENT - I am advised that many of the documents are public documents already, but the call is yours.

Ms WEBB - As are many documents tabled in this place. I am just tabling them to be associated as they are directed to this parliament, tabling them to be part of the parliamentary record. May I seek leave to table the documents?

Leave granted.

Ms WEBB - Mr President, thank you for your indulgence and for the support of others.

Clearly there are many other areas we could include in the discussion here. However, I am aware of time and the patience of others, which I appreciate. Instead, I will conclude my comments by reiterating the optimistic welcome I give to this 51st Parliament.

I genuinely hope to see and contribute to positive opportunities in the term of this parliament, especially the 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 the same old preferential treatments and 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.
