

## Legislative Council

### Hansard

Wednesday 14 August 2024

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

*[excerpt...]*

#### TASMANIAN DEVELOPMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2024 (No. 34)

#### Second Reading

[11.40 a.m.]

**Ms WEBB** (Nelson) - Mr President, I rise not to make a detailed second reading contribution to echo some points and add some concerns I have about the bill. That is on the questions that were put during briefings and the answers provided; also not provided in terms of the detail that was not there.

I find it extraordinary we would let a lot of time lapse and certain limits, like the ones we are dealing with in this bill, go out of date and we need to lurch forward with such significant increases of 150 per cent or more. That is concerning.

I asked in the briefing, and it is good to put it on the record here, what consideration was given, if any, to introduce something more into the bill than raw rates or numbers for these limits? Some sort of formula to apply so that increases to these limits happen automatically over time, rather than us waiting for them to become out of date before we lurch forward with updated amounts. It does not appear that that consideration was given and I seek clarification as to whether it was given or not. And, if not, why not? Why would we not aim to keep our legislation current instead of letting it go out of date?

I am particularly interested to know what triggered this updating of the limits to bring them to significantly higher levels? I do not believe any need for it was identified in TDR's annual reports. I do not believe there was a specific request from the board, but could it be clarified if there was a specific request from the board? I think that would be the most likely place for such a request to be made, so it is interesting if that was not the trigger.

The lack of modelling to explain how these amounts were arrived at is concerning. The fact that Treasury did not model it; the fact that there have been no risk assessments, especially on the unsecured loan amount - it is all concerning. I add my voice to others who have mentioned that.

The consultation period appears to be something of a joke. Seven days in total, with five working days. Not only that, on further questioning, it appears that surprisingly, or rather unsurprisingly, there were no submissions made in that five-day period. That might be because there was also no active promotion of the consultation period occurring. No active reach-out to anybody external to government. There was some consultation with board members and apparently with other parts of government. If I have misconstrued that in any way, it can be corrected during the Leader's summing up.

It is extraordinary to me because, in most instances, we expect departments that have legislation going out for consultation to advertise that with exposure drafts and the like. In fact, we heard, in relation to other bills, when the Department of Justice does this, they have an automatic list of 50-odd stakeholders whom they alert to the fact that there is a consultation period on a bill. So, I do not understand why you even bothered to have a consultation period of five working days with no promotion or outreach to invite input. I find it entirely unsurprising that there were no submissions as a result. That is concerning. I wonder whether that is compliant with policy for the department. I imagine it is not compliant with policy for government. Perhaps that could be clarified on both fronts.

The issue that the member for Murchison raised in the briefing, and has put on the record here, is significant. Are we rushing this through, with all these questions hanging over it, to deliver on an election commitment? What is behind that commitment to raise, I believe, the \$10 million new equity investment cap to \$35 million? Why was that election commitment made? What is behind it? Is there something lined up to be delivered under the new cap after we pass this legislation in the upcoming budget?

This is particularly relevant because we have recently had an election and there is a budget coming up for the government to deliver on funding its election promises. What sits behind those promises? How does that relate to funding elections and political donations? We do not have anywhere near enough transparency with political donations to make assessments as a parliament, or as Tasmanian citizens in the broader community, about election promises, the legislation that is rushed through to fund them, and who may or may not have donated to the major parties - in particular the party who has formed government. That is problematic. That is a nexus that should be as visible as possible. We should know about significant donations. We should have the opportunity to determine for ourselves - as citizens and here as a parliament - any connections between promises made during elections, funding delivered through budgets, and political donations made to major parties.

I am incredibly disturbed that this has been raised and brought to our attention - that there is potentially a connection there. The government has to have some good explanations and descriptions about any connections that can be drawn in relation to this bill, given all the opacity around those unanswered questions, about these limits and the lack of modelling.

That is my short contribution. I am somewhat disturbed.