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[excerpt]

MOTION

Premier's Address - Noting

[3.23 p.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Mr President, I rise to present my Address in reply to the Premier's State of the State speech 2025. I have appreciated listening to the contributions of other members. I acknowledge the final contribution made in this place by the Leader of this nature. I imagine that was quite a pleasant one to deliver. However, Mr President, I have found myself noting the common concerns that are being raised by a range of non-government members in this place, and my agreement with many of them.

Indeed, I rise to make my contribution with some degree of disquiet and considerable disappointment.

In a nutshell, the address delivered by the Premier in the other place on 4 March provides greater insight into the state of the Liberal government than it does into the state of Tasmania.

The paucity of imagination and constructive ideas presented is nothing less than alarming, Mr President.

So much so, I found myself going back to the standing orders to ascertain what the convention and purpose behind this annual parliamentary address was intended to be. The address is, in fact, to provide an opportunity for the review of the government's past actions and proposed policies and activities for the future. In short, it is intended to provide for the government's legislative and policy agenda for the parliamentary year ahead.

Yet, inexplicably the state of state address for 2025 is devoid of any mention of a proactive legislative agenda.

Instead, Mr President, we got a bizarre, limited, revisionist, and reductionist statement, one that seemed to revel in the prospect of upsetting people and that was, infact, unashamedly divisive in tone and content.

Yet, by default, in its revisionist approach it acknowledged that much of the current bluster is intended to distract from the fact that it is becoming harder for this government to hide the extent to which it is wasted the last 11 years in power.

The key announcements of privatisation and slashing the public service is couched with a revisionist and myopic attempt to blame others of 11 years ago and more.

Enough already, Mr President, of hiding behind decade-old decisions from former governments.

The first step when claiming a commitment to accountability is accepting responsibility for one's own actions and decisions, especially when they extend back beyond a decade.

Unfortunately, this government appears addicted to the lazy and base approach of blaming the parliamentary ghosts of historic parliaments passed.

Let's banish these political poltergeists and get on with examining the realities and the ramifications of this government's actions, or lack of, during the last 11 years of self-proclaimed mandates.

Let's see a demonstration of real accountability by accepting responsibility for one's own actions.

Mr President, I also consider the Premier's statement to not only be revisionist but also reductionist. Devoid of positive and progressive legislative agendas, it instead is a manifesto dedicated to dismantling.

The confected moral panic over red tape, I think is one example of distraction via dismantling.

In fact, it could be argued the announced efficiency units and red tape audits would suggest that maybe the position of coordinator-general is one of the non-essential public sector roles we should be looking at. That position has had years to identify and recommend unnecessary red tape for cutting. It is literally a core responsibility of the role Mr President, and, to be fair, it would appear that work in that role has progressed on this.

The *Tasmanian Red Tape Audit Report*, released last year, states that since 2014, 86 per cent of 198 red tape issues identified have been addressed. So we have a red tape audit report process underway, being acted on, yet the Treasurer has just announced another red tape audit.

Is it actually possible Mr President to create more red tape by duplicating your effort to tackle red tape, I wonder? Unnecessary duplication is a definition of red tape, as I understand it.

This brings me Mr President, to the bizarre announcement of putting parliamentary days aside to solely repeal legislation and regulation. It is fine to review and undertake a health check that our statutes are consistent with, and meet, contemporary standards and expectations. However, it is a simplistic and farcical notion that one new current piece of legislation or regulation equates to another existing piece of legislation to be repealed. Particularly, in the absence of any apparent maximum number of the ideal total number of statutes. If it was as simple as a numbers game, we would have a sense of what the ideal total should be. The fact is that the total number of statutes is clearly arbitrary and ludicrous. So too, then, is the notion that trading an existing regulation for a new one is in any way a responsible manner of managing our statute books.

And by the way, the government needs to be reminded that it is up to each Chamber to vote upon and agree on its sitting schedule. So, while the Premier may put forward a proposal to designate certain parliamentary sitting days, it will be the parliament which has the final say on that. Each Chamber is a master of its own destiny.

Not only do I consider unnecessary the sudden and frenzied moral panic about red tape, I must also take this opportunity to caution that the government must not attempt to treat this

parliament and its public scrutiny and accountability role as if it is red tape in itself.

We have already seen that in action, this week, with an attack on the parliament's appropriate scrutiny role. And it was incredibly disappointing to see both major parties so willing to undercut the responsibility of parliament to scrutinise government and government entities on behalf of the Tasmanian people. Such attempts to undermine the primacy of parliamentary involvement and oversight is an attack on our fundamental democratic principles.

Mr President, mentioning parliament brings me to an area where I believe this government has missed a significant opportunity.

The Premier and his government appear to have turned their back on opportunities presented by a potentially collaborative balance-of-power parliament. Comment has been made over the fact that we have seen a range of good policy initiatives be proposed by a number of non-government party and crossbench members, that have been debated and passed across the parliament in areas that will have a real impact on the day-to-day lives of many Tasmanians. In fact, we had an example just today in this place, Mr President.

But if we were to look in the state of the state address for more of these collaborative opportunities forthcoming, or indeed welcomed by the government, we would be left disappointed and empty handed.

The paucity of imagination in this address is breathtaking.

The government is in a rut.

It is moribund and devoid of constructive ideas.

But it is worse than that, in fact Mr President. This government has baulked at and fled from the opportunity of the moment back to its narrow ideological comfort zone of attacking the public sector and the services which vulnerable Tasmanians in particular and so many more in our community rely upon.

Back to the comfort zone of playing wedging and division skittles. Back to the comfort zone of short term and knee jerk privatisation of public assets.

In the context of tackling community disillusionment and fragmentation, the dangers of disinformation, the cost-of-living crisis, the climate justice challenge, the desperate need for financial structural reform, hiding in the comfort zone by a government is lazy.

What we are witnessing is a government taking the easy way of trying to remain in power without putting in the hard work to earn the right to be in power.

Yes, collaboration, reaching out across political differences to find common ground in the genuine public interest takes effort, determination and hard work. The opportunities of a balance of power parliament offer a platform where that effort may pay off. It may deliver good policy outcomes initiated by a range of sources and therefore secure long-term support and implementation longevity.

But instead, it appears the government is intent on bunkering down in its rule by division and fragmentation approach.

The government is going to rely upon distraction rather than collaboration.

It is going to desperately cling to blaming those who are mainly not even in this place anymore, rather than front up and take responsibility for wasting the last 11 years.

Mr President we heard much about a so-called pathway to surplus, which I will discuss in further detail later on, but what about a pathway which also develops and invests in our community capital and our biodiversity capital? When evaluating significant annual statements to parliament, such as the state of the state addresses, I certainly seek to assess whether and how it delivers on core principles, and I ask myself questions like the following:

- Does this present a pathway to strengthen our vital democracy, a more robust integrity and transparency to strengthen public confidence in our systems of good governance?
- And I ask myself, does this present a pathway to all in the community to feel included and welcome to walk in an inclusive and equitable manner?
- And also does this set out a pathway to structural fiscal reform, ensuring Tasmania is not only on a financial sustainable footing, but also an ecologically and socially sustainable footing in the immediate and long term?

Mr President, on my estimation, this state of the state address comes up far short on all three of those questions.

The current government has failed to seize this opportunity in time and has abandoned the space of constructive ideas.

In the absence of a government providing leadership and vision, the rest of the parliament now has an opportunity to reimagine a constructive platform laid out in an alternative state of the state address.

Such an address would seek to deliver a legislative agenda driven by those core principles of strengthening democracy, good governance, integrity and transparency and investing in a sustainable and cohesive community backed up by a strong, structurally reformed Tasmanian financial environment.

It is no surprise, Mr President I am going to always have an eye in this place to strengthening the integrity of democracy in this state.

An alternative state of the state address would have laid out a clear plan to turn back the tide that is currently eroding our precious democracy.

This week in this place we saw a non- government amendment bill to lower the disclosure threshold and require more frequent disclosures pass our Chamber and the parliament, which was very welcome. However, more needs to be done to ensure a rigorous, transparent disclosure framework.

Examples of that, that would be included in our pathway to a strengthened democracy, include further reforms to state political donation disclosure laws, including the introduction of expenditure caps for the Assembly elections and/or donations caps overall, further reforms to amount to the amount and distribution of public funding for the purposes of election campaigning and the disclosure administration system.

An introduction to bans on political donations from corporate property developers, gaming and tobacco interests, and perhaps others.

It would also have additional strengthening of our democratic legislative reforms that should include introducing truth in advertising laws to promote healthy democratic debate by prohibiting misleading or deceptive political advertising.

A review, Mr President, of our *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2002* with the aim of strengthening our whistleblower laws and protections which are shamefully deficient at the present time.

An introduction even of fixed four-year terms for the lower House to encourage certainty and longer-term policy development while minimising the advantage that incumbent governments have in choosing an election date for partisan purposes.

And also, one last to mention, moving to establish a joint parliamentary inquiry into a preferred model providing dedicated seats for the Tasmanian Aboriginal people in this parliament, something I hope to see one day for sure.

Ms O'Connor - A recommendation of a parliamentary inquiry too.

Ms WEBB - Indeed. That recommendation pointed to the need to have a particular inquiry focused on dedicated seats I believe, which we still have yet to see, probably close to a decade down the track.

Mr President, crucially, as another pillar of strengthening our democracy an alternative and constructive state of the state address would declare that attempts to undermine our planning system have been abandoned.

No ifs, buts, but to perhaps be reintroduced at a later date - just clearly abandoned.

Such a commitment would reiterate the community's right to be included in land use planning processes and our right to merits-based appeals.

It would commit to the state government getting out of the way of the local government and instead providing better support to that tier to do its job as planning authorities in accordance with the objectives laid out in our resource management planning system.

The Premier's state of the state speech last week asserts the government has listened.

He said that explicitly, 'the government has listened'.

Well, if that is the case, Mr President, we have to ask the obvious question: to whom?

If the government had genuinely listened to the community, to all local councils in this state and to the majority vote of this Chamber, then the Development Assessment Panels bill should be scrapped once and for all, for example. The fact that the government is attempting to progress a strikingly similar bill to that which was rejected by this place in November last year is proof positive that it has absolutely no intention of listening to the Tasmanian people, nor those who represent them in the other level of government.

Not only is the government not listening, it is determined to progress measures that block the Tasmanian people from planning processes which they have a fundamental democratic right to participate in, Mr President.

Asserting that you are listening while at the same time trashing the opportunity for Tasmanians to have a say in shaping their communities through the planning systems -

Quorum formed.

Ms WEBB - As I was saying, asserting that you are listening while at the same time trashing the opportunity for Tasmanians to have a say in shaping their communities through the planning system only proves that you are listening to and prioritizing in fact special interests, vested interests and not the Tasmanian people.

Mr President, I move on to how we might better be delivering on the principles of robust integrity and transparency, an area of perpetual interest to me and one I will unfailingly champion in this place.

In a small, connected state like ours, we are highly vulnerable to situations of grey corruption in our decision-making and governance.

There is nothing as overt as envelopes of cash passed under a table. Rather, it is often that more elusive relational influence brought to bear which is all-too-readily normalised and then entrenched.

Happily, there are clear mechanisms available to us to guard against the creep of grey corruption and relational influence in this state. In the interests of delivering good governance and public confidence, we should be more actively pursuing them.

A reimagined, constructive state of the state address would detail a pathway to investing in such measures, and they would include:

- locking in through legislation the new lobbyist register and code of conduct as recommended by the Tasmanian Integrity Commission
- a commitment to tackling the scourge of election pork-barrelling by adopting the Integrity Commission's recommendations on reforms to grants administration for funding commitments,
- a plan to deliver on the promise for an updated review of the Integrity Commission to ensure it is fit for purpose and can meet public expectations. Starting with the Cox recommendations would be a good start, Mr President.

We have a set of recommendations there from a review from now nine years ago, which are waiting to be implemented and should be, as a matter of urgency.

Similarly, a comprehensive state of the state address would positively acknowledge the current RTI review underway and pledge to support and implement any findings and recommendations it may deliver.

We could see a commitment by government to respect and act upon this Chamber's call, made twice now, for the improvement of disclosure of ministerial diaries, in terms of content and time frames.

And further, an alternative state of the state address would introduce a commitment to establish an independent police oversight body to ensure we move away from police investigating their own.

Such a long-overdue reform would both protect police officers from the perception of protecting their own, as well as boosting public confidence, particularly in light of scandals such as former officer Paul Reynolds, which has taken its toll on public confidence in our police force.

And final couple of aspirational things that I want to see in a positive state of the state address from government in terms of commitments to integrity, transparency and good governance, would be these, Mr President:

- a commitment to trialling the release of Cabinet documents after 30 days, as they do in New Zealand. That is good transparency right there.
- An announcement that, from now on, each piece of government legislation would have an accompanying regulatory statement released that details the need for the bill, the costs and benefits of options considered, the consultation undertaken in its development, how the application of a gender lens and human rights lens was undertaken, and a roll-out plan.

Such a tool would promote transparency, accountability and evidence-based policy making for government bills. It would facilitate the functioning of this parliament in passing legislation, and it is worth noting a similar mechanism, a statement of public interest, has been introduced into the New South Wales parliament since 2022.

Moving on to investing in an inclusive and resilient community.

A key responsibility of government is to ensure that every Tasmanian feels and knows they matter - not just those who wear high vis.

A compassionate and people-prioritising state of the state address would detail and invest in core services of health, education and housing, with a strategic future focus that delivers an improving trajectory on outcomes that can be demonstrated and shown for our people. Not what we see now, which is the consistent and concerning downward trajectory that we see in each of those areas.

It is not just about counting widgets, Mr President, and claiming annual record spending on things. It is about shifting outcomes for our community - something this government has consistently failed to do over the last 11 years.

We see the wellbeing and cohesion of our community undermined by the constant reality of lack of access to these absolutely basic necessities of life, and now put further at risk by threatened cuts and public sector job losses. After 11 years of this government in charge of these fundamental pillars of government services for the Tasmanian community, we have made no enduring improvements in outcomes, and on many measures, we have plummeted to worse and worse.

Mr President, I would also touch on other aspects of an inclusive and resilient community that we never hear from this government, but which I believe should belong in any state of the

state address that genuinely values our Tasmanian community.

Where is the plan to prioritise and progress the pathway to truth-telling and treaty? This has languished for far too long, Mr President. We need a sense of urgency and prioritisation from government that is currently simply not there.

It is inexcusable for the government to be stalling on this front. Shameful, in fact, especially given our utter failure in meaningful progress on the Close the Gap measures.

New data out just recently continuing to demonstrate that there is no question in my mind, Mr President, that the portfolio responsibility for Aboriginal Affairs rightly belongs with the Premier, as a matter of leadership and an indication of genuine commitment from any government. This Premier is shirking this responsibility, which should rightly sit on his shoulders.

I would also mention here the need to set a time frame for what I have called for over many years in this place - a Tasmanian human rights act, as called for twice by the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute and advocated for by many in our civil society and consistently by me in this place.

Mr President, so much important work to be done that has been neglected by this tired, lacklustre government so myopically focused on retaining power, yet with so little interest in governing.

Nothing highlights this so much as this government's neglect of important oversight institutions and entities that we rely on to ensure the powers of the state are exercised with accountability.

Where is the plan to address and implement the recommendations of the Tasmanian National Preventive Mechanism (TNPM) implementation project report called *Preventing Torture and Ill-Treatment in Tasmania*? And that was from November 2023.

There was a subsequent update report in 2024 that presented us with a strategy and budget parameters to provide for progressive implementation of the TNPM to ensure that it is fully operational by the 2025-26 financial year.

It is nothing less, Mr President, than cruelly cynical for this government, in its last budget, to have funded only the position of the TNPM but provided none of the requested funding for this position to do its actual legislated work. The inspection of places of detention to ensure torture and ill treatment are not occurring. So Mr President, we have a TNPM on paper, but entirely unable to operate in practice. It is cruel, it is cynical, and it is wrong.

We see a similar neglect in relation to other oversight functions and entities in our state, particularly those which provide an architecture to protect human rights, such as the independent Office of the Custodial Inspector, which the government has also placed in the invidious position of having to warn that it is in danger of not being able to comply with its statutory requirements due to being starved of adequate resourcing.

It is unacceptable and negligent for government to allow this to happen and then to turn a blind eye and allow it to drag on and on and on.

Mr President, an inclusive and resilient community must also be a sustainable community that plans and equips itself to manage and mitigate environmental and community challenges it faces now and into the future.

To that end, Mr President, I maintain we need to reinstate an explicit minister for Climate Change, and a commitment to the immediate development of a comprehensive climate justice plan for our state.

And while we are talking about climate change, where was the update in this Premier's address on the implementation of the state *Climate Change Action Plan 2023-25*? This is particularly pertinent as the current plan expires this year, in 2025, with a further five-year plan to be developed, apparently, this year.

An alternative and in-touch state of the state address would have detailed that planned process and provided the community and stakeholders with both incentives to engage with that process as well as provide a time frame as to when to expect its commencement.

Additionally, an in-touch and genuinely future-proofing state of the state address would provide an update on the implementation of the 16 recommendations contained in the much-awaited 2024 State of the Environment Report that we had delivered last year.

Mr President, one thing a state of the state address should do is build trust in government.

Tasmanians should be able to hear commitments made by their state government and trust that those commitments are being made in good faith and will be delivered.

Sadly, as the years pass with this state Liberal government, Tasmanians have fewer and fewer reasons to believe what is promised and committed to.

This is a government that makes promises it does not keep, and the Tasmanian people are rightly becoming frustrated and jaded by this failure of integrity and authenticity.

Mr President, examples of this can be as straightforward as the commitment made during the 2024 election just last year to introduce a 5 per cent levy on short-stay accommodation, be hypothecated, I believe, into funding for social and affordable housing initiative. Which has, as far as I am aware, not been progressed. Seems like perhaps influential voices behind closed doors have been making themselves heard on that one, but not to worry Mr President, I am sure it was helpful to shore up a few votes as an election promise. So Job done there. No need to actually deliver.

Mr President, I will briefly mention two significant examples of this failure of honesty and integrity from the Rockliff government - one that is very close to my heart and that of thousands of Tasmanians and one of particular importance to my electorate.

Mr President, we cannot speak of broken promises and preferential treatment of special interests in this state without mentioning the Rockliff government's shameful abandonment mid-implementation of a mandatory pokies card.

Gold standard consumer protection and harm minimisation ditched at the behest of their donors and friends in the poker machine industry. In relation to this dishonourable government backflip, I noted comments made in an editorial in *The Advocate* newspaper on the 21 November 2024, which were particularly on point, I think. That editorial said this, and I quote:

Shifty and spineless can be added to incompetent as epithets for Tasmania's Liberal government and the first two can equally be applied to the Labor opposition. The major parties have sold out to the pokies lobby, while turning their back on those in need. It is a disgraceful outcome when so much was promised.

End of quote. Mr President, I could not have said it better myself.

After the evidence-based expert-advised policy of a mandatory pokies card was announced by then finance minister, Michael Ferguson, in late 2022, implementation of that card was progressing steadily. The Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission were diligently working through the design and technological matters to be addressed in the introduction of the card. It is a matter of public record that the poker machine industry, when initially invited to provide private input into the early stages of the design process, completely ignored the communications and consultation paper of the Liquor and Gaming Commission; did not bother to respond Mr President, presumably, because they knew that the best avenue to advance their vested interests on this matter and to kill the card was their well-trodden path of backroom threats and promises.

The early election called in 2024 provided the perfect setting to deploy their significant influence on both major parties. Certainly, something they have done to great effect in previous elections, most reprehensibly in 2018. Lo and behold, Mr President, at that 2024 election, we saw the Liberals begin to walk back from their promise of a pokies card. The shameful retreat was confirmed in its entirety later in the year, once the champion of the card, Michael Ferguson, was removed from cabinet. Many thousands of Tasmanians, a great many of them confirmed Liberal voters, who had been rightly proud and admiring of the announcement to introduce the nation leading pokies card reform were then only to be horrifically betrayed by the government dancing to the tune of this tainted industry - an industry that has not only benefited for decades from policy and regulatory capture of successive Labor and Liberal governments, but most recently, after the 2021 gaming act amendments brought in a new individual venue licensing model, an industry that has seen venue-retained profits rise astronomically.

On average, I believe, it is in the vicinity of a 59 per cent increase in retained profit from poker machines in those venues. Michael Ferguson confirmed in a piece in the *Mercury* newspaper on the 1 November 2024, that he was aware of a venue, in the time that he was still the relevant minister, that had seen an increase in retained revenue from poker machines of \$73,000 in a single month. An increase of that amount in a single month. Yet, Mr President, this industry, gifted a massive increase in pokies' revenue, of which around 50 per cent - we should remind ourselves 50 per cent comes from Tasmanians suffering an addiction - then executed a hit job on the nation-leading consumer protection and harm reduction measures.

It is telling, I think, to note what else Michael Ferguson wrote in that Talking Point piece in the *Mercury* on the 1 November last year and I quote this:

With so much extra profit being made right now thanks to Liberal reforms, there is room for genuine harm reduction if we care for the public interest. We should be alert to the sectional interests trying to undermine Tasmania's nation-leading approach, informed by facts, progressing with plenty of consultation, unanimously supported in parliament. The public interest demands it of us all.

End of quote. Public interest, Mr President, may demand it, but tragically when it comes

to poker machines, it is quite the opposite of public interest that is being put first by the Rockliff government and shame on them for it. And shame on the opposition who are even more of an industry lapdog bleating industry propaganda, even more full throated forcefully and failing to put the interests of the Tasmanian community first.

The other significant example I wanted to touch on when it comes to the failure in honesty and integrity from the Rockliff government is a very local one from the electorate of Nelson. The matter of the sale or disposal of land at the Sandy Bay campus originally gifted to the university.

Mr President, I appreciate this is a topic relating to an upcoming bill in this place, so I will be mindful of not going into too much detail or pre-empting the specifics of that debate but it is certainly a current live example of a promise made by this government and then broken within a matter of months.

During the state election of March 2024, in a bare-faced pre-emptive effort to stem the anticipated bleeding of Liberal votes in the Sandy Bay area, the Liberals promised to amend the *University of Tasmania Act 1992* to require any sale or disposal of UTAS gifted land to be approved by parliament.

Later then, in 2024, the state Liberal government tabled its *University of Tasmania (Protection of Land) Bill 2024* to give effect to that promise. So far so good, Mr President. The government was on track to deliver on the promise made during the election.

However, the government subsequently moved amendments to their own bill during the Assembly debate in November last year. These amendments provided for UTAS-owned land above Churchill Avenue to be rezoned to inner residential to allow, and preparation for, UTAS to sell or lease that land for development.

This is rightly regarded by many in the community, particularly the Sandy Bay community, as an utter betrayal of the election promises made.

Having trumpeted during the election time about being the saviours of the Sandy Bay campus, the Liberal government has turned around six months later and sought to pave the way for the campus to be carved up without any public consultation, with scant information or detail provided, and bundled hastily into the very bill that was supposed to deliver an appropriately robust parliamentary scrutiny mechanism for any such proposal.

So much for the promise, Mr President. It was never anything but a sham, it would seem.

But again, it no doubt served its purpose for the Liberal Party at the time of the election.

Perhaps it kept just enough voters in the party tent to deliver that second Clark seat instead of going to a competitive independent who genuinely was committed to preserving and protecting the gifted Sandy Bay campus site.

Mr President, these examples are not just failures of honesty from the Rockliff government in delivering on promises made, they also reek of backroom influence, of vested interests and raise serious questions of integrity and transparency.

Tasmanians deserve so much better when it comes to political leadership. The deception and broken promises of the Rockliff government are simply a disgrace.

Mr President, we are not going into the details as a budget speech would. It would not be unusual for a state of the state address to detail overarching reforms to our fiscal management regimen. It is a fair question when new policies are announced to ask how and when will they be paid for. However, a range of community stakeholders and MPs have rightly expressed frustration that this government keeps reverting to type when it comes to the tired reliance on short-term funding options dressed up as some form of comprehensive mature financial reform.

Inevitably, these short-term knee-jerk fundraising announcements pit sectors of the community against each other in a combative and divisive manner.

Rather than gut the hard working Tasmanian public service providing the community services and regulatory compliance that keeps us rowing in the same direction, or relying on the old failed cliché of robbing Peter to pay Paul by selling off state assets for one-off and short-term cash boosts, an alternative state of the state address would change direction.

It would acknowledge the imperative to make up for the last 11 years wasted by this government, which sought to avoid doing the necessary hard work on integrated, comprehensive and structural fiscal reform.

A crucial first step would be a commitment to establishing the long overdue independent expert panel commissioned by parliament to undertake a review of the current state taxation and revenue settings to ensure they are as robust as possible, with appropriate levers to drive necessary sustainability reforms, while improving our fiscal fairness and efficiency.

This proposal is one that I, and others, have raised regularly for many years now. Without undertaking such necessary structural reform of our financial system, successive governments are dooming Tasmania to continue going around in circles and bouncing between the perennial debate regarding expenditure versus revenue.

Mr President, to touch upon the predictable re-emergence of the privatisation agenda, I will not spend too long on this matter as it has been discussed in detail by others here and in the other place. However, I wish to emphasise that this current minority government does not have a so-called mandate for stripping public assets.

Not only is it yet another example of lazy reversion to ideological agendas, it could prove counterproductive to the stated aim of contributing to a future-proofed Tasmania.

I do note Mr President, that not only does the government not have a mandate through an election for these sorts of endeavours, they are also likely to prioritise ones that don't even have to come through this place to get a mandate from a majority in both Chambers, and that is disgraceful.

I think we are going to be losing government entities without them even coming through here for consideration because not all the ones that are likely on the list require changes to legislation to be dispensed with.

I note the Premier's speech asserts the GBEs and state-owned companies, minus Hydro Tasmania, of course, are on the table as prospective sale items, apparently to instigate a public conversation about this. However, it is currently devoid of assessment criteria to inform either the community or the nominated GBE assessor, Mr Saul Eslake. Apparently, such sale

assessment criteria may be forthcoming, hopefully by the end of this week, but the proof will be in the pudding once we see it, Mr President. And it is unclear as to how much all the government's budget repair eggs are in this one basket of asset sales.

What is the Plan B if the GBE sales assessment is not as positive as the government hopes?

Mr President, similarly, we have heard much about the undefined 'right size' of the public service as the other so-called plank of the pathway to surplus.

What a nonsensical and half-baked statement that is.

'Right size' for whom and to deliver what?

Tasmanians can be excused for responding somewhat cynically to this terminology 'right size' when it is given without any additional context. Especially, when there is also no mention of any intention to implement the 27 recommendations and road map for reform provided by the independent review of the Tasmanian State Service released in 2021, undertaken by the independent reviewer Dr Ian Watt AC.

Imagine, Mr President, if the same question was asked regarding the 'right size' of a taxpayer-funded chocolate fountain or, indeed, for the 'right size' stadium in the right location.

Imagine if the recurrent rate of non-transparent corporate welfare doled out by this government was placed under the same microscope as our public service and our publicly owned state companies and GBEs are proposed to be. How much money could we save there?

Imagine if an alternative state of the state address detailed a plan which provided equivalent focus on the broad range of Tasmanian business sectors beyond solely that of construction. Perhaps a plan specifically focused on investing in and supporting sectors and industries which are female dominated.

There is a growing frustration with this government's myopic favouring of the blokey, 'We support you if you are wearing high-vis vest' approach.

We have been told for years now that we have to keep building our way out of a crisis or into financial surpluses, but while that is, no doubt, an essential part of the puzzle Mr President, it is by no means the whole kit and caboodle, and that message Mr President, is wearing very thin.

I warned during COVID that the over-reliance on building our way out of the pandemic, as promoted by the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council (PESRAC) was fundamentally flawed and the fact that successive Liberal governments have become lazily addicted to that mantra is also indicative of the fact that PESRAC has failed in its strategy to put us back on a sustainable financial footing.

The final PESRAC report was delivered on 16 March 2021, almost exactly four years ago, yet, apparently, we are still having to build our way out of the pandemic and build our way back to a surplus, but I am not sure if the reality of that is going to come to fruition in the way the government hopes.

Before I move on, it is also worth noting that a key element of business confidence is a guaranteed, transparent, and level playing field.

Confidence that support is not dependent on who you may know in government or whose ear you may be able to get hold of during an election pork-barrelling period.

A lack of clarity and transparency over why and how certain funding and assistance decisions are made for those in the private sector can be as detrimental to business confidence as red tape considerations, perhaps.

If the government was genuine about carving out and building a robust and sustainable pathway to surplus, it would roll up its sleeves and get on with the hard work to deliver structural fiscal reform and in a manner that seeks to address current structural imbalances, such as gender, and establishing a firm, level playing field which underpins all work in the private sector.

Mr President, people look for leadership in the state of the state address. Unfortunately, when I listened for leadership in this year's effort from the Premier, I heard instead legitimisation of divisive language and rhetoric being used to pit people against each other.

We have seen a propensity for this government to pick fights, such as the one they have recently picked with a whole tier of local government over planning.

This government seeks to polarise, to divide, and sow seeds of confusion and distrust.

I am concerned about a rigid ill-fitting binary straitjacket this government appears to be trying to squeeze our Tasmanian community into.

For example, there are now essential workers versus non-essential workers - a false binary, Mr President.

Apparently, if you are not a builder you are a blocker. Again, a false binary, Mr President, and a rude one at that.

Not only is this trite, it reinforces an 'us versus them' mentality amongst and between Tasmanians.

It demands people are either with the government or against it.

It is unnecessary and destructive.

It indicates a government which has abandoned any pretence of governing for all. There is an in-crowd with this government and those who are excluded.

And if you are one of the excluded, you will be labelled with some juvenile, heckling name by those who are supposed to represent and lead you.

Mr President, this does not represent the Tasmanian community, which is certainly not binary in this way, but rather diverse in its views, values, priorities, and should be celebrated as such, not berated by their Premier and political leaders to score cheap political points on social media.

Mr President, I firmly believe that the vast majority of Tasmanians want to see the government hit pause on this petty political attitude as a matter of urgency.

Authentic political leadership should seek to bring people together, to emphasise common goals and values, while respecting differences and the need to work collaboratively to draw people in and forward together. That said, I urge the Premier and other government members to refocus on those principles of governing for all Tasmanians and demonstrating inclusive leadership for our state.

Mr President, in summary, I think this state of the state address is actually an SOS.

It is indicative of a government that has withdrawn into itself, abandoning the principles of an all-encompassing leadership for a narrow, ideologically driven fortress, where it is content to merely shout at its own, at the already converted.

A state of the state address is an opportunity for the government of the day to deliver a plan detailing a pathway to a stronger and healthier community. A pathway to bring people together and a pathway to investing in a broad range of sectors, initiatives, and, importantly, ideas.

Devoid of a legislative and constructive policy agenda, imagination, or ideas, this Premier's speech risks becoming a pathway not to surplus but to a dead end. A pathway to nowhere. To stagnation, division, and missed opportunities.

Mr President, there is little interest demonstrated in the Premier's speech in the day-to-day reality experienced by the broader Tasmanian community. And that is a deeply worrying takeaway from the Premier's speech.

This 2025 SOS delivered by the Premier exposes a serious need for a government reset, one that draws upon the strengths and opportunities of the current balance of power parliament to generate constructive, considered, evidence-based public policy solutions for our state.

A parliament that may assist and share the load in undertaking the necessary hard work of structural reform of the state's finances. Let's face it, neither of the two major parties are likely, in the near future, to achieve the numbers in parliament or the political capital needed to successfully embark on a solo effort to deliver the significant financial structural reform needed in this state.

What is needed is the courage to acknowledge this, the vision to propose a way forward to deliver long-term, enduring reform which can be undertaken in a collaborative way that shares the political risks and rewards.

In noting this year's state of the state address, I sadly lament how far it falls short in providing the leadership and vision that Tasmanians need and deserve.

*** *ends* ***