**Legislative Council**

**Hansard**

**Tuesday 24 November 2026**

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

*[excerpt]*

## MOTION

### Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG) Herbarium Cuts

[11.46 a.m.]

**Ms WEBB** (Nelson) - Thank you, Mr President. I rise to speak to the motion in my name, No. 15 on the Notice Paper, calling for a reversal of planned cuts and a commitment to secure long-term funding for our much-loved and valued Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery

**Ms WEBB** (Nelson) - Mr President, I move -

That the Legislative Council:

(1) Notes with concern the Tasmanian government's intention to cut resourcing and staffing of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG) which holds internationally significant natural history collections, including vital educational, interpretative, promotional and senior curatorial roles;

(2) Acknowledges the considerable alarm and disbelief expressed by many in the Tasmanian scientific, cultural history and broader communities in response to the news of the threatened government funding cuts;

(3) Notes the range of urgent representations from local, interstate and international university-based and other professional research institutions expressing significant alarm over the proposed cuts and the impacts they will have on established research projects underway, the health and viability of the TMAG collections, current and future research and capacity, and the reputational damage to Tasmania;

(4) Acknowledges TMAG's collections management is not a passive administrative task but instead requires skilled and continual high-level research, classification and maintenance;

(5) Notes the government's intended staffing and resourcing cuts risks jeopardising the integrity of the TMAG collections and public assets, and also endangers:

(a) The collections' security and conservation due to inadequate oversight accelerating the physical degradation of vulnerable, unique and irreplaceable type specimens;

(b) Current and future research throughput as the absence of dedicated research risks collection stagnation, reduced active loans and innovation collaboration, exchanges, and cross-regional biosecurity support;

(c) Capacity to meet statutory obligations as set out in section 5 'Institutional objectives' of the *Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery Act 2017*;

(d) Tasmania's access to vital skills, knowledge and expertise.

Further, that the Legislative Council notes the motion passed at the Friends of TMAG public meeting of 8 October, and calls on the government to:

(6) Immediately reverse the intended job cuts at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery;

(7) Retain the skilled staff who care for and interpret Tasmania's TMAG state collections;

(8) Commit to providing TMAG with the secure, long-term funding needed to fulfil its public, cultural, scientific and legal responsibilities; and

(9) Reflect the long-term funding commitment in the 2027-28 State Budget and forward Estimates.

Many would be familiar with the quote attributed to Winston Churchill when he was asked to cut funding for the arts in order to support the war effort in World War II. As the story goes, Churchill's response was -

> Then what would we be fighting for?

While it's a pithy illustration of arts and the creative industry being central to a nation's identity and social soul, historians have not been able to find written evidence that Churchill did actually pose that question. However, we do have the corroborated remarks Churchill made in a speech to the Royal Academy on the 30 April 1938 -

> The arts are essential to any complete national life. The state owes it to itself to sustain and encourage them.

The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, affectionately referred to as TMAG, is the second-oldest museum in the nation and since its inception in 1848 has been the custodian of our cultural, social and scientific heritage and stories.

TMAG is further unique in that, as Peter Boyer pointed out in a September opinion piece, it holds Tasmania's historic, scientific and art collections integrated in one place, unlike other states.

TMAG's art and cultural and natural heritage and scientific collections consist of more than one million items, including a library of 150,000 rare books, all of which provide a wondrous foundation underpinning contemporary creative research and scientific inspiration.

Clearly, over the last approximately 180 years, TMAG has been pivotal to Tasmania's cultural life and would surely have met with Churchill's approval.

This recognition of TMAG's unique role is also reflected in the following statement. Let's listen to it carefully:

> Speaker, in my inaugural speech in this place more than a few years ago, I said how proud I was to be a shadow minister for the Arts.
>
> I said then that investment in by government and business in the arts is not subsidising artistic expression.
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> It is an investment in community development, in diversity, creativity and cultural identity.
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> I spoke of my passionate belief that the arts empower communities.
>
> I'm as dedicated today as I was then.
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> This government has a strong record of investments in the arts.
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> We are proud of our support for the TSO, for TMAG, and for QV-MAG, along with theatres across the state.

Members here may recognise that statement which was delivered by the Premier on the 3 March this year in his annual State of the State address. Investment in the arts, investing in community development, diversity and creativity, empowerment of communities and support for the TSO, TMAG and QV-MAG. How quickly things change.

One is now at risk of being drowned out by a stadium, while the others face withdrawal of any such investment and are instead facing savage and debilitating resourcing cuts by this very government, under this very Premier.

So how do we get from that glowing statement of 3 March to here and now? Members may recall that barely five months after the Premier's State of the State address, concerns were raised by the public sector union that 30 per cent of staff, nearly one third of employees, were to be cut. The *Mercury* reported on 31 August that a government spokesperson, and I quote,

> Rejected the union's claims as false

Yet, barely three weeks later, on the 23 September, news broke that Dr Gintaras Kantvilas's position as head of the Tasmanian Herbarium was to be axed. There were further concerns of a 5 per cent reduction of herbarium staff reducing the complement from eight to four. Axing such a specialised role and its incumbent with 40 years' experience and who was also the recipient of the Premier's annual STEM award was incomprehensible, but it got worse. News then broke that further TMAG staff were to be cut, with seven critical roles to go, including that of senior curator of vertebrates and palaeontology, and senior curator of invertebrates - apparently the remaining curator of zoology role was to take on all of these curatorial roles, despite them being fundamentally different scientific disciplines. Other key positions such as librarians, exhibition officers, graphic designers and photographers are also under threat. The outrage, disbelief and devastation was felt immediately throughout the creative, scientific and broader Tasmanian community. The fallout continues to this day.

Last month, during a debate in the other place, the minister stated that he's glad TMAG is and I quote,

> Front and centre.

End of quote, in the public debate, stating, and I quote again,

> That's where it belongs, and that's where it should be.

End of quote. Well, that is quite extraordinary. What an extraordinary, tone deaf and patronising thing to say. The reason TMAG has suddenly shot into the public spotlight in such a way here, also nationally, also internationally, is because this government's ill-conceived, detrimental and devastating cuts are on the table. This is not something for the responsible minister to be proud of. What doesn't this government get? The contextual reason for TMAG to be front and centre in the current public debate is because thousands of Tasmanians, not to mention others across our nation, not to mention others across the globe, are angry, shocked and disbelieving at these decisions being made. The staff who are at risk of losing their jobs and seeing invaluable research and projects shudder to a sudden halt are not thinking 'it's wonderful' that they are the reason for TMAG suddenly being thrust into the spotlight of public debate. It is borderline cruel to issue such platitudes from the responsible minister. However, the minister wants TMAG to be front and centre. Well, front and centre he got, not just across Tasmania but across the nation and globally.

I'm aware that MPs here, including this Chamber, have received messages from numerous professional, research and other stakeholder entities such as museums and universities based all across our globe, from Trieste, Upsala, Oslo, Gdansk, Madrid, Barcelona, Portugal, Prague, Ottawa, Arizona, Mexico, Brazil, Turkey, and on and on, all expressing their disbelief and calling for an urgent reconsideration. I'm going to place on the public record just two extracts from some of those compelling, evidence-based emails that we have been receiving from international academic and scientist communities.

Firstly, from Dr Jan Vondrák of the Herbarium at the Academy of Sciences in the Czech Republic. This is what Dr Vondrák said,

> These measures pose a serious threat to scientific infrastructure of long-term importance, not only to Tasmania itself, but also to the international research community. Particularly alarming is the intention to eliminate the position of Tasmania's only lichenologist, Dr Gintaras Kantvilas. His work has made a fundamental contribution to our understanding of southern hemisphere's biodiversity and is widely utilised by European institutions as well. Equally serious is the loss of expertise in bryology, a field essential for the study of non-vascular plants. Together with fungi, these organisms constitute more than half of Tasmania's biodiversity. The HO Herbarium is an internationally respected centre for taxonomic research. Weakening it will lead to the disruption of long-term scientific projects, compromise the management of collections, and reduce the availability of data crucial for ecology, nature conservation, and global climate change monitoring.

Secondly, I will quote from a letter co-signed by 23 international scientists from the International Association for Lichenology who warned us this, Mr President:

> Natural History collections require qualified leadership and specialist knowledge. Once this expertise is lost, it is extremely difficult and costly to rebuild. This has now been recognised in many places in the world who are attempting to rebuild taxonomic expertise to tackle the challenges of global biodiversity loss and climate change. It is therefore surprising to see that Tasmania has chosen to take the opposite path. The IAL, therefore, respectfully urges the Tasmanian Government to reconsider these changes, retain the herbarium specialist positions and leadership, and consult meaningfully with its scientists and the wider scientific community before proceeding with these severe and irreversible cuts.

Mr President, there were many more international statements of support for TMAG and calls for these disastrous cuts to be halted. Indeed, they are still arriving in my inbox and no doubt others. We could be here all day, if we wished, to highlight the range of examples cited of TMAG's work across a whole range of fields. That is an indication of the esteem in which it is held by its global counterparts.

But Mr President, to come back locally, the shock and disbelief was felt viscerally across the community here in Tasmania. Tasmanians did not need to be urged by the responsible minister to keep TMAG front and centre, that is for sure. Additional to the flood of horrified, outraged, and distressed emails sent to MPs, hundreds of Tasmanians turned up to be counted at the Friends of TMAG public meeting held during lunchtime on 8 October. Speakers included Rodney Gibbins, inaugural chair of the TMAG Aboriginal consultation group. In his speech on that day, Mr Gibbins stated the following

> The representation of Palawa in TMAG is now characterised by respect and engagement. Developing a strong consultative relationship with the Palawa community has led to an equal and respectful partnership leading the way across government and its institutions. TMAG, with Palawa, have achieved some significant outcomes over the years, which included return of human remains and petroglyphs removed from Palawa cultural sites. These outcomes mattered because strong leadership and professional integrity with actions matter. TMAG provided the tenets for these to occur. That's something that the whole of government could learn.

Again, at the same meeting, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the honourable Alan Blow AO KC, warned us this, Mr President:

> Successive governments have reduced funding for the TMAG over decades, but the past cuts have never threatened its ability to function as a state museum and a state art gallery. If the recent announced cuts go ahead, the proper functioning of the institution will become impossible for the first time. Special exhibitions will become impossible, as will the rejuvenation of permanent exhibitions. Without half of its staff, only half of the herbariums work will get done.

Another speaker at that public rally, Mr President, Dr Sally Bryant AM, was blunt:

> Our natural collections are not objects sitting in dusty drawers, they are reference libraries and type specimens with documentation and curation that must keep pace with changing times. New species are being added all the

> time, especially during TMAG discovery expeditions, demonstrating there is so much more to learn about Tasmania's natural environment. Maintaining and interpreting these collections requires highly skilled, academically trained professionals. Real people with experience and dedication.

She also said:

> There is no extravagance in these roles or institutions. They already depend heavily on volunteers and friends of groups to help them keep buoyant. Volunteers contribute invaluable time and expertise in ensuring TMAG continues to be a state institution of global importance. When you cut staff to save money you lose more than people and the services they offer; you lose access, and the heart and soul of an organisation is something that goes far beyond a budget line.

'The heart and soul;' these are statements from professionals, the experts in their respective fields, and we should listen to them.

Of course, recently we've seen MONA entrepreneur David Walsh enter the fray with his letter published in the *Mercury* on 16 November. Mr Walsh has always acknowledged the inspirational role TMAG has played in his life and fortunes. He put it so succinctly, and as a first-hand testimony, it's worth placing on the public record here. Mr Walsh's letter reads,

> The Australia Institute economist Richard Denniss said, 'We're one of the richest countries in the world - we can do anything we want. But we can't do everything we want.' Does that mean if we want a football stadium, we can't have a properly funded museum? If that's the case, allow me to reconsider my neutrality towards the football stadium.
>
> I want TMAG properly funded. I want the life-changing childhood experiences I had as a kid at TMAG to be available to all Tasmanians forever. I put stuff on Mona's wall because TMAG put stuff in my heart.

**Ms O'Connor** - Hear, hear.

**Ms WEBB** - When next someone frets about the cost of maintaining TMAG, it is worthwhile reminding them that without the investment into TMAG years ago, a little boy may not have been inspired to go on to create his own astounding and complementary private museum just up the river. TMAG did contribute towards that huge private investment, which our state still benefits from.

We could go on reading out statements of support; however, I'm conscious other members are likely to want to speak to this as well. And, of course, there is the current petition that will be tabled in the other place, which had garnered well over 7000 signatures when I last checked. But before I move on, I wish to mention the open letter issued by Friends of TMAG, dated 17 November. This letter details TMAG has a 'statutory obligation to care for approximately one million objects of inestimable value.' Many of which are extremely fragile and require expert care and maintenance. The letter also states,

> ... TMAG has been recognised as a significant driver for the local and state economy. It has an outstanding reputation which draws visitors and researchers and adds considerably to Tasmania's reputation. TMAG has educated generations of Tasmanians and its collections and the knowledge of its science curators underpin much of Tasmania's conservation, agricultural and biosecurity legislation.

And further,

> The cuts of the scientists will damage Tasmania's reputation, its management of natural and rural environments and its agricultural economy. The cuts to exhibitions staff will significantly compromise its ability to present outstanding exhibitions and public programs, which in turn will damage its leadership role in Tasmania [sic] cultural tourism.

Over 100 eminent people signed that letter calling on the government to reconsider the threatened job cuts which risk and, 'Unintended deleterious consequences on multiple areas of the Tasmanian economy.' The signatories include a former state Liberal minister for the Arts, a former Labor premier and minister for the Arts and former governor Barbara Baker AC. Other signatories include local and international academics, local business operators, artists, actors, historians, scientists and ecologists.

Mr President, I wish to seek leave to table a copy of that open letter of 17 November to ensure that it forms part of the public record.

**Leave granted.**

**Ms WEBB** - As the open letter emphasises, TMAG is not just a storage facility housing static collections. Common themes run through the wide array of representations received by us and direct conversations that we've held, attesting to the crucial role contributing to our contemporary scientific, cultural, research, educative and creative endeavours. TMAG is a living and evolving institution making current and contemporary discoveries, as much as it is the official caretaker of cultural and natural heritage. A local scientist sent me correspondence in which she stated:

> The herbarium is far more than a repository of specimens. It's also the material evidence of what we know about Tasmania's flora and the foundation upon which new knowledge is built. This asset is our greatest opportunity. It is not hyperbole to say that understanding the past and present of Tasmania's natural resources is fundamental to using them wisely in the future.

It is the current critical research being undertaken with international partners and networks. It's the ongoing expression of creativity and cultural identity. TMAG is a time traveller's portal; a guardian of our island's heritage, unique stories, and lived experience spanning millennia.

Compelling as the extensive array of correspondence on this matter has been, I wanted to see and assess this for myself. I had the honour of visiting both the herbarium and the TMAG Rosny archive and collection site, both of which were fascinating and illuminating. Prior to my

visit, I was genuinely unaware of the full extent of these impressive collections and the world-class experts that care for, further develop and share these collections locally, nationally and internationally. Quite frankly, it was breathtaking to be shown through these collections. To be shown, for example, in the herbarium, the specimens of Tasmanian flora collected by the earliest European visitors to this island right there laid out in front of you, or shown in the in the Rosny vertebrate collections, preserved specimens of Tasmanian tigers collected prior to extinction. Not to mention a huge array of other creatures I never had any idea existed in previous times on our state and currently. Absolutely extraordinary.

A multitude of carefully preserved items and specimens; and they're not static collections. That came to life for me when I saw it in person. It's easy to read that on a page and hear it and not fully understand the intensive work that happens every day by the wonderful people looking after these collections to ensure that they continue to be available and cared for and able to be used for ongoing scientific endeavour. They're actively being used every day in further scientific discovery, in important biosecurity work, as part of international scientific collaborative research projects and much, much more. It was abundantly clear to me that there was a need for highly-skilled experts to care for, to continue to use and to develop the collections and not just the most prominent senior roles in those areas, but all of the roles in those areas who were all, I think, working like champions, given the cuts already suffered. I extend my deep thanks to the staff who took the time to show me through these collections and, even more, I thank them for their highly knowledgeable and enthusiastic ongoing care for these key scientific, cultural and heritage collections on behalf of our state.

All year we've heard on repeat from the Premier and the Treasurer about the need for a rightsized public sector but as we know, however, the rightsized public sector has been determined by the government, it is not evidence-based, but is instead driven by ideology and, quite frankly, desperation. Ideology doesn't place much value on facts or evidence, particularly if they raise inconvenient considerations. What about a rightsized TMAG, what could that be? Despite the fine-sounding platitudes issued by the Premier and other government members on this matter, the whole sorry saga indicates to me that the government failed to do its research and inform itself of the impact of any cuts on TMAG's capacity to fulfil its core and statutory duties and that, quite frankly, is unforgivable and it makes me so very angry, as I know it does thousands and thousands of Tasmanians.

Angry on behalf of those directly affected and angry over such avoidable, careless and callous behaviour from this government. For the government to not even have the curiosity, let alone undertake professional due diligence, to carefully examine exactly what TMAG does, its statutory obligations and its contribution to the state's cultural and tourism sectors, and overall economic contribution, before deciding to slash jobs, is an incomprehensible situation bordering on negligent. The decisions that the government has taken to slash TMAG resourcing were clearly made in an information and evidence vacuum. They are callous and destructive cuts being proposed and they are - worse, Mr President - false economy.

Further, we know that due to protracted underfunding over years, these threatened cuts will produce minimal savings to the public purse. Additionally, these cuts risk Tasmania losing incredibly specialised skills, knowledge and expertise. These professionals who are being cut will not hang about but will be scooped up interstate or internationally, leaving a vast expertise hole in our knowledge base here in Tasmania. These cuts will impoverish us culturally, professionally, and economically.

I wish to briefly mention a report released in May this year, the *Measuring the Economic Contribution of Arts and Culture to the Tasmanian Economy: A New Methodology.* That's the

report, Mr President, undertaken by consultants, Inkhorn Projects, for Creative Tasmania. This report identifies TMAG as a major cultural institution which is an anchor for Hobart cultural tourism with over one million visits per year. As such, it is identified as a key contributor to the state's tourism sector, which the report describes as being 'distinctively cultural.' The report stresses that when a proper cultural tourism attribution is applied to ascertain how much of Tasmania's tourism economy is driven by cultural motivations, the result is proportionately more significant here than it is for other national jurisdictions.

How does it make economic good sense, Mr President, to undermine that current contribution? And that is on top of the well documented contribution TMAG and the herbarium expertise makes across the agricultural, the biosecurity, the forestry, and other sectors. It simply doesn't make sense because the decision was ill-conceived, lazy, undertaken with absolutely no due diligence or assessment to inform even the most preliminary consideration. Quite frankly it was utterly reprehensible. The inherent value of TMAG, its collections, its research, and its contribution to the community is immeasurable. The hollowing out of this unique public institution will cause irreparable damage. And, unfortunately, the lack of evidence-based leadership by this government has seen the inevitable flow on effect, with recent news of cuts to Launceston's QVMAG. This government should hang its head in shame for setting such a poor example of devaluing these important cultural institutions.

I'm aware that over recent days it appears the government has had to do a rethink and that some specific positions previously targeted for the chop will apparently now be retained. I hope that can be confirmed by the Leader in today's debate. Specifically, I'm hoping that it will be confirmed that the Herbarium will be retained as a distinct department within TMAG, and hopefully that Dr Gintaras Kantvilas will be there still as its head. Apparently, a decision to abolish another curator role has also been overturned, which would be welcome indeed.

However, even if that good news can be confirmed. It doesn't negate this motion and the calls that are made in it. We know TMAG has been criminally starved of funds for years and yet has somehow managed to maintain its extraordinary output due to the dedicated and concerted efforts made by staff and volunteers. I think that potentially TMAG across all its departments has done such a laudable job in continuing to meet and exceed expectations when delivering on its statutory obligations, it's educational and community engagement activities, it's lulled us into a degree of false security, perhaps. These detrimental cuts, flagged by the government, have served as a wake-up call. No more false security, no more complacency or taking this institution for granted. For quite some time under this government, we have not had a rightsized or a rightly funded TMAG. This government has grossly underfunded TMAG and we need to turn this around.

Which brings me to the crux of the motion detailed in clauses (5), (6), (7), (8) and (9). Mr. President. Clause (5) of the motion highlights the threatened resourcing cuts risks both jeopardising the integrity of the TMAG collections and public assets, while also endangering its capacity to maintain collections, fulfil research imperatives, or deliver its statutory obligations. When considering clause (5) and the rest of this motion, it's worthwhile considering the Ministerial Statement of Expectation that relates here. The most recent Ministerial Statement of Expectation that I could find on the TMAG website is dated March 2025 and makes interesting reading, Mr President. Not surprisingly, it emphasises institutional objectives and strategic expectations as specified in section 5 of the *Tasmanian Museum and*

*Art Gallery Act 2017*. It also details strategic expectations, including the delivery of an accessible and highly utilised public program to enrich the state collection via appropriate research and acquisition activities, and to work to grow and support Tasmania's cultural and creative industries and visitor economy but, Mr President, section 5.4 of the statement of expectations is the part which really caught my attention. Section 5.4 states this, and I quote:

> The Minister, along with the Department of State Growth as their adviser, is to be kept informed of any matters of significance. Specifically, the Minister expects to be notified of any adverse development which may prevent the achievement of performance objectives, significantly affect the operating ability of TMAG, impact upon the reputation of TMAG or the Tasmanian government, significantly impact on Tasmanian government policy or client relations.

Well, Mr President. Well, I can inform the minister that there are indeed adverse developments which are preventing TMAG's operating ability, its performance objectives and which are impacting upon TMAG's and the government's reputation. It is the government itself and the minister who is the author of those adverse developments, Mr President. It is beyond ironic that the ministerial statement of expectations highlights the very things the minister he himself is doing.

We can address those adverse developments though, Mr President, clause 6 and 7 of the motion call for the immediate reversal of the proposed job cuts, the retention of current skilled staff however, as I've already stated, retaining the curatorial roles is welcome, but if they're deprived of essential administrative and other support, they will remain hamstrung when working to fulfil their responsibilities. We've seen that across the police and health departments, for example. Cutting of jobs perceived to be not essential only results in those essential jobs being driven to undertake administrative and other work that's beyond their own core role, leading to a detrimental outcome.

It's another example of false economy. Clause 8 and 9 of the motions seek to address years of false economising which has resulted in the already chronically underfunded TMAG. We are now all aware that the status quo is woefully insufficient. TMAG must be provided with secure funding facilitating its delivery of all its public, cultural, scientific and legal responsibilities to conclude, Mr President, I wish to read out the motion passed at the Friends of TMAG public meeting which was held on 8 October. The motion was unanimously passed by the packed Waterfront Pavilion audience and I quote from it, this is the motion:

> That this meeting calls on the Tasmanian government to immediately reverse the proposed job cuts at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, retain the skilled staff who care for and interpret Tasmania's state collections and provide TMAG with the secure long-term funding needed to fulfil its public, cultural, scientific and legal responsibilities.

End of quote. As members will see, the motion before us in this Chamber reflects the sentiment of the community motion. Mr President, the minister stated in the other place, and I quote:

We will continue to ensure that TMAG is strong, front and centre and available, accessible and valuable to more Tasmanians and our visitors over the years ahead.

Well, Mr President, that's a very laudable statement and, in fact, the motion before us provides an initial blueprint for how to begin delivering on those positive goals stated by the minister. To reiterate, in order to invest in a strong front and centre and accessible TMAG, the government must undertake steps detailed in the last four points detailed in the motion: Immediately reverse the intended job cuts, all of them, at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, retain the skilled staff who care for and interpret Tasmania's TMAG state collections, commit to providing TMAG with secure long-term funding needed to fulfil its public, cultural, scientific and legal responsibilities and ensure the long-term funding commitment is clearly identified in the 2027-28 state budget and forward estimates.

The first step is for the government to immediately cease and desist with these dangerously ill-conceived and uninformed job cuts at TMAG and the second step is to ensure proper funding provided for in the next state budget. Mr President, to close, I wish to acknowledge all the dedicated and passionate TMAG staff, volunteers and supporters, including those here in the chamber today.

Also, a specific shout out to the Friends of TMAG group who have worked tirelessly for 44 years in good faith to support our public institution and who have kept the flame alive over these last few stressful months. Thank you for all that you do. To reiterate, Mr President, this motion does seek to place TMAG truly front and centre, just as the minister welcomed in the other place, and with that I commend the motion to the House.