

[4.56 p.m.]

Mrs TAYLOR (Elwick) - I too would like to make a short contribution to this debate and add my congratulations to the Premier, particularly on becoming the first female Premier of Tasmania.

The Premier's state of the State address paints a broad picture but as a follow-up to the midyear financial report it does not give us any clear details. It is good to be optimistic but there are no practical long-term solutions, nor even how the reduction in public workforce spending is to be achieved. That in itself has produced concern and despondency, particularly within our public service. The reality of the Government's allowing itself to be deluded into thinking that we were being protected from the effects of the GFC by the generous spending of the Federal stimulus package shows poor economic management. I do not dispute that there has been more recent additional bad financial news but in budget scrutiny last year it was clear that the State would have been in deficit had it not been for Federal spending in this State as in the rest of Australia.

However, I do not intend to repeat the sentiments other members have already eloquently expressed and many have raised the big issues. I will largely confine my remarks to a few examples pertaining to my own electorate and drill down into a couple of situations that will show the concern that there is, generally speaking, on many issues in the State and make some remarks about my concern about where they go.

As in other electorates a number of promises were made before the 2010 State election and it is a matter of concern to the people of my electorate, as other electorates, whether those promises will be honoured. As the honourable member for Apsley has said, there are many issues in her electorate that are the same.

It has already been announced now that the Cosgrove Specialist Sports School Project will not proceed. It was an \$18 million project and in some ways it comes as no surprise because an \$18 million project that was announced very late before the last election had no planning, no project management, there appeared to be nothing there except a wish that a specialist sports school would be good for the area, and indeed it would have been, and that it would solve the problem of the Chargers having a home. I think it was an off-the-cuff promise very quickly made, very quickly decided on, and not substantiated. There was no substantiation at all at the time.

This year's Budget included \$1 million for the start of that project with the rest of the \$18 million to follow in some years. We asked at the time, why \$18 million? Where does the \$18 million come from since there was no plan and no project, no business case at all?

I think that it comes from the fact that the National Fitness centre in Moonah had for probably three years been working with the Government - it had some refurbishment but it had also been working with the Government for a replacement. A big study was done, funded by the Government, which came up with the result that it would cost \$18 million to replace this centre. I think that is where the \$18 million came from. It was a figure plucked out of the air. I think the understanding was that the National Fitness centre could be partly replaced by also going into the Cosgrove Specialist Sports School site. All these things could be done in one hit and in one site, and that indeed that is where the \$18 million came from. The \$1 million was put in this year's Budget as a taster, I suppose, and a start for that project and at budget scrutiny time I asked what the \$1 million was for and I was told that it was for planning for the project. I said that it could not

cost \$1 million to do a plan for the project, surely, and was told that there were several other little projects already at Cosgrove that could be funded this year, but when I asked what they were there was no answer to that because, indeed, I do not believe at the time they existed.

However, as a result of this promise and as a result of having \$1 million, the Cosgrove school community and the rest of the community in my electorate started planning for this project. The principal of the school was given the job as project manager and he, in this current school year, was seconded as project manager of that project and another principal from another school came to take his place as acting for the year. That was until the week before school started, when suddenly the announcement was made that the project was shelved. So a considerable amount of money has already been spent in planning. A lot of community consultation has been done about what the specialist sports school would look like and the entire school community was ready to go with this project. They spent most of last year planning, knowing that this was going to happen. So a considerable amount of effort, time and money has gone into this until the week before school started and then suddenly there is nothing.

What a terrific waste, because there is now a project. As I say, it had started being funded. Part of the project that could already be started with the little amount of money that was available had already been spent and suddenly there is nothing, as though all the preparation and all the work was for nought. I think to myself, where is the strategy, where is the planning, how does this fit into our being a State that is looking for good educational opportunities, better sporting opportunities, community building and all those kinds of things? When a project that was certainly not well conceived or planned nevertheless was granted funding, and then just as easily when there really was a project that was going to go ahead just suddenly dismissed, it just does not make sense to me. I want to raise that issue in particular because I am concerned that it is so easy for that to happen, for there not to be proper planning, not to be fitting within a strategy and then for some reason - it is not a whim, I know because we are in a difficult financial position, but as I say I do not think this is an unexpected difficult financial position. This surely should have been foreseen. It is just a great waste of time and energy, and that entire community now that has spent a great deal of time in the last year planning for what would happen and how everything would fit in is now suddenly devastated by the thought.

The principal who was seconded as project manager for the year is now back as principal of the school. The principal who had been appointed as acting is back at the school that he came from. It all happened within days of the school year starting, so very disruptive and quite demoralising, I would think.

A great deal of money, both State and Federal, has been spent in the last 18 months on building new schools in my electorate and that, of course, is obviously safe, apart from the amount of spending that is still to be done in those schools, that part which is the State funding. Most of the schools are very close to completion, but certainly Montrose Bay High School still has two or three years of a further building program to go, which is now, I presume, not safe.

Other promises made in my electorate include the funding of lights at KGV Oval for TFL night games and fortunately, of course, that has been spent. That not only was promised but was provided and the lights are going up as we speak. I think in the last two weeks the light towers have gone up.

Mr Wilkinson - So you can see Aker now?

Mrs TAYLOR - Aker. On 2 April come along and see under lights the first game for the year.

Mr Aird - I think I'll be busy that day.

Mrs TAYLOR - Well, you can come and see the black and whites play, heavens above.

Mr Wilkinson - You won't need the lights with Aker and his blond hair. It illuminates everything.

Mrs TAYLOR - I have to say that it was not a bad move by the football club. It was a very good move.

Mr Aird - Time will tell.

Mrs TAYLOR - Indeed.

Mr Aird - But I have to say that he is a better buy than Fevola.

Ms Forrest - Has someone bought him?

Mr Wilkinson - He's going to be the sight board for cricket, isn't he?

Mrs TAYLOR - No, one of the VFL teams has bought him, I think. Certainly, though, the council and the people of the City of Glenorchy would like to be reassured that their other projects which have also been promised and are on the drawing board, are not in jeopardy, such as the integrated care centre which will provide extensive new health services to the city and the new police station, one of the three that has been promised for some years and is still - the story of Devonport, of course, is different but nevertheless -

Mr Dean - Much older station.

Mrs TAYLOR - That is not the point. The question is, are any or all of those in jeopardy? Of course, the partnership on the joint redevelopment of the Glenorchy Civic Square which, again, had support from all three parties before the election but is not a done deal until such time now as the money is in the bank, if you like, is an issue for concern.

I did ring Minister McKim the day after this announcement was made about the northern suburbs light railway study. That, again, was a project that had been promised funding this year but the consultants had not yet been appointed and it was not mentioned in the mid-year financial report so I was a bit concerned about whether that project would go ahead. I was reassured and in actual fact the consultants have now been appointed and the feasibility study is being done. Of course, what the result of that will be is another matter because if that is shown to be feasible then considerable money will be needed to implement that public transport. One would imagine that it would only be the Federal Government that will be able to fund that and the huge call on infrastructure replacements around Australia by the Federal Government may well make a difference to that.

As the member for Apsley mentioned, I note the mention of MONA. It is a very welcome investment project both locally for my electorate and for the State but this project is entirely a private philanthropic gift to Tasmania. It has not had one dollar of State government money. However, it is, of course, providing an enormous change to the area. I do not know whether you have been yet but if you haven't please do go. It is free. It will take some time so do not leave yourself half an hour to go and see it. It is a most interesting place. It has made an enormous change just to the ambience of the area, if you like. Moorilla has been a place where I suppose devotees have gone or wine buffs or people who would go to a nice restaurant or to high quality accommodation, but since the opening of MONA, you see people any day actually walking up and down the driveway

and sitting around the lawns and having a coffee or whatever. It has got almost that same sort of atmosphere, although different because it is grassed rather than urban, like Salamanca Square. There are people just hanging out and having a good time. It is an enormous attraction, obviously, for overseas tourists and for arts buffs -

Mr Wilkinson - What is your favourite display?

Mrs TAYLOR - There are a lot; it is really good. I will not mention my favourite. I do not think I have a favourite; I have lots of favourites. You have distracted me now.

Mr Aird - Do you want to ask him what his favourite is?

Mrs TAYLOR - I just did; he hasn't been yet.

Members laughing.

Mrs TAYLOR - It has changed the ambience of the area and while I am very happy that it is a major attraction for the State and for tourism I am also really happy that it is really good for local people. If you go there on any day, you will see local people there. I was recently there and asked the locals how many times they had been and what did they think, and I might have even asked the same question: what is your favourite thing? And they said, 'Oh, we've been five times since it's opened'. They just walk up the driveway and go and have a look at MONA and go and have a coffee and stuff. That is not the kind of atmosphere that has been around Glenorchy until now and it is just a wonderful, welcome change. It is a great boost to the area, but as I say this is entirely privately funded. That is a great thing.

There have been no answers to the questions and concerns about how secure any of the promises are. The state of the State address does not give us details and does not give us those practical answers. The member for Apsley referred to many of the uncertainties within her own electorate. I think we are probably anxiously awaiting the Budget, not just for local commitments but also for statewide commitments.

For example, one of the 2010 election strategies in health - and a lot was made of it at the time - was a promise that much more emphasis would be placed on prevention of chronic diseases. In the Premier's address last week she announced the development of a wellbeing strategy, and I quote - 'Because we want to help people improve their health so they have less need for hospitals in the first place'. We all agree with that. We all think that is admirable and long overdue that we spend more on preventive health.

Mr Wilkinson - The Heart Foundation has a very good proposal at the moment, an extremely good proposal. I was going to talk about that.

Mrs TAYLOR - Fantastic, indeed, yes. I just recently heard about it too. Just in the last few days I have been made aware that the budget initiative to increase the number of regional health promotion officers has been reversed since the midyear financial review in February. So those extra regional health promotion officers, surely part of this strategy, are now not going to be employed.

I believe that they were very close to being employed, that positions had been advertised but that this is now totally reversed. That does not sound to me like a commitment to preventive health care. No matter how much you say we are concerned about helping people improve their health so they have less need for hospitals in the first place it has to be followed up by practical answers. It is not just motherhood statements that are sufficient.

How many more such cuts that go against strategic planning or against policy will there be and where will the public service cuts be made? That will be a matter of great interest to the honourable members in this year's Budget and I look forward to all of those answers because just optimistic motherhood statements are not sufficient. They need to be followed up by practical results. I am sure that we are all concerned about the reality of the detail when we actually get this year's Budget.

I thank the member for Apsley also - she is very optimistic about new initiatives being funded in the Budget. I hope she will be right. I am a bit concerned that the old initiatives are in danger, never mind about the new initiatives. Madam President, I do support the motion.