



**HON REBECCA WHITE MP**  
**LABOR LEADER**

Mr Don Challen AM  
Chair  
Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council  
By email: [secretariat.PESRAC@treasury.tas.gov.au](mailto:secretariat.PESRAC@treasury.tas.gov.au)

Dear Mr Challen

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Don'.

Labor welcomes the work of the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Council and we are committed to working constructively to build a better and fairer Tasmania in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the last month my Labor team has been talking with communities about the kind of Tasmania we would like to see emerge from the devastation of COVID-19.

The result of that extensive consultation is Labor's COVID-19 Recovery Package, which I am submitting to you to help inform your Council's deliberations.

This package is guided by three strategic objectives: to support those hardest hit by COVID-19, get people into jobs, and to build a better and fairer Tasmania.

The pandemic has amplified inequality in our community. Before the virus, Tasmania had the highest rate of underemployment in the country and too many people relied on precarious casual employment. Many of these people were the first to lose their jobs when COVID-19 hit.

Jobs are the key to economic security for people's livelihoods and we need to use this opportunity to make people's lives better and to create a strong economy.

The opportunity in recovery is to reverse the trend of casualisation, insecure work and erosion of workers' rights that means thousands of people are just one paycheque away from homelessness.

Recovery will require a response that covers all industry sectors and all regions, with a place-based focus on buying local, building local and employing local.

The government's response to date has been heavily focussed on infrastructure projects. While Labor supports this important investment, it fails to directly support many of the industries hardest hit by the shut down or the people who have lost their jobs.

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Investment in people will be as important as investment in built capital. Job losses as a result of COVID-19 have disproportionately affected women. Targeted strategies are needed for industries that primarily employ women to incentivise them to provide stable and permanent employment.

The attached Package contains initiatives we believe the Government should be pursuing in the short to medium term to assist with Tasmania's recovery and for inclusion in the budget later this year.

Labor's package also includes projects that have already been announced by government, but which have stalled. We are advocating for the State Government to get them back on track and fast track their delivery.

Labor's COVID-19 Recovery Package is informed by local knowledge that supports the social and economic recovery across our regions.

Taking an approach to recovery that considers all regions and all sectors of the economy is the pathway to rebuilding a better and fairer Tasmania.

We should not rush to go back to the ordinary. We should strive to create something extraordinary in its place.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding this submission.

We look forward to continuing to engage with you through the formal consultation process.

Kind regards



Rebecca White MP  
**Tasmanian Labor Leader**

 June 2020

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# Labor's COVID-19 Recovery Package **CREATING JOBS**

REBUILDING A **BETTER & FAIRER** TASMANIA

June 2020





# STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



Taking an approach to recovery that considers all regions and all sectors of the economy is the pathway to rebuilding a better and fairer Tasmania.



## Support those hardest hit by COVID-19



## Get people into jobs



## Build a better and fairer Tasmania

At every stage of the COVID-19 pandemic, Labor has been constructive and proactive in calling for measures to assist Tasmania's response and recovery.

Labor called on the State Government to "go hard and go early" by putting in place strong border controls.

We called for early action to save lives and we understood that the biggest threat to the economy was failing to get on top of the virus.

We said that no one should be forced into poverty and advocated strongly for wage guarantees, hardship provisions, rent relief and protection from evictions.

When the immediate danger passed, we knew that in order to have the confidence to reopen the economy we would need to do more testing.

This virus has had the greatest social and economic impact on our state in a generation and it has sadly taken the lives of 13 people. Tasmania has the unenviable record of the highest death rate per capita, and was the only state that needed to bring in the military after an outbreak that closed two hospitals.

Nothing less than a Royal Commission is needed to scrutinise every aspect of the preparation and response, allow the community to have their say and ensure we learn lessons for the future.

## Now is the time to reboot our domestic economy and get people back into jobs.

In developing this package, Labor has drawn on Regional Development Australia's Recovery Principles.

The package builds on the regional development work already undertaken by key groups including Regional Development Australia, Northern Tasmania Development Corporation, the Cradle Coast Authority, local chambers of commerce and regional tourism leaders.

To be effective it is critical the State Government's response is informed by local knowledge to support the social and economic recovery across our regions.

Recovery will require a response that covers all industry sectors and all regions, with a place-based focus on buying local, building local and employing local.

The government's response to date has been heavily focussed on infrastructure projects.

While Labor supports this important investment, it fails to directly support many of the industries hardest hit by the shut down or the people who have lost their jobs. Investment in people will be as important as investment in built capital.

Job losses as a result of COVID-19 have disproportionately affected women. Targeted strategies are needed for industries that primarily employ women to incentivise them to provide stable and permanent employment.

This document is the result of significant consultation and sets out projects and proposals we believe the State Government should adopt right now - in addition to initiatives already announced by government.

Taking an approach to recovery that considers all regions and all sectors of the economy is the pathway to rebuilding a better and fairer Tasmania.



# LABOR'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19



**Rebecca White**  
LABOR LEADER

COVID-19 has had a profound impact on all our lives. It caused economic and social upheaval and turned life as we knew it on its head.

It also amplified inequality in our community. Before the virus, Tasmania had the highest rate of underemployment in the country and too many people relied on precarious casual employment. Many of these people were the first to lose their jobs when COVID-19 hit.

The opportunity in recovery is to reverse the trend of casualisation, insecure work and erosion of workers' rights that means thousands of people are just one paycheque away from homelessness.

We should not rush to go back to the ordinary. We should strive to create something extraordinary in its place.

My Labor team is working hard in consultation with stakeholders, industry, unions, our Industry Advisory Councils, local government and the broader community to plan for a better future.

Tasmania can be a beacon for fairness. We are small enough that no one should be left behind and clever enough that we can do great things that make us the envy of the world.

From this tragedy, let's find a way to build hope for the future.



**David O'Byrne**  
SHADOW TREASURER

While the economic impact of COVID-19 has varied across industries, it is clear nobody has been untouched.

As we move into recovery, we have a unique opportunity to work as a community to build a fairer and more resilient economy.

Labor advocates for a comprehensive response; for example we are calling for the establishment of industry and region-specific innovation and investment funds to support a mixture of support and targeted growth.

We are open to supporting the creation of industry-led co-ops to allow smaller businesses to collectively increase their purchasing power.

There is a need for clear access to lines of equity and capital at reasonable rates, in some cases underwritten by government.

Government assistance for industry must be tied to businesses building a better framework of economic security for workers. Without job security the decisions workers make on a daily basis on where and how they spend their money in our economy will be severely restricted. Job security builds consumer confidence, which in turn builds a stronger economy.

We must work to rebuild a sustainable state budget position to ensure we can deliver the highest-quality government services in health, education, housing, our parks and beyond.

Now is the time for bold action and innovation.

# THE STEEP PATH TO RECOVERY



The task of rebuilding Tasmania is made harder by the fact that Tasmania economy and the Budget were already in trouble before COVID-19.

## THE STATE BUDGET

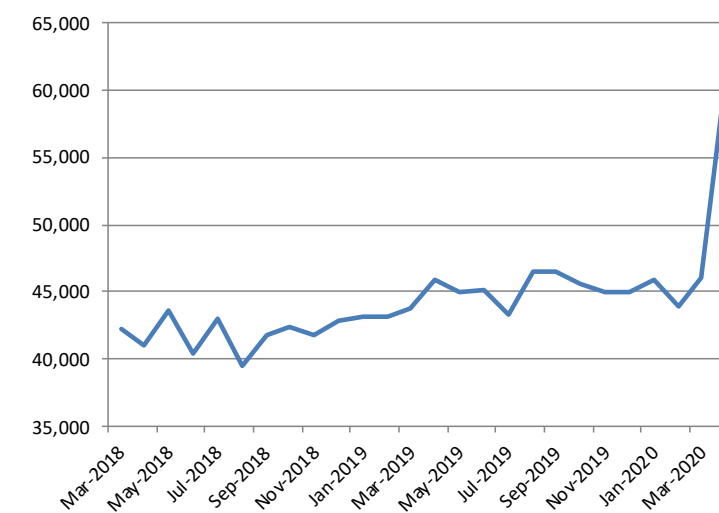
The most recent budget, in May 2019, showed Tasmania accumulating \$1.4 billion of debt over the next three years. This was after Labor left more than \$200 million in cash for the incoming government in 2014.

The March 2020 budget update showed this year's budget had collapsed into a \$100 million deficit, before the pandemic and associated spending increased that to \$700 million. A deficit of \$1 billion is expected next year.

## UNDEREMPLOYMENT

Before COVID-19, the underemployment rate was the highest it had ever been. This meant people couldn't find enough work to make ends meet or to build a secure future for their families.

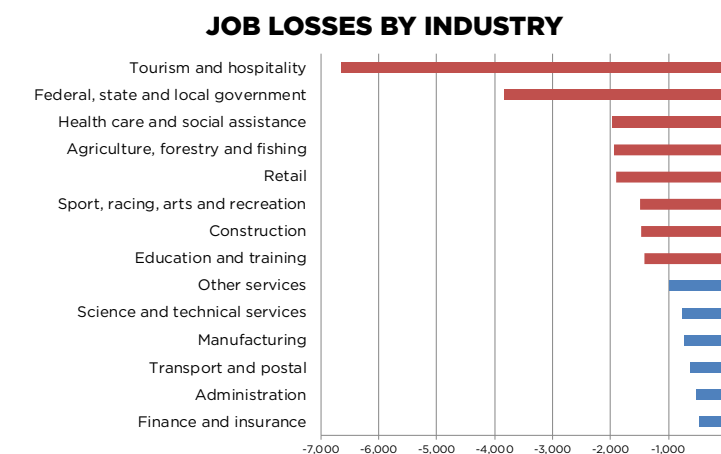
### NUMBER OF TASMANIANS WHO NEED A JOB OR MORE HOURS



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics: Labour Force, Australia, April 2020

## JOB LOSSES BY INDUSTRY

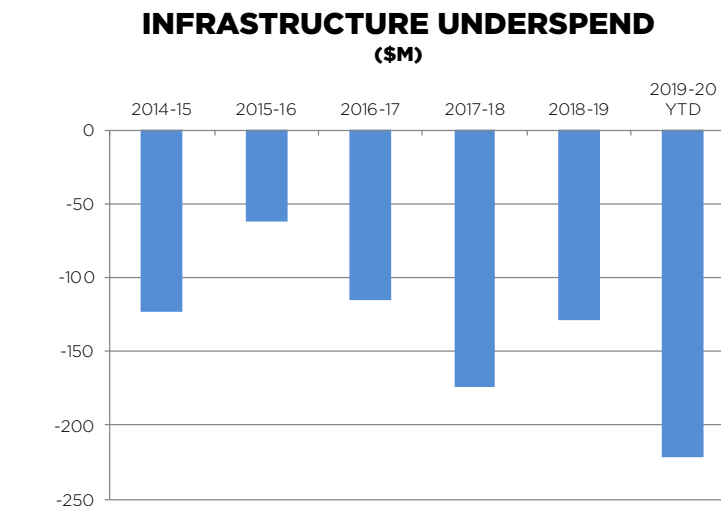
Some sectors have been particularly affected by COVID-19. The State Government must broaden its focus and ensure no workers are left behind.



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics: Weekly Payroll Jobs and Wages in Australia, Week ending 30 May 2020

## INFRASTRUCTURE UNDERSPEND

The Premier says he plans to build Tasmania out of this crisis. But every year, this government has failed to build the infrastructure it has promised. Numerous major projects are delayed indefinitely. With more than 20,000 jobs lost since mid-March in Tasmania, this is too important to get it wrong.



Source: Treasurer's Annual Financial Reports, 2014/15 - 2018/19 Economic and Fiscal Update Report - May 2020



# 1

# CREATING JOBS



## Our number one priority has to be to create jobs.

We know that more than 20,000 people have lost their jobs – but many more were either unemployed or underemployed before the pandemic.

The State Government’s jobs response cannot be one dimensional. It must reflect that some sectors have been hit harder than others and that women and young people have been disproportionately affected.



**Adopt Labor’s Free TAFE policy** With more than 20,000 people out of work, now more than ever, all barriers must be removed to train and retrain people for the jobs of the future. Labor’s Free TAFE policy provides free courses in areas of skills demand across the economy.



**Adopt Labor’s Ag Career Kickstarter scheme** Ag Career Kickstarter will provide a subsidised training pathway for workers to gain basic skills that will set them up for a career in agriculture. With borders closed to international visitors there will be demand for local labour to help our farmers get product to market.



**Mandated apprentice numbers on public works, including civil construction** A 20% quota of apprentices and trainees should be introduced for all public works, including civil construction, to help people get a foot in the door to a job. The requirement must be strictly enforced, both through the tender process and ongoing compliance checks.



**Regional Employment Hubs** Modelled on the successful South East Regional Development Association program, Regional Employment Hubs should be rolled out statewide to link the long-term unemployed with training opportunities and jobs.



**Disability Enterprise Quota for State contracts** Establishing a minimum spend for Tasmanian Government agencies will support jobs in Australian Disability Enterprises in a wide range of areas such as packaging, assembly, production, recycling, screen printing, plant nursery, garden maintenance, landscaping, cleaning services, laundry services and food services.



**Equal opportunity job applications** COVID-19 job losses have disproportionately affected women. Targeted initiatives will be required to get women back into work. Job applications for the public service should be structured to eliminate unconscious bias in recruitment processes.



**No job cut guarantee** Government must commit to retaining jobs and employment conditions across the total state sector, including for casuals and contract workers.



*Labor’s Free TAFE policy provides free courses in areas of skills demand across the economy including building and construction, aged care and disability services.*





# 2





# BACKING BUSINESS



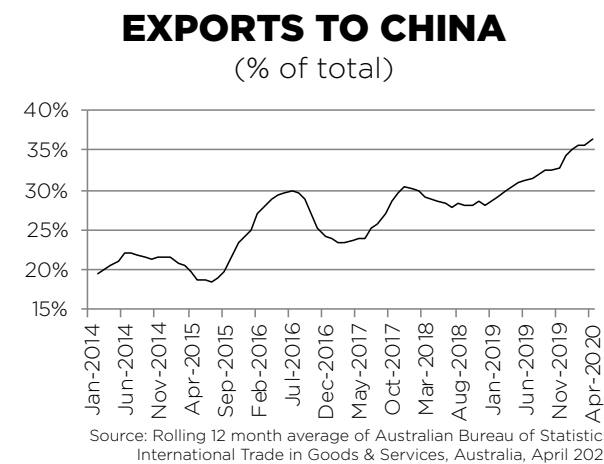
## Businesses will need continued support to survive in the short term.

But long-term recovery will rely on government working in partnership with business and industry to innovate and identify new market opportunities.

Through our eight Industry Advisory Councils, Labor has been listening to the unique needs of different industry sectors. We have also drawn on industry submissions to the State Government which have not been adopted by the government.

-  **Extend JobKeeper beyond September for hardest hit sectors** With restrictions set to remain in place for some time many businesses will struggle to survive when JobKeeper is removed. Labor is calling on the Federal Government to extend JobKeeper for the worst affected sectors.
-  **Set a date to reopen state borders to provide certainty for the visitor economy** Businesses need certainty in order to plan for the future. With many states on track to eliminate COVID-19, the State Government should immediately set a target date for interstate travel to resume, informed by public health advice.
-  **Increase gathering limits in line with other states** Current restrictions are confusing and inconsistent – a nationally consistent approach should be adopted on the number of people who are allowed to gather in public to support our small businesses to recover.
-  **Reopen Small Business Hardship Grants Program** The grants program has been deeply inequitable, with some businesses missing out completely, despite being forced to close, and other grants being issued with questionable merit. In addition to a full review, the grant program should be reopened to those who missed out, despite experiencing significant hardship.
-  **Bring forward Government Business Enterprise infrastructure and maintenance programs, including mandating local content requirements** Government Business Enterprises have significant buying power and should be using their balance sheets to bring forward planned maintenance and infrastructure to provide local employment opportunities.
-  **Accelerate TasWater infrastructure program** Poor water and sewerage infrastructure continues to be a hand brake on the Tasmanian economy, holding back investment and impacting on people’s health and the health of our beaches and waterways. The TasWater infrastructure program should be reviewed, and where possible, accelerated.
-  **Trade waste grants program** The cost of trade waste compliance has already forced some businesses to close and, with the additional impact of COVID-19, many more are under threat. Government should adopt Labor’s policy for a grant program to help businesses upgrade their trade waste infrastructure.

-  **Exports to China** Tasmania has become increasingly reliant on China as a destination for our exports. Diversifying our export markets will help protect our industries, including agriculture, fisheries and tertiary education against future shocks.

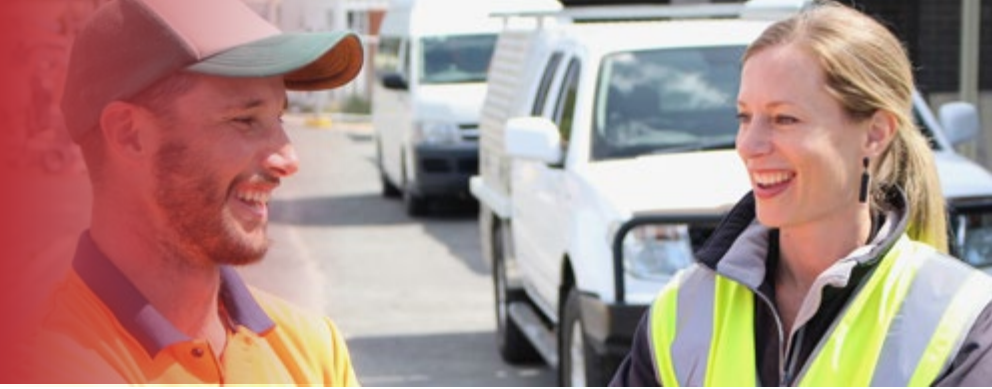


-  **Revive local manufacturing** Disruptions to supply chains have created challenges sourcing some imports from overseas. Tasmania needs to identify alternative markets and consider how Tasmanian manufacturers could be used to supply items that have previously been imported. This should start with a Manufacturing Capability Assessment for Import Replacement.
-  **Reimagine events fund** Entertainment and events have been particularly hard hit by social distancing restrictions. Funding should be provided to events to identify innovative ways to adapt and survive.
-  **Free car travel on TT Line to support our visitor economy** Labor backs the Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania’s proposal to increase the Bass Strait Passenger Vehicle Equalisation Scheme to effectively make it free to take a car on the Spirit of Tasmania.
-  **Renewable energy solutions plan** Stimulate investment in renewable energy projects, including hydrogen and accelerating Battery of the Nation and Project Marinus feasibility studies to project ready stage.
-  **Industry innovation co-investment fund** Competitive grant round for matched investment in innovation and diversification projects, including in the red meat industry for a new co-operative abattoir.
-  **Racing recovery package** The State Government shut down the racing industry in Tasmania, although it continued operating across the rest of the country. The government needs to work with the industry on a recovery package.
-  **Boosting creative and cultural industries, design and manufacturing strategy** The government must deliver the Cultural and Creative Arts Strategy that was due at the end of 2019.
-  **Bell Bay Advanced Manufacturing Zone** Businesses in Bell Bay will play a critical role in our state’s recovery and the government should set up a special taskforce with all parties in the region to focus on projects within the zone.



# 3

# BUILDING A BETTER TASMANIA



## Out of the devastation of COVID-19, there is an opportunity for Tasmania to build a lasting legacy.

We should use this opportunity to progress major intergenerational infrastructure that has been in the too hard basket for too long.

In doing so we will be building more than bricks and mortar – we will be building a better Tasmania.

✔ **Adopt Labor’s Housing Works Policy** Housing Works would fast track the construction of 490 affordable homes in three years. This will create 550 jobs, including 75 apprenticeships.



✔ **Adopt Labor’s policy to create the Passenger Transport Corporation** Responsible for planning Hobart Passenger Rail and Derwent Ferries. Will ultimately assume responsibility for the entire passenger network including integrated ticketing and timetables.

✔ **Hobart Passenger Rail** This project not only improves access to public transport and eases traffic congestion it creates hundreds of jobs and unlocks rezoning opportunities along the corridor that will stimulate building and construction and increase housing supply.

✔ **Derwent Ferries** The State Government should complete the Bellerive trial with the intention of making passenger ferries permanent to help ease traffic congestion.

✔ **Burnie Port** The State Government should aggressively progress the Master Plan for the Port and invest in the bulk mineral loader to drive economic recovery across the region.

✔ **Macquarie Point sewerage treatment plant** The Macquarie Point precinct has failed to progress. The relocation of the sewerage treatment plant would help accelerate development on the site.

✔ **Launceston Eastern Bypass** The State Government should accelerate work to progress the ring road to ease traffic congestion, open up new land for development and improve liveability in Launceston.

✔ **Charles Street Bridge** The State Government should fast track this project to ease traffic congestion in Launceston.

✔ **Roads to Market** Infrastructure investment in regional roads, prioritising strategic freight corridors.

✔ **Hobart Showground Renewal Project** The opportunity exists to redevelop the site to provide more than 500 new homes, including affordable housing, community spaces, a new exhibition space and sports field.

✔ **Asbestos removal program for public and private buildings** Endorse the Master Builders and Civil Contractors Federation’s submission for the creation of an asbestos removal fund to improve the health and safety of buildings.

✔ **Education infrastructure and school amenities upgrades** Bring forward maintenance on public schools and fund upgrades to school toilet facilities to make them COVID-19 compliant.



✔ **Climate change mitigation and disaster resilience program** While COVID-19 has captured our attention we cannot ignore the other challenges facing our community, including natural disasters and the broader effects of climate change. A program of prevention and enhancing resilience includes flood mitigation, bushfire protection, weed eradication and community safer places.

✔ **Digital technology and infrastructure** The State Government should conduct a full audit of its information technology systems and procurement processes, including in health, where there is a need to invest in hospital IT infrastructure to facilitate telehealth, shared health records and fully integrated e-referrals.





# 4

# STRENGTHENING OUR REGIONS



**There will be no recovery without regional recovery. The North West was the hardest hit by COVID-19 but no part of the state has been left unscathed.**

Social distancing has stretched social support networks and it is critical that recovery focusses on rebuilding connections within communities. That means investing in regional services, neighbourhood houses, men's sheds and other community infrastructure.

- ✓ **Main Street, suburban and regional revitalisation strategy** We need to make sure our CBDs, suburbs and regions have the infrastructure and services they need for a liveable and sustainable future.
- ✓ **Social Infrastructure Investment** Enhancing the Tasmanian way of life with targeted investment in tracks and trails, sport and recreation facilities, men's sheds and other community projects.
- ✓ **Mobile black spots** Working from home has highlighted existing weaknesses in the state's telecommunications network. The State Government should seek co-investment from telecommunication companies to address black spots.
- ✓ **Visitor Information Centre investment** Regional towns need to be ready to welcome back tourists and provide the highest standards of customer experience.
- ✓ **Electric car charging network expansion** Tasmania needs to capitalise on its renewable energy resource as a fuel source to power the future generation of vehicles.
- ✓ **Accelerate South East Irrigation Scheme Integration** Continued growth requires water security - the agricultural sector needs certainty for market access and jobs.



- ✓ **Public transport network improvements** Improvements need to be made to the affordability of, and access to, public transport across the state. This will be essential to help people re-enter the workforce.
- ✓ **Additional Working Together enrolments and childcare sector support package** There must be swift action to support families and children in the early years, maintain placements in childcare and support the early childhood education and care sector as it recovers from the impact of Federal Government policy decisions.
- ✓ **Regional health infrastructure improvements** To improve the services provided to people in regional areas and to take the pressure off our major hospitals.

*Labor knows we need targeted support that keeps our regions going and growing*

**BUY LOCAL**

**BUILD LOCAL**

**EMPLOY LOCAL**



# 5 LOOKING AFTER PEOPLE



## Social recovery is just as important as economic recovery.

COVID-19 will have lasting impacts on people's mental health, particularly our young people who require targeted support.

The pandemic also demonstrated the catastrophic consequences of underinvestment in the health system and the need to upgrade health facilities across the state, particularly regional health facilities and services.

- ✓ **JobSeeker payment cannot return to pre-COVID-19 levels** Newstart was insufficient before COVID-19. With a 70% increase in the number of people on JobSeeker in Tasmania since the first case of COVID-19, the Federal Government cannot withdraw the COVID-19 supplement.
- ✓ **Royal Hobart Hospital Stage 2** Pressure continues to be felt in our health system with ambulance ramping and bed block. The State Government must work to secure Federal funds to start detailed planning works on the next stage of the redevelopment.
- ✓ **Launceston Private Hospital colocation and Launceston Health Precinct** This project has stalled and it needs to be jumpstarted to make sure people in northern Tasmania have access to the highest-quality health care on one site.
- ✓ **Restore rehabilitation beds at the North West Regional Hospital** The State Government cut 8 rehabilitation beds from the NWRH after promising to keep them. The Government must reverse this short-sighted decision.
- ✓ **Targeted roll out of free public WIFI in areas of greatest disadvantage** COVID-19 further exposed Tasmania's digital divide, with education, bill payments and Centrelink all requiring internet access. The 2019 TasCOSS digital inclusion report recommended public wifi should be prioritised in areas of social disadvantage and that the internet should be considered an essential service.
- ✓ **Restore public services** This pandemic has highlighted the critical role public services play in supporting our everyday lives, from health, to education to biosecurity and it is critical they are restored, rather than diminished or outsourced.
- ✓ **Adopt Labor's Mental Health Workers in Schools policy** Our young people have experienced disruption during this time in ways we may never fully appreciate. Mental health workers need to be in every school to support students and make sure they can access the support and guidance they need, when they need it.
- ✓ **Winter energy supplement** The State Government should provide a one-off payment to people to assist those in hardship with winter power bills.

- ✓ **Homelessness and affordable housing** The State Government must accept all 61 recommendations from the Parliamentary Inquiry into Affordable Housing.
- ✓ **Increase family violence support** The number of calls to family violence hotlines has increased as a consequence of COVID-19. There must be an increase in services to support survivors.
- ✓ **Adopt Labor's Solar Homes policy** The construction of every new affordable housing property should include solar panels to help lower the cost of living for tenants.
- ✓ **Catch up funding for students** Despite the best efforts of school staff, who went to extraordinary lengths to minimise the education disruption, students who were falling behind before the crisis will have fallen even further behind. The State Government should provide additional money to schools with clear guidelines about high priority initiatives.
- ✓ **Energy efficiency upgrades** The State Government should reintroduce energy efficiency upgrades for eligible applicants to help ease the cost of living.
- ✓ **New public mother and baby unit beds** Tasmania has just one public mother and baby unit bed. Access to support after the birth of a child should not be rationed and statewide services must be introduced.
- ✓ **Mersey Community Hospital Emergency Department** The Government must restore the MCH ED to a 24 hour, seven day a week service.
- ✓ **Food relief funding** The Federal Government has failed to provide funding certainty to emergency food relief providers in Tasmania. This must be addressed urgently.
- ✓ **Safer workplaces plan** Properly resourced inspectorate in Work Safe Tasmania with the capacity to support employers and unions to deliver safe workplaces and to effectively prosecute breaches.
- ✓ **Recovery plans for not-for-profit sector** Provide targeted training for the not-for-profit sector on business continuity and recovery plans. Provide support to develop disaster plans, IT development and cyber security measures.
- ✓ **Closing the Gap** First Nations people faced greater health risks from COVID-19, which further disadvantaged them when they were already living with greater inequality. Closing the Gap initiatives must be accelerated.
- ✓ **We are all in this together** Every effort must be made to eliminate discrimination and racism and ensure people from all nations can participate fully in our society. Many visa holders have faced great hardship during COVID-19 and recovery will take longer for them without support.



# REGIONAL PROJECTS



The following are examples of regional projects the Labor Party recommends the State Government fast track or fund under the programs outlined in the earlier chapters of this document.

## NORTH WEST

### Priority Infrastructure

- Burnie Port redevelopment
- Cradle Mountain redevelopment
- Bass Highway upgrades
- Bass Highway / Stowport Road intersection safety improvements
- TT-Line Terminal upgrade
- Stanley Port upgrade
- Next Iconic walk on the West Coast

### Community Development

- New Burnie Ambulance Station
- North West Coastal Pathway, fast-track completion
- North West Museum and Art Gallery development
- Upgrades to Montello Primary School
- Accelerate Penguin High School redevelopment

## NORTH

### Priority Infrastructure

- Tasman Highway overtaking lanes
- West Tamar Highway duplication
- Continuation of Golconda Road upgrade
- Reconstruct and seal Palana Road, Flinders Island
- Campbell Town underpass
- Dalrymple Road upgrade and bridge replacement, George Town

### Community Development

- Coles Bay water and sewerage upgrade
- Tamar River health projects
- Launceston City Council City Heart project
- Bass Highway upgrade - Meander Valley
- Victoria Street Scottsdale upgrade
- Queechy School upgrade of gym and F Block

## SOUTH

### Priority Infrastructure

- Huon Bypass
- South Arm Highway, Clarence Plains/Rokeby upgrade
- Kingston Beach Master Plan
- Mt Field National Park upgrade
- Mornington Roundabout upgrade
- Arthur Highway upgrades

### Community Development

- Hobart Showgrounds Redevelopment
- Risdon Vale Recreation and Facilities Masterplan development
- Lauderdale Primary School upgrade
- Hobart Men's Shed relocation
- Pontville Sports Precinct redevelopment
- Kingborough Lions, Lightwood Park upgrade

# Labor's COVID-19 Recovery Package

# CREATING JOBS

REBUILDING A **BETTER & FAIRER** TASMANIA



**Support those hardest hit by COVID-19**



**Get people into jobs**



**Build a better and fairer Tasmania**



**Rebecca WHITE**

Labor Leader & Member for Lyons  
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