

[3.15 p.m.]

**Mr BROOKS** - That would be great.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - Since becoming the new Minister for Hospitality, this represents a great opportunity because it gives me a chance that very few ministers have, and that is to build a portfolio from the ground up. There was some initial work done by the previous minister and what it gives the new Government is an opportunity to really build something of absolute significance. In answer to your question, we absolutely take this seriously. We value the relationship. I have met with the THA and their board on a number of occasions. I have been across the State. I am meeting, in fact, up in your neck of the woods with representatives from the hospitality industry and looking at some of the issues that they want sorted and we are onto it.

**Mr BROOKS** - As you mentioned, you have met with the board several times.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - Yes, the THA. They amalgamated with AHA/RCA.

**Mr BROOKS** - Did they promote their key requirements to you to have gaming and liquor under the hospitality portfolio?

**Mr O'BYRNE** - In discussions with the THA, they expressed a desire to have a one-stop-shop minister who covers all of their issues of concern with one minister. Clearly, that includes a vast array of issues of concern relating to skill development, training, workforce skill and workforce development. They raised the issue of licensing and gaming, and that is still a responsibility of the Tasmanian Gaming Commission which is a part of the Department of Treasury and Finance. There are very few industry sectors that have a minister which covers the full gamut of the portfolios that cover their area. What they have got is a voice in Cabinet now, which they did not have prior to the establishment of a Hospitality minister. If they have issues relating to that matter, as their minister, as the Hospitality minister, it is incumbent on me to make representations to the appropriate departments to ensure that their voices are heard, and the issues that they raise can get full consideration by Government.

**Mr BROOKS** - Did they put that to you that they would specifically prefer gaming and liquor licensing to be under the control of the Hospitality minister?

**Mr O'BYRNE** - Yes, they did. They did articulate that.

**Mr BROOKS** - Did you represent that to Cabinet?

**Mr O'BYRNE** - I am not able to talk about what happens inside Cabinet, apart from the formal decisions. What I can commit to is that once that representation was made to me, in a meeting with the Treasurer we raised the issue and like most of my conversations with the Treasurer, they are usually pretty pointed and we have the debate about how much money we are going to get or not going to get, and within the budgeting process some of those conversations are pretty robust. Within this context, he is in no doubt about the view from the THA, and I have raised that formally with the Treasurer.

**Mr BROOKS** - So what is the Government's position, then, on it?

**Mr O'BYRNE** - The Government's position at the moment is that licensing and gaming remains the responsibility of the Tasmanian Gaming Commission, which quite rightfully reports to the Department of Treasury and Finance.

**Mr BROOKS** - So you failed?

**Mr O'BYRNE** - No. I think I made the point that when issues are raised with a minister, they are raised in the appropriate areas. Very few industries across Tasmania have a one-stop-shop in terms of a minister. There is a whole range of responsibilities that ministers have and sometimes unfortunately they do have -

**Mr BROOKS** - It was more at this stage about two specific areas, not the one-stop-shop for everything.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - I might say at this stage there has been no change in the position, but that does not mean I stop advocating for the industry.

**Mr BOOTH** - With regard to the one-stop-shop issue, can you flesh that out a bit? Who is going to own it? What shape is it going to take in terms of responsibility for workers comp, OH&S and all of the issues that normally are associated effectively with a pool or a labour hire situation? So can you detail how it is going to work?

**Mr O'BYRNE** - It is a concept at this stage, and I suppose as Workplace Relations minister there is a whole range of

**Mr O'BYRNE** - There is a whole range of government legislation which would impact on any establishment - this is talking about the central pool.

**Mr BOOTH** - Yes. The idea is attractive but I am concerned that those sorts of activities are already carried out by labour hire companies and various other organisations to get access to employees, so I am intrigued that the Government is thinking of setting up a labour pool that it might be responsible for, if that is what you are intending to do.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - No, it is a \$20 000 commitment. There are a number of labour pool concepts that occur around the world. For example, in Las Vegas with the casinos, there is a central pooling system. One of the major issues with the hospitality industry is that they struggle to find good staff and labour hire companies or group training companies seem to have struggled to keep up with the demand from the industry. The concept - and it is just a concept at this stage and we need to work through a whole lot of detail - would be to, with maximum input from hospitality employers through the THA and the Liquor and Hospitality Union as a representative of the workers, is to try to have a central point of registration. Essentially it is the original vetting, so instead of putting out expensive ads in the paper every time there is a vacancy we could have a central conduit where staff could register their interest and there are some checks and balances so that a fair bit of the work is already done for business in terms of vetting. It will not impinge on the businesses right to employ anyone or not, it is an idea to try to fill a hole that industry has raised with us.

**Mr BOOTH** - I am just concerned that you might set up another quango looking after employed hospitality workers and ostensibly providing a service.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - I think we have made it pretty clear that it is to deal with the seasonal high-demand times. It will not be the base point for the provision of labour and training within Tasmania, but in peak times in certain areas. Every year we cannot get good staff, we cannot do it. This is a way for Government to sit down with industry and say, 'How about we try this to add to what is already there?'

**Mr BOOTH** - The same seasonal problems with picking fruit; when I had my sawmill I used to have the same problems finding skilled labour. You went through the Commonwealth Employment Service or employment agencies that did that stuff and I am wondering whether you ought to be engaging with the private sector to create that through their normal structure, rather than creating a bureaucracy that is going to be expensive to run. If you take on some sort of responsibility for vetting people it raises issues of equity and equal access and stuff.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - Again, let us not get too far ahead of ourselves. There is a need from industry that is not currently being met in high season peak demands. This is a concept to see if it works. It has worked well - and I gave the example of Las Vegas -

**Mr BOOTH** - Is that run by government?

**Mr O'BYRNE** - It is run by industry predominantly and the government assists by way of regulation. It is early days for this idea.

**Mr BOOTH** - I am content with that answer; I was just curious.

**Mr WIGHTMAN** - Can you please tell the committee exactly what you intend to do to address training issues in the hospitality sector?

**Mr O'BYRNE** - This continues on from the previous couple of questions. As I said, the Hospitality portfolio is brand new and it is something that we need to build together from the ground up. It is exciting, it has hard work and is full of opportunities. Nearly every Tasmanian has a close personal experience with the sector but it works on a much bigger level, too. There is a whole range of opportunities out there. When I was given the Hospitality portfolio I consulted with industry and asked them what they needed to grow the sector in Tasmania and to make it the best it could be. Many individuals and businesses told me that they

needed access to better training so that they could provide the best staff available. With this in mind, the 2010-11 Budget has \$100 000 allocated to hospitality training. This is a key example of the Government consulting with stakeholders, listening to what they are saying and responding accordingly. The \$100 000 will be used to establish a hospitality sector skills development initiative. By introducing this program, the Government is saying it recognises the need to upskill workers, particularly those in part-time and casual work. Providing hospitality workers with the opportunity to learn will strengthen the industry over the long term, and will make it easier for business to find good staff.

In addition to the \$100 000 that the Government has provided for training over the next 12 months, Skills Tasmania recently introduced the Hospitality Casual Workers Initiative. This makes it possible for casual workers in both the north and the south to study selected units from Cert II in hospitality operations. So casual workers will also be better trained and more able to operate at a really professional level. The Government has also committed \$20 000, with that question raised by Mr Booth, to see if we can find a way to assist our industry in peak times. The really important thing is that the State Government continues to listen to the industry, and we will establish a formal process for the industry to consult with and provide advice to Government.

This will include developing a partnership with the Tasmanian Hospitality Association to properly recognise the importance of the sector and its very significant contribution to the social and economic wellbeing of all Tasmanians. So there is a whole range of things that we are working on as a response from industry and also as a response in my previous life in the liquor and hospitality union.

**Mr BROOKS** - Your policy commitments include \$30 000 for Pub Watch, which is funded, and a great initiative. As I said, it is good to see that is one of the promises you stuck to. In regard to another policy commitment, which you did highlight then, was the skills initiative which is funded under the education sector in the Budget. It is under your department, so why is there only funding for this year?

**Mr O'BYRNE** - It is an initial commitment to get the thing up and running, there is a need at the moment. It is hard to predict how the need will evolve over the years. It is a one-year commitment to set the base up to assist the industry with training.

**Mr BROOKS** - Okay. So we commit to the Future Fund?

**Mr O'BYRNE** - It depends on the discussions with the industry. It does not follow I am saying no, there was an election commitment for \$100 000 and we have honoured that and we are working with the industry.

**Mr BROOKS** - So you will not commit to the Future Fund. That is fine, it is all for art. Given the industry -

**Mr O'BYRNE** - No, it is not really what I am saying.

**Mr BROOKS** - The question was, will you commit to future funding?

**Mr O'BYRNE** - It is important in Estimates, Brooksy, that when I answer a question - sorry, that was unparliamentary, Mr **Brooks** .

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - The award-winning Mr **Brooks** . Mr **Brooks** goes to Hobart.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - What I will say is that we had an election commitment to invest in the industry training and we have honoured that commitment.

**Mr BROOKS** - Okay. So on that commitment, given the industry has around 23 000-odd employees, give or take a few, that \$100 000 works out at about \$4.35 per employee. They will not get much training.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - I just do not accept those maths.

**Mr BROOKS** - So there are not 23 000 people in the industry.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - There are, but you are assuming no-one has been trained. You are assuming that there are no people at Cert III and Cert IV, that we do not have chefs, commis chefs, sous-chefs. We have all of those. This is about making sure -

**Mr BROOKS** - None of them need training whatsoever - any training at all.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - Do you want to go talk to a chef and say, 'If you want more training, mate', good luck to you. They have knives and they will throw them. We have workers in the hospitality industry who are absolutely highly trained, there are specific needs and there already are training programs that are being provided through Polytechnic.

**Mr BROOKS** - So if you cut it in half, that is \$8.70, so no worries.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - That is a ridiculous proposition.

**Mr BROOKS** - Well, is \$100 000 enough money to train them?

**Mr O'BYRNE** - The \$100 000 is a commitment that was an election commitment. We are hopeful that it will be enough.

**Mr BROOKS** - So it is enough.

**Mr BOOTH** - Minister, you made reference to your previous life as a liquor and hospitality union representative.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - Not a thug - lovely.

**Mr BOOTH** - You would not self-describe as that, would you?

**Mr O'BYRNE** - Not at all.

**Mr BOOTH** - I have not described you as that. The question I was going to ask relates to your commitment as minister that neither you or any premier or any government that you are involved in will cross the picket line in a limousine in the times of a strike by the LHMU.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - You are talking about the 2004 issue?

**Mr BOOTH** - Correct.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - Arguably, this is not really a matter for budget Estimates. Regarding the definition of a picket line, this Government will always respect workers in their endeavours to achieve dignity in respect of their workplace. With reference to that incident, there was not a hard picket line. Under the laws of the time it was a community information centre. I was at the one at Wrest Point all day - for about 26 hours.

**The committee suspended from 3.30 p.m. to 3.39 p.m.**

**Mr BROOKS** - We have covered funding, and apparently it is not short of funding. Is there a strategic plan for the hospitality industry?

**Mr O'BYRNE** - I am not going to say there is a strategic plan for the industry -

**Mr BROOKS** - There is no trick questioning behind this one.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - We are working with the industry to identify their needs. The election commitments and the relationships that we are building and the strategic plan may very well be a part of the MOU discussions that we have with the Tasmanian Hospitality Association and other industry stakeholders. You do not just pull one out of your bag -

**Mr BROOKS** - No, I thought there might have been one prepared previously, that's all.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - When we do it, it will be done in consultation with the industry.

**Mr BROOKS** - Okay, so you will prepare one at some stage?

**Mr O'BYRNE** - We are working on an MOU and if the Tasmanian Hospitality Association and other industry stakeholders believe it is advantageous for Tasmania to have a strategic plan then we will do that. The Government will continue to work strategically to build the industry.

**Mr BROOKS** - So obviously the follow-on is: when would it be completed if you would do one? There would be no time frames then?

**Mr O'BYRNE** - Again, we are commencing discussions with the Tasmanian Hospitality Association on a memorandum of understanding about how we will work and it will no doubt form a part of those discussions.

**Mr BROOKS** - No worries. I just had a quick question if I can jump back - because I have sort of jumped all over the place - to the liquor licences and gaming. They are closely related. I understand that you have presented the industry's position - do you think it should be under the hospitality portfolio?

**Mr O'BYRNE** - Ultimately that is a whole-of-government decision. I will have my discussions with the Treasurer and other Cabinet members about that. What I committed to the industry to do is to make sure that their voice is heard and that their views are heard by other members of Cabinet. I am undertaking to do that.

Mr **BROOKS** - Okay, but you will not give a personal position here?

Mr **O'BYRNE** - When you are a minister in Government you have a lot of responsibilities and it is important that you exercise them appropriately.

Mr **BOOTH** - It becomes all about responsibility and no care, you reckon?

*Laughter.*

Mr **O'BYRNE** - No. I will not bite.

Mr **BROOKS** - The labour-pool funding of \$20 000.

Mr **O'BYRNE** - Yes.

Mr **BROOKS** - I am happy to admit - and I am new here so I may not understand how to read budgets properly or how businesses work -

Mr **O'BYRNE** - I think you are underdoing yourself there, aren't you?

Mr **BROOKS** - I could not find it in the Budget other than in the general overview in Budget Paper 1 under Economic Development, Tourism and the Arts. I could not find it in the actual budget paper reflective of that. Is it in here somewhere?

Mr **WATSON** - The Budget allocation has been added to an existing economic development portfolio output.

Mr **BROOKS** - Okay. So it is hidden in here somewhere?

Mr **WATSON** - It is in among all the other outputs.

Mr **BROOKS** - It does not say it is in here, though.

Mr **WATSON** - It is there.

Mr **BROOKS** - Okay. We will trust you on it that it is there.

Mr **BOOTH** - Have you had representation from the industry with regard to the difficulty of employing people on Sundays and public holidays, late at night and those sorts of things?

Mr **O'BYRNE** - Not specifically. That has been a part of the on-going chatter as far as I can remember. As long as I have been involved, those issues have been raised. But there are obligations for every employer to pay people appropriately. It is not a matter that I have had specifically raised as a key issue for the industry. There is general chatter about it but in specific terms, no.

## **Output group 2**

### **Sport and recreation**

**Adam Brooks MP**  
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