**TASCAT OFFICIAL COMMENCEMENT – 5 Nov 2021
ATTORNEY-GENERAL – Opening statement**

* I am pleased to be here with you all today to officially open Tasmania’s new single Civil and Administrative Tribunal – the Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (TASCAT).
* As everyone here recognises – this is a significant occasion in the history of Tasmania’s justice system.
* The establishment of TASCAT will provide greater consistency in decision making, promote alternative dispute resolution and enable seamless service delivery to a diverse range of clients – and marks a very big step to improving access to justice for all Tasmanians.
* Our Government has delivered this important project, which is almost two decades in the making, through the passing of two tranches of enabling legislation in both 2020 and more recently this year.
* This follows the co-location of the nine tribunals last year at this wonderful example of a modern and accessible premises where we find ourselves standing in today (in Barrack Street, Hobart) – as the first stage of commencing the important transitional work to amalgamate each of the tribunal operations.
* While the idea of a single tribunal had been only talked about previously, for decades, I am proud that I prioritised and have now achieved this important milestone.
* Our research confirmed the benefits of amalgamating Tribunals by creating a one-stop shop for Tasmanians who need to come before the various Tribunals.
* The Tasmanian community will see better access to justice arising from this reform including:
	+ greater consistency in decision making and processes;
	+ greater efficiency and reduction of red-tape through centralised registry functions;
	+ streamlining processes and administrative structures where appropriate, while still retaining specialist features of the previous Tribunals;
	+ creating an economy of scale that allows greater flexibility in staffing and resource allocation;
	+ access to shared state of the art facilities, staff skills and technology; and
	+ providing more efficient use of resources generally.
* Tasmania now joins all other Australian jurisdictions in forming a Civil and Administrative Tribunal. We have had the benefit of looking at what each other state has done in creating their Civil and Administrative Tribunals.
* I am advised that the other jurisdictions around the country were very helpful in assisting Tasmania in developing its CAT and I take the opportunity to thank them for that assistance.
* As I said, I am incredibly proud to have prioritised this significant reform that will deliver a more client-centric focus, particularly for our protective jurisdictions which often deal with our most vulnerable Tasmanians.
* I would like to thank and acknowledge the work undertaken to achieve this important milestone for Tasmania’s justice system, including the contributions by the inaugural President, Mr Malcom Schyvens, as well as our new Tribunal’s Deputy Presidents:
	+ Alison Clues;
	+ Rowena Holder;
	+ Yvonne Chaperon; and
	+ Marica Duvnjak.
* I also note the significant contributions of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel Robyn Webb, as well as all Department and TASCAT staff who helped to progress this project. This includes:
	+ Department of Justice Secretaries: Kathrine Morgan-Wicks and Ginna Webster;
	+ Deputy Secretaries including Dale Webster and Kristy Bourne; and
	+ key project officers including Jarrod Bryan (who is the current Acting Principal Registrar), Brad Wagg, Petr Divis, Brooke Craven and the rest of the Strategic Legislation and Policy team.
* I will also take the opportunity to thank the various Steering Committee and Working Group members from across the agency and tribunals who have also had considerable involvement in the development of this work.
* I note that we also have the architects from X Squared Architects here with us today, who are some of the masterminds behind this amazing building, so I thank them again and all of the Department infrastructure and facilities team who have helped to deliver these modern and accessible facilities.
* The nine Tribunals that have been amalgamated into TASCAT as part of the initial implementation are the strong foundations for future reforms.
* As I have indicated already, I am currently looking at other decision making functions that can be given to the Tribunal.
* My Department will continue to work with TASCAT as we continue throughout the transition phase, as well as to determine what further Tribunals, Boards and other areas would be appropriate to be transferred to the TASCAT in future.
* Subject to further detailed analysis and consultation, matters that the Government will consider for transfer to TASCAT in stage three may include:
	+ residential tenancy matters;
	+ certain appeals relating to licensing matters within the consumer affairs portfolio;
	+ building matters, including certain building disputes;
	+ certain other appeals to the Administrative Appeals Division of the Magistrates Court; and
	+ certain appeals within the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court.
* I look forward to progressing this further work early next year, and thank you all again for all of your efforts and contributions which have resulted in the formal commencement of TASCAT.