

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
Wednesday, 23 July 2014
ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Chair:

Ms F.E. Bedford

Members:

Mr S.P. Griffiths
Ms K. Hildyard
Mr E.J. Hughes
Mr A.S. Pederick
Mr M. Pengilly
Ms D. Wortley

The committee met at 10:00

Estimates Vote

DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONS, \$107,229,000
ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONS,
\$3,311,000

Minister:

Hon. G.G. Brock, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Local Government.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr S. Ashby, Chief Executive, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

Mr T. Mader, Executive Director, Regions, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

Mr B. Paolo, Director, Regions, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

Mr S. Johnke, Director, Finance and Prudential Management, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

Mr M. Williams, Manager, Budget Strategy Unit, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

The CHAIR: The estimates committee is a relatively informal procedure and as such there is no need to stand to ask or answer questions. The committee will determine an approximate time for consideration of proposed payments to facilitate a change of departmental advisers. I understand that the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition have agreed on a timetable for today's proceedings.

Changes to committee membership will be notified as they occur. Members should ensure that the Chair is provided with a completed request to be discharged form. If the minister undertakes to supply information at a later date, it must be submitted to the committee secretary by no later than Friday 26 September 2014 for inclusion in the *Hansard* supplement.

I propose to allow both the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition to make opening statements of about 10 minutes each if they wish. There will be a flexible approach to giving the call

for asking questions, based on about three questions per member, alternating each side. Supplementary questions will be the exception rather than the rule.

A member who is not part of the committee may, at the discretion of the Chair, ask a question. Questions must be based on lines of expenditure in the budget papers and must be identifiable or referenced. Members unable to complete their questions during the proceedings may submit them as questions on notice for inclusion in the House of Assembly *Notice Paper*.

There is no formal facility for the tabling of documents before the committee; however, documents can be supplied to the Chair for distribution to the committee. The incorporation of material in *Hansard* is permitted on the same basis as applies in the house, that is, that it is purely statistical and limited to one page in length.

All questions are to be directed to the minister rather than his advisers. The minister may refer questions to advisers for a response. I also advise that for the purposes of the committees television coverage will be allowed for filming from both the northern and southern galleries. I declare the proposed payments open for examination and call on the minister to make his opening statement, if he wishes.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Thank you for the opportunity to make an opening statement. Our regions contribute to the economic strength and the social fabric of South Australia. They are an integral part of South Australia's identity. Regional South Australia contributes about \$23 billion to the state's economy and produces about 45 per cent of the merchandise exports, and it does so with approximately 29 per cent of our state's population.

Our regions are dealing with various challenges; some of these challenges are region-specific and need local solutions, while others are common across all the regions. However, wherever I have been so far as Minister for Regional Development, I have been struck by the optimism and commitment of local communities and businesses working to find sustainable opportunities for their region to grow and prosper. Creating the conditions for regional businesses and communities to grow and to prosper is fundamentally important for all South Australians.

This government is working to transform our state's economy, and this budget is focused on jobs, that is, working to ensure that all South Australians are afforded the opportunity of meaningful employment wherever they live. The government is doing this through measures that support businesses and jobs, such as:

- payroll tax concessions;
- reforming WorkCover;
- training and employment-related initiatives; and
- providing help for businesses to win more government work through the Tender Ready initiative in collaboration with Business SA.

The success of regional industries, such as agriculture, forestry and fishing, mining and minerals processing, manufacturing, tourism, energy production, aquaculture, and food and wine production, is vital to the wellbeing of South Australia's economy. The South Australian government recognises the need for regional communities to build on their economic foundations to generate social vitality and to preserve and restore their environmental assets.

Building stronger regions is an imperative acknowledged by the state government and is a key reason for my decision to support stable and effective government based on the delivery of a series of agreements between the Premier and myself which were reached in March 2014. The government has committed to two charters, one aimed at building a stronger regional South Australia and the other aimed at growing and supporting small business.

The government's regional development package has been developed in the context of the Charter for Stronger Regional Policy which sets out a number of opportunities for regional communities to interact with the government, such as:

- the reintroduction of country cabinet meetings each year;

- at least one parliamentary forum being held in regional areas each year;
- at least one minister spending a day each week in regional areas;
- holding at least three senior management council meetings in the regions each year;
- development of an interactive portal connected to the sa.gov website to engage with regional communities; and
- the development of a dedicated GovChat program to enable regional South Australians to discuss issues directly with the Premier, ministers and chief executives.

The new regional development package of initiatives is worth \$39 million in the first year and \$29 million per annum thereafter. The \$39 million package includes:

- \$10 million as a one-off Job Accelerator Fund quarantined for regional development;
- \$15.5 million per annum drawn from existing resources; and
- \$13.4 million per annum increase to the Regional Development Fund.

The 2014-15 state budget highlights the government's commitment to regional communities through significant investment in key service areas, programs and infrastructure allocated to regional South Australia. These investments are outlined in the regional chapter of the state budget, which I negotiated to be included in the budget papers and which provides information about the new initiatives in the 2014-15 budget that provide opportunities for regional South Australia.

These targeted investments are expected to drive growth and generate flow-on benefits for regional communities and to provide a large range of improvements to regional infrastructure. The charter for stronger regional policy provides for a greater focus on regional South Australia in government decision-making.

While the issues and the opportunities affecting regional South Australia impact every government department, and the delivery of the government's commitments to the regions belongs to various agencies, these activities need to be coordinated to build an integrated and effective approach to regional engagement.

To this end, the Regional South Australian Cabinet Committee, specifically created to focus on the regions, was established and held its inaugural meeting on 26 May 2014. I chair the cabinet committee, with others being the Treasurer, the Minister for Employment, Higher Education and Skills, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries and the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure.

A greater focus on regional South Australia in government decision-making is also enshrined in the regional impact assessment policy and guidelines, which ensure that regional impacts and issues are considered in government decision-making processes.

The regional impact assessment policy and guidelines are being formed at the moment and require government agencies to prepare a regional impact assessment statement for any significant change proposed in relation to services or infrastructure in regional areas.

The government's commitments to the regions include an annual boost of \$13.4 million in new monies that I have secured to enhance the Regional Development Fund. This will provide for an annual expenditure program of \$15 million per annum, and the processes for this have already commenced. The Regional Development Fund comprises the following five programs:

- Regional Food Initiatives Program: \$300,000 per annum over four years to support regionally-based food organisations to build a stronger regional food presence in South Australia.
- Small Grants Program: \$3 million per annum over four years to support new regional employment and investment opportunities linked with state government priorities.

- Major Projects Program: \$8.55 million per annum over four years to support major economic projects designed to strengthen regional industries, support local economies and opportunities through investment in strategic projects.
- Community Infrastructure Program: \$3 million per annum over four years to support investment in regional communities to develop their economic infrastructure and to grow their capabilities as a foundation for future jobs and economic growth.
- Country Cabinet Program: \$150,000 per annum to support communities that host country cabinet meetings over the next four years for project proposals that will assist the community to meet its economic and social needs.

Expressions of interest for the first three of these programs have now closed, as has the Riverland round of the Fund My Idea program. The Community Infrastructure Program is open until 1 August.

Regional investment in job creation initiatives is essential to building capacity in local industries and communities. The new \$10 million Jobs Accelerator Fund, exclusively for regional development, will not only complement the package of initiatives that will drive regional economic development but also will aim to leverage state government programs delivered by other agency portfolios, such as training and employment programs and business assistance programs.

A strategic and coordinated approach will give regions the opportunity to build on their competitive advantages and to create an environment for jobs growth and improved social and economic infrastructure. This approach will be underpinned by partnerships between the government and the private sector in identifying and addressing barriers to creating jobs in our regions. As its name suggests, the Jobs Accelerator Fund will aim to stimulate or fast track investment that generates new employment and participation opportunities that are sustainable.

The most efficient and effective way to deliver on the government's current and future commitments is to have leadership that provides across-government support to rural and regional South Australia as well as providing a clear point of entry to government.

To that end, Regions SA has been established within the Department of Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA) to provide a comprehensive focus on regions. It will provide a clear, strategic focus to state government regional development activity and will provide regions with a stronger voice in government. Regions SA will provide an integrated cross-sector, cross-government and regionally-focused approach to policies, strategies, and programs thereby ensuring government policy to promote improved economic and social outcomes for the regions is developed with input from regional stakeholders.

A recruitment process has been undertaken to provide the necessary capabilities in terms of the development and implementation of regional development strategies supporting increased economic activity in the regions and maximising the collective impact of government activity in the regions.

These new commitments to regional South Australia build on the work of previous years and provide an indication of what can be possible when we all work together. The Regional Statement for South Australia was launched in December 2013 based on four themes which regional communities identified through consultation as being of paramount importance. These include:

- there being a commitment to the regions;
- the need to work together;
- the empowerment of regional communities; and
- aligning regional priorities.

The statement reaffirms the state government's commitment to regional areas by highlighting the importance of regional communities to the continuing economic development of the state. Examples of successful collaboration undertaken previously include:

- the Riverland Sustainable Fund—where \$20 million was provided over four years to assist the Riverland region to diversify its economic base. Now closed, the fund

supported 31 local projects which will lead to the creation of up to 235 jobs and more than \$48.7 million in total project investment; and

- the Enterprise Zone Fund—Upper Spencer Gulf and Outback. This \$4 million fund over four years was available to boost economic and community development within the Upper Spencer Gulf and Outback. Now closed, the fund has supported 11 projects which will lead to the creation of 116 jobs and an investment of nearly \$14 million.

In concluding these introductory remarks, I reiterate that the government understands that the prosperity and wellbeing of regional South Australians and their communities underpin the sustainability and wellbeing of the entire state.

The contribution of our regional industries is important to the state's economy and our prosperity and wellbeing, and the government's role in supporting regional industries and communities remains vital in building a better future for all South Australians. There are many opportunities to grasp and we know that the challenges are a constant. The government will continue to work closely with the commonwealth and local governments, industry, business and communities in striving to get the best possible outcomes for regional South Australia.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Member for Goyder.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Madam Chair, I note that the minister's opening statement took 13.5 minutes, or thereabouts.

The CHAIR: Never mind; let's get away, shall we? Do you have a statement or are you going to ask a question?

Mr GRIFFITHS: No, I just have a couple of things to say. There was a lot of great information provided in that statement, minister, and I took particular note of the fact that you quoted 29 per cent of the population being in regional South Australia. This is a statement, not a question to you, but I find it interesting that the Strategic Plan, according to my recollection, quotes a figure of 18 per cent as being the target for regional South Australia. So you might choose to clarify that at a later opportunity. I would love to see it at 29 per cent, I must say.

Indeed, the members on this side of the house absolutely support the statement that it is all about jobs, because it is. Job opportunities in regional South Australia link to every opportunity that a community needs and deserves. Certainly for us, it is part of our DNA—and for you, living in a regional area too. I might just ask one easy question; it relates to jobs and the reference is Budget Paper 3, page 127. Under table 8.2 there is some information about regional population and labour force data. Minister, are you able to confirm what the unemployment rate for the Yorke, Mid North and Barossa area is?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Could we have the line number again, please?

Mr GRIFFITHS: It is on Budget Paper 3, page 127, table 8.2. My request for data would be at the latest ABS figures, which I believe were in June.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: We will take that on notice, member, just to make sure we have the right information. We do not have that information here at the moment.

Mr GRIFFITHS: The information in the book certainly relates to (which disappoints me immensely) an average figure of 2013, and I think that is a discrepancy, that you as a minister would like to see some accurate information provided. As an extension of that, minister, do you seek that sort of briefing as part of your regular updates with your staff? Is this the sort of information you request?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: To answer your question, I do get regular information on all that and we just have to get the correct information. I did not bring that with me at this particular point. I just reinforce to the member that we will get that information and that I have the information, but before I make a comment here I do not want to put the wrong information across to you. I understand exactly where you are coming from, and I have seen it, but I just want to double-check my figures before I make it public.

Mr GRIFFITHS: The reason I ask for that collection area is that it is our own patch, and I thought that would have been information quite easily available from the variety of staff you have around you.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Can I just reinforce that I know the information, but before I make public comment here I just want to double-check my figures.

Mr GRIFFITHS: On the basis that you have been provided with that information, the figure, and I am quite happy to tell you my understanding of the latest ABS figure, is a 7.2 per cent unemployment rate for the region. That disappoints me immensely, and it is a significant jump from 12 months before that. In the policy development you do, on the basis of what the outcomes of the policy are for job creation opportunities, have you set yourself a target of what you want regional unemployment within individual collection areas or the whole state to be brought down to? Is that your challenge to yourself?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: To answer your question, my personal vision is to create as many jobs as we can with the opportunities out there, working with businesses and also working with other ministers to maintain the best opportunities out there, bearing in mind that it is not only the government who can create the unemployment move, it is everybody. The projects that have already gone out with the Regional Development Fund have only just gone out, so what we are doing is, when it goes out there, understanding how many jobs it should create, and I will be monitoring those jobs further on to see what the response is and the final outcome of those projects.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Just as an extension of that, I think the words you said there, minister, were 'not the role of the government to create the unemployment move'.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Not only the government.

Mr GRIFFITHS: 'Not only,' okay. The government obviously sets the key policy and, as a significant driver of policy for regional South Australia, as part of your negotiations with the Premier on the two charters you referred to in your opening statement, was that one of your discussion points—about what unemployment rates currently are, and what the targets were to provide not just the skills opportunity but the job outcomes, and what level of investment needs to occur in infrastructure, the creation programs, and augment assistance? Did you talk about the unemployment rates to the Premier?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I talked about unemployment in general, not unemployment rates. What I want to be able to do, as we all should be doing, is creating as many job opportunities out there as we can, with optimism, and also working in conjunction with the federal government to ensure that we have that optimism out there. I was not looking at 6 per cent, or 5 per cent, or 10 per cent unemployment; I want to get as many jobs and opportunities for our youth and our regions as we can.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I will jump to another area, then: Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 35, specifically the Job Accelerator Fund, which you referred to in your opening statement, and the \$10 million that is available in the 2014-15 financial year. Are you able to confirm, are the guidelines available yet for applications or expressions of interest to be lodged?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: First up, I think I need to explain what the Job Accelerator Fund is, and then I will carry on. The Job Accelerator Fund aims to stimulate or fast-track investment that generates new employment and participation opportunities that are sustainable. The fund is a one-off, as I said earlier, in 2014-15. Regions SA will be liaising with key agencies to maximise the important investment in regions and to support the delivery of the government's Our Jobs Plan policy.

Regions SA will work in conjunction with the Economic Development Board on a package of initiatives for the fund. The package of initiatives may include a combination of grants, loans and other mechanisms and incentives for the private, local government and community sectors to partner with the government in fast-tracking job creation in the regions. Regional infrastructure investment in job creation initiatives is essential, as I said earlier, about building capacity and local industries and communities.

The \$10 million Job Accelerator Fund is exclusively for regional development and will not only complement the package of initiatives that I have achieved through my agreement with the

Premier to drive regional economic development but will aim to leverage state government programs delivered by other agency portfolios, such as training and employment programs and business assistance programs.

We need to have a strategic and coordinated approach which will give regions the opportunity to build on their competitive advantages and create an environment for jobs growth and improved social and economic infrastructure. This approach will be underpinned by partnerships between the government and the private sector to identify and address barriers to creating jobs in the regions.

The fund will be developed with the Economic Development Board. A subcommittee of the Economic Development Board is working on the \$20 million Job Accelerator Fund, which was part of the state government's Our Jobs Plan election commitment. This committee is led by Mr Rob Chapman. Regions SA has already held initial discussions with the office of the Economic Development Board with a view to progress with a subcommittee in early August; therefore, it is still going. We will work very closely with the RDAs to investigate regional opportunities, and we are meeting with the RDA CEOs tomorrow to progress ideas and seek their views on the future direction.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Minister, I absolutely respect the words. What I am particularly interested in though is actions. It is over four months since the election, and it is over four months since you began talking about these additional dollars in the \$10 million fund available for one year only.

In your response then you have talked about meetings and the formulation of plans. Mr Rob Chapman will probably be a little bit busy trying to sort out Adelaide Crows issues for a little while now. But, minister, you have not told me your own target date for the eventual release of these guidelines; that is the key date I am interested in.

Minister, when I quote to you a 7.2 per cent unemployment rate in our own patch, it is obvious to me that \$10 million is desperately required. You have got it; okay. You have got it through your negotiations, but when is it actually going to be available for use?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Thank you, member. First up, just to go back, I have been across all the regions, and we have been listening and bringing those issues and challenges back to the cabinet and to this Regions SA cabinet committee we have got. We have not got all the staff for Regions SA at this particular point. We are still sourcing some other people.

We want to be working very closely with the RDAs. You are very aware that we had a bit of a misunderstanding with the RDAs coming up to where we are today. We have had meetings with the CEs, looking at ways to collaboratively work with the RDAs in particular. We need to have good collaboration working not only with the government but I think with all members of this parliament here.

The other thing is it is easy to just push this stuff out there, but this \$10 million accelerator fund has got to go through the Economic Development Board. At the moment, we are putting the proposals up to the Economic Development Board with some suggestions. We will make certain that what we do through the subcommittee of the Economic Development Board is get our views and suggestions up there and then our opportunities.

I have just been advised that the Economic Development Board subcommittee meets on 5 August, and we will be presenting all our proposals to that subcommittee on that particular day. I want to be able to make certain that we get the best opportunities out there by working with the RDAs. Each region is separate. Each region has various challenges and opportunities, so we have been taking that on board as we go along.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Okay. Madam Chair, I know there are questions from the other side but, on this, minister, you are the person in the unique position to actually say, 'Stop the crap. I just want to see action on this.' The fifth of August is an interesting date, a week and a bit in the future, but is it your intention to either attend yourself or tell those who attend there that, 'One week after 5 August is when I want the blooming guidelines released'?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I have not checked my diary on that particular day. I do not have my diary here with me—but it fills up fairly quickly. I am making every attempt to attend that subcommittee meeting. If somebody can just perhaps check my diary, I can give you an answer.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I understand that, minister, but you have the departmental chief next to you who reminds you of the date of the meeting. Does the departmental chief then know if you are scheduled to attend the meeting?

The CHAIR: You can come back to that.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: No, I can give you the answer to that. That is a parliamentary sitting day. It depends. If I can get a pair here, I will be making every attempt to attend that meeting.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Yes, it is a Tuesday.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: It is a Tuesday, yes it is.

Mr HUGHES: I refer the committee to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 35 to 37. The Regional Development program sets out PIRSA's regional programs. Where can I find information about other regional expenditure?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: In order to provide greater transparency around the state government's expenditure in regional South Australia, the government has instigated the publication of material in its budget papers that sets out the funding provided to regional communities. The Regional Budget Chapter, which I negotiated to be included in the budget papers, identifies funding which is provided to regional South Australia from across various government agencies.

These investments are outlined in Budget Paper 3, Chapter 8: Regional South Australia, which provides information about the initiatives in the 2014-15 budget which provide opportunities for regional South Australia.

In this way, the 2014-15 state budget highlights the government's commitment to regional communities through significant investment in key service areas, programs and infrastructure allocated to regional South Australia. The chapter also includes information on the Charter for Stronger Regional Policy and the \$39 million packages of initiatives that I negotiated, the Regional South Australia Cabinet Committee, and a regional economic profile.

To remind members, the government's regional development package of new and existing funding is highlighted by the Charter for Stronger Regional Policy which sets out a number of opportunities for regional communities to interact with the government as follows:

- the reintroduction of three country cabinet meetings each year;
- at least one state parliamentary forum in a regional area per year;
- the requirement that at least one minister spend a day each week in a regional area;
- holding at least three Senior Management Council meetings in regions each year;
- the development of an interactive portal connected to the SAGov website to engage with regional communities; and
- a dedicated GovChat program that enables regional South Australians to discuss issues directly with the Premier, ministers and chief executives.

The regional development package of initiatives is worth \$39 million in the first year and \$29 million per annum thereafter. The \$39 million includes \$15.5 million per annum drawn from existing resources; \$10 million as a one-off Jobs Accelerator Fund quarantined to regional development; and a \$13.4 million per annum increase to the Regional Development Fund.

These targeted investments are expected to drive growth and generate flow-on benefits for regional communities and to provide a large range of improvements to regional infrastructure. This is the first iteration of the Regional Budget Chapter. I anticipate future budgets will be able to expand on that and refine the information provided in the regional chapter for the amount of money spent in the regions. Madam Chair, if I may, we have an answer for the unemployment figures.

Mr GRIFFITHS: And it is?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Before I do that, Steve, which month did you ask for?

Mr GRIFFITHS: I asked for June, minister.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: June. Steve, can you ask that question about the job figures again so that I have it correct?

Mr GRIFFITHS: I am particularly interested in ABS data figures for the June 2014 month for the Barossa, Yorke, Mid North collection area for unemployment rates.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Seven per cent for regional South Australia.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Seven per cent?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Seven per cent for regional South Australia; 7.1 per cent for Barossa, Yorke and Mid North. That source is the ABS Labour Force Survey. Just getting back to the Job Accelerator Fund and the EDB on 5 August, as I said, it is on a parliamentary sitting day. Would the opposition be receptive to giving me a pair in order to attend that? Take it on notice.

Members interjecting:

The CHAIR: We are moving on.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I have been posed a question by the minister.

The CHAIR: The member for Reynell has a question.

Members interjecting:

The CHAIR: We are moving on. We are into questions. That is for later. We only have a small amount of time.

Ms HILDYARD: I refer the committee to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 35. What has been the response to the new Regional Development Fund program?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: As members would be aware, the government has increased the Regional Development Fund by an additional \$13.4 million to a fund now totalling \$15 million per annum from 2014-15. Wherever I have travelled in the state I have promoted the fund and encouraged interested people, in conjunction with Regional Development Australia organisations where relevant, to consider applying for these funds.

To recap briefly, the Regional Development Fund comprises five programs: the Regional Food Initiatives Program, which is \$300,000 per annum over four years to support regionally-based food organisations; the Small Grants Program, which is \$3 million per annum over four years to support new regional employment and investment opportunities; the Major Projects Program, which is \$8.55 million per annum over four years to support major economic projects designed to strengthen regional industries, support local economies and opportunities—

Mr GRIFFITHS: Point of order.

The CHAIR: Order! We have a point of order.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I believe the minister provided this information as part of his introductory comments, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR: I am listening. We need to move along.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: There is a little bit more than I can elaborate on, if I may; I will just skip that part. Regions SA has been inundated with responses, which is very encouraging. It is a clear indication that organisations in our regions are ready to invest. The Regional Food Initiatives Program has received more than 30 expressions of interest, the Small Grants Program received more than 100 expressions of interest, and the Major Projects Program closed on 18 July with 40 expressions of interest.

Short-listing of these programs is being undertaken at the moment, and the short-listed applicants will be invited to submit a full application by the end of August 2014. Successful applicants

can be expected to be notified by the end of November 2014. The short-listing of expressions of interest for the Major Projects Program is expected in about mid-August 2014, with short-listed applicants invited to submit a formal application by early September 2014. Expressions of interest for the Community Infrastructure Program do not close until Friday 1 August.

In addition, I understand that 76 submissions have been received for Fund My Idea Riverland, which was released during the country cabinet meeting held in the Riverland on 23 June. Submissions were made online via the YourSAy website, and suitable submissions will be published online for public voting between 26 July and 9 August. The top three publicly voted ideas will then be assessed for funding.

We are already seeing an extremely positive response from regions. I look forward to seeing the best and the most innovative of these projects being further developed so that we can start to see the \$15 million flowing to our regions.

Ms WORTLEY: Minister, in your opening statement, and in response to the last question, you referred to Regions SA. Can you please provide us with some detail as to what will be the role of the new Regions SA? I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 35.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: The formation of a stable government in South Australia was based on the delivery of a series of agreements between myself and the Premier. These agreements detail a number of actions the state government has committed to for regional South Australia and include additional support to be provided to communities, projects and programs. One of these commitments was the creation of Regions South Australia (Regions SA) to support my office in the exercise of my portfolio responsibilities from 1 July 2014.

Regions SA has been established as a division within the Department of Primary Industries and Regions SA. The establishment of Regions SA provides a clear strategic focus to state government regional development activity and will provide regions with a strong voice in government and enable Regions SA staff to deliver on a regionally-focused suite of activities and outcomes.

Importantly, Regions SA has a coordinating role in terms of the development and implementation of regional development strategies, supporting increased economic activity in the regions and maximising the collective impact of government activity in the regions. Establishing Regions SA involves transferring relevant state government functions, resources and staff to PIRSA and will have an establishment of 30 staff, including:

- 11 existing PIRSA staff;
- the transfer of two staff from Skills for Jobs in Regions within the Department of State Development, formerly department of further education, employment, science and technology (DFEEST);
- the transfer of three vacant funded positions each from of the Department of State Development; the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure; and the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources; and
- the remaining eight staff will be funded through an efficiency dividend across government.

This will provide Regions SA with significant capabilities in terms of the development and implementation of regional development strategies, supporting increased economic activity in the regions and maximising the collective impact of government activity in the regions. Specific functions of Regions SA will include:

- providing strategic direction to the state government's regional development activities—for example, through region-specific development strategies; as I said earlier, each region has different categories and priorities—and working to ensure delivery on agreed strategic objectives across government;
- administering grants programs to support regional development, including the Regional Development Fund and dedicated additional funding for the new Job Accelerator Fund program;

- providing project management capacity to develop and implement regional projects outside the responsibilities of other departments, including through the secondment of staff to support specific projects from time to time;
- providing a point of reference for the coordination of line agency services to the regions;
- promoting better community engagement by state government agencies in the regions, including through the Regional Communities Consultative Council and through supporting the regional engagement commitments in the charter for regional development;
- responsibility for relations with the commonwealth on regional development matters and with Regional Development Australia (RDA), including coordination of state government activities with the RDAs;
- developing and administering specific regional development initiatives; and
- supporting me in my role as Chair of the Regional South Australia Cabinet Committee, which is driving implementation of government commitments to regional development.

Regions SA will also be supplemented through targeted, strategic secondment of necessary expertise to focus on specific projects. An internal government recruitment process has been underway seeking candidates to be part of Regions SA. At present, four staff are located in regional SA: one each in Port Lincoln, Loxton, Clare and Mount Gambier. PIRSA already has well-established and positive relationships right throughout the state, with 223 regional staff deployed across 27 regional sites.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I have a supplementary first before I get to my questions, given that I need every advantage I can get. Minister, I think the last part of your answer referred to four staff who are located in the regions of the 30 that currently exist. I note that FTEs for regional development are predicted in 2014-15 to be 48.6 so, obviously, you are still recruiting 18.6 full-time equivalent people. Can you confirm that for the 26 difference that currently exists, are they all based in Port Adelaide?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: No-one is based in Port Adelaide from Regions SA.

Mr GRIFFITHS: There is no intention for any staff to be based in Port Adelaide for Regions SA?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Not from Regions SA, no.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Minister, I will get on to one of my prime questions, which is about funding, particularly on a core basis, for the RDA networks. Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 35, with reference to dollars that have been provided. With the two commitments now financially, one pre-existing and one new one that makes it \$3 million per year, are you able to provide an absolute guarantee that the core funding is available for staff who operate within the RDA network, to ensure that it is not actually project-based or a percentage of projects that they might attract but that it is, indeed, core funding to ensure the longevity of those organisations?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Can I say first that, after meetings with both CEs and chairs, we are not using the terminology 'core funding'—that has been agreed. I will explain: in addition to the \$39 million regional funding package for 2014-15 which I secured for regional South Australia, regional communities will also directly benefit from the \$1.6 million in new money provided to them through their RDAs. This commitment increases funding available to communities across regional South Australia from \$1.4 million to \$3 million per annum.

This funding is to support the government's efforts to grow stronger, sustainable and competitive regions. In addition, RDAs will also be able to access grants from the enhanced \$15 million Regional Development Fund. This funding is for regional communities and will be focused on supporting the government's efforts in delivering new jobs, new investment, improving infrastructure and growing regional communities. This approach will be informed by RDAs undertaking broad community engagement, underpinned by accountable and transparent use of funds, and measured by qualifiable outcomes and benefits to regional South Australia.

I announced these new merit-based funding agreements in my news release on 15 April 2014, meaning that RDAs will have the opportunity to submit applications for projects or programs. I expect RDAs to put forward the most critical projects for their region which will provide the best outcomes for job creation and investment or to address a vital regional economic development need. These new funds will be available through a merit-based proposal process that reflects the priority identified by their communities.

The \$3 million annual funding from 2014-15 is exclusive to the seven RDAs and is exclusive of GST which means that the RDAs will also be paid the GST amount. The \$3 million per annum is over and above funding which other state government agencies, local councils and the federal government provide to RDAs. The 2013-14 outcome-based funding arrangements have provided the RDAs with \$2.725 million allocated for programs that cover 2013-14 and 2014-15.

I want the best outcomes, as I am sure does everybody, for regional communities from this funding in support of the government's efforts to facilitate economic growth, improve infrastructure and job creation in the regions. The new \$1.6 million will be available from 1 July. I discussed my expectations with the RDA chairs at a meeting on 10 June 2014, and I look forward to innovative, strategic and outcome-focused proposals from regional communities through their RDAs.

Draft guidelines were provided to RDA chairs for comment. The RDAs have since provided feedback on the draft guidelines and, on 17 July 2014, Regions SA met with the RDA's Chief Executive, Mr Rob Kerin, in his capacity as Chair of the RDA membership group, to discuss their comments for my consideration prior to releasing the guidelines.

RDA chairs have also agreed to develop by the end of December 2014 a new framework for collaboration between RDAs and Regions SA. I have been further advised that we have the agreed criteria here, which has been agreed to by RDAs, the CEOs and also the chairs. If you want me to go through that, I can do that now.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I am happy if you table that, thank you, minister. Minister, can I take from your rather detailed response that, if I were to telephone each of the seven CEOs, they are going to tell me over the phone that everything is all tickety-boo—that they are happy with where their dollars come from and how they have to be expended, continuity of staff, and the ability to ensure that the networks they have developed are retained because of staff retention and that everything is okay? That is what I have tried to take from your responses. Do you think I would get the same answer?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I am not going to guarantee what response you might get, but this is the agreed criteria that has been agreed with the CEOs and with Rob Kerin, who is the Chair of Regional Development Australia SA. They have agreed to these criteria. I can say only that this is the criteria agreed to by the chairs and also the CEOs the other day. I think that there is another meeting tomorrow with my department, and I am also meeting the CEOs tomorrow afternoon when I get a break within the parliament.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Minister, I am not sure whether we work and operate in different worlds, then, because the universe I am currently operating in tells me a slightly different story to that, and it is after 17 July, indeed, where there was a direct contact from a person, who is informed, who still held the concerns—but I think we will move forward on that, though.

The CHAIR: Just before you do, it is not possible to table that information. Are you happy to have the information you have distributed to the committee? We do not table, but we can distribute it. If you can hand that to the usher, he will look after that. You want to answer something, minister, before the member for Goyder goes on.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Can I say that we have some notes on this. Can we get a copy—

The CHAIR: You can distribute it later then.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: We have information and documentation from all of the CEO that, as from Monday this week, they have all agreed with the draft guidelines, which will be implemented by the end of this week.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Minister, this is a bit of a cheeky question, I readily admit that. In Budget Paper 1, Budget Overview, page 10, you have referred to the seven RDAs. But I note that, in a nice

little graphic the Treasurer's office produced, it talks about regional development—\$3 million for the eight regional development Australia boards across South Australia. I understand that there are eight, but the Adelaide metro one is entirely funded by the feds. Why is the state suddenly taking the kudos for a group they do not supply dollars to?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I do not produce this document, so I cannot make a comment on it, although McLaren Vale—which is within the Adelaide RDA—does qualify for some of our grants.

Mr GRIFFITHS: A connection, okay, I will accept that then, minister—sort of. Still on RDA funding, my understanding is that the Local Government Association hand-delivered to you on 16 July, I think, a letter about core funding. That is a term that I have used for a long time and it is a term that the Liberal Party used as part of its election policy: of \$3 million in core funding to ensure the consistency and retention of staff and outcomes for the community. Are you acknowledging that you had this letter from the Local Government Association and, therefore, are you acknowledging that the agreement that is now in place post 17 July meets all local government concerns as one of the major funding partners of regional development?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I have seen the letter; the president of the LGA handed it to me, then it goes through the process. My negotiations for funding for RDAs is with the RDAs, not with the Local Government Association, at this stage. Also, the fact is that this letter is going through the system, getting a briefing for me through the system.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Minister, just on that, you are in a rather unique position as being minister responsible for both local government and RDAs. Given that local government is one of the significant funding partners, I would have thought that, given the uniqueness of your position, you would have ensured that the dialogue occurs, that there is an understanding of the concerns being raised, and that there are some really quick, positive outcomes for it.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Can I also mention that the composition of the RDA boards also includes local government representatives in each one of the seven.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I understand that.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: This request here is for the Local Government Association.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Yes, who are recognised—

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: There are local government representatives on those boards, and I will clarify this tomorrow with the CEOs. I think the boards have agreed with the CEOs and the chairs about the draft criteria.

Mr PENGILLY: Is that right? Is that definite?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: As I said, I am going to check that with the CEOs tomorrow.

Mr PENGILLY: There are negative-looking vibes coming from your sidekicks.

The CHAIR: Order!

Mr GRIFFITHS: Minister, the RDA boards do have local government representation, I acknowledge that, but it is certainly not reflective of the 49 councils—

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: It is 47.

Mr GRIFFITHS: —that exist in regional areas. The LGA, the peak body, does have a responsibility to advocate on behalf of all regional councils and not just expect the one or two local government-based members on each RDA board to actually undertake that role.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: In answer to the member for Goyder, I have been advised, and I would hope, that the agreed criteria with the RDA CEOs and the Chairs will address some of the concerns the LGA was putting up. We have encouraged them not to use 'core funding'—that is, the words 'core funding'—because core funding does not mean that you will get outcomes from that. Certainly, some of the agreed criteria will address some of the issues that you may be alluding to, member for Goyder.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Minister, I thank you for the answer, but I allude to these issues because of my concern about continuity of staff, and it all comes to that. Here we are, 23 days into July, with a funding agreement that started 23 days ago and uncertainty has existed in these staff for several months now.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I will just read some of the agreed criteria in part:

- reasonable allocation towards the remuneration of the RDA chief executive officer and staff who are essential to delivering the program or projects—

That is what is agreed in there, as well as:

- reasonable office accommodation costs directly related to the delivery of the proposal;
- reasonable office equipment costs directly related to the delivery of the proposal;
- reasonable travel and accommodation costs directly related to the delivery of the proposal;
- reasonable car leasing costs directly related to the delivery of the proposal;
- reasonable phone and data costs directly related to the delivery of the proposal;
- reasonable allocation of outlays towards activities or collaborative projects or business case studies; and
- additional administrative costs and program/project management fees of not greater than 5 per cent of the grant funding amount.

We will hand this in, but this is the agreed facility; I have heard nothing to the contrary, but I will be just double-checking tomorrow at the meeting.

The CHAIR: We need to go to the other side now. Member for Giles.

Mr HUGHES: I refer the committee to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 37. What has been the support provided to the Upper Spencer Gulf and outback communities in the past year?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: The Enterprise Zone Fund—Upper Spencer Gulf and Outback provided financial support to priority projects to boost economic and community development within the Upper Spencer Gulf and the outback. The \$4 million grant fund was available over four years and accessed by organisations for projects leveraging opportunities stemming from the growing mining, energy and allied services industry that would make a major impact in the Upper Spencer Gulf and the outback by changing competitive advantages in its favour.

For the 2013-14 year, \$849,101 was awarded to four projects through the Enterprise Zone Fund—Upper Spencer Gulf and Outback, which will generate a total investment of \$4 million. Now closed, overall the fund has supported 11 projects, awarded a total of \$4 million, leading to the creation of up to 116 new jobs and a total investment of nearly \$14 million. The Upper Spencer Gulf and outback regions are well placed to capture business from the expansion of the resources, energy and allied services industries. The fund aimed to capture the benefits of growing industries to further strengthen these communities, including:

- capitalising on opportunities that are focused on, but not limited to, the expansion of the resource and energy sectors; and
- providing access to organisations in the Upper Spencer Gulf and outback for projects that make a major impact in the region by changing competitive advantages in its favour.

The fund was accessible to local government, businesses and industry associations in the region. Applications were assessed on a number of criteria, including whether the project:

- created sustainable economic benefits that are broadly distributed across communities or industries beyond the organisation receiving the grant;
- was strategically important to the state, the region or a major industry;
- was viable and sustainable in the medium to longer term;

- leveraged alternative sources of funding, such as private investment or other spheres of government; and
- diversified the economy of the Upper Spencer Gulf and outback regions.

Funded projects included:

- \$80,229 towards the re-establishment of a refuelling facility by Starke Aviation at Leigh Creek Airport;
- \$60,000 to support a mentor based in the Port Augusta region for Indigenous mining employees;
- \$112,906 towards the provision of broadband services to towns in the Port Pirie regional area by Aussie Broadband;
- \$302,500 to Kelly Engineering for building infrastructure to support the expansion of facilities and workforce at Booleroo Centre in the northern agricultural region of our state;
- \$2 million to E&A Contractors towards costs associated with the purchase and installation of wind tower fabrication equipment and upgrades to its existing buildings and fabrication facilities;
- \$428,750 to the City of Port Augusta towards upgrading the Port Augusta Airport terminal facility, car parking and airstrip apron;
- \$172,649 to Cowell Electric Supply Pty Ltd towards the purchase of equipment to undertake tension stringing of conductors (the wire) under tension for high-voltage power lines;
- \$600,000 to the City of Whyalla towards upgrading the Whyalla Airport terminal, car parking area, pedestrian refuges and walkways, lighting, storm water and landscaping;
- \$41,960 to Port Pirie Aviation Fuel towards the installation of a jet refuelling facility at Port Pirie Aerodrome key card operation;
- \$75,000 to Civil Train to deliver construction training to a group of 12 women from the north and far north region; and
- \$132,141 to Alinta Energy to undertake a feasibility and technological analysis to assess the viability of solar thermal generation to Port Augusta.

Whilst I am on that, I had the opportunity to have a look at the Civil Train facility at Port Augusta. For people who have had not had a look at that, I would encourage them to do so. I am not saying that people have not done that, but I would encourage them to go and have a look at that. It is a state-of-the-art operation to provide training, and it is a mobile facility; the training facility can go anywhere in the state. That \$75,000 was well spent, and it is going to create training for employment opportunities across the whole of the region.

Also, that \$41,960 to Port Pirie Aviation Fuel has increased the opportunity for the Flying Doctors, Medevac and others to be able to refuel there with Jet A-1 fuel, and it has increased the amount of tourists and recreational planes going through the Port Pirie Airport by three or fourfold, so it is great. Funding to the City of Port Augusta for upgrading the Port Augusta Airport terminal is also going to increase the opportunity for people to fly in and fly out of Port Augusta.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Minister, in your opening statement you referred to regional impact assessment statements and the reform of that, which is part of the cabinet consideration process of anything that impacts in regional communities. I am rather intrigued, after a government of the Labor style for 12 years, in which there has been a regional development minister for all that time, that it is necessary to reform it; I would have thought it would have been a continually improving project all the way through.

I am even more frustrated by the fact that, as is my understanding, since 2010 I think there have only been five regional impact assessment statements undertaken and reviewed as part of

cabinet decisions on that. Can you give me an expectation from you, I suppose, on what this reform package will do to ensure that the needs of regional communities and their issues are considered as part of cabinet decisions?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I will just elaborate on one of the reasons that I took this position. The Regional Impact Assessment policy and guidelines were launched in July 2003 as part of a broader commitment that regional impacts and issues are considered in government decision-making. This policy requires that when a significant change in services is proposed, the proponent must give detailed consideration to regional impacts before implementation. Agency chief executives are responsible for ensuring there is a process in place to identify when a significant change is proposed that will trigger the preparation of an RIAS.

This policy is in addition to the requirement of cabinet submissions to consider and include comment on regional impacts in the preparation of cabinet submissions. An RIAS can be initiated in a number of ways, including a departmental officer advising a chief executive that a proposal will have a significant impact and, therefore, an RIAS is necessary, a chief executive of a department requests an RIAS be prepared, or a minister requests that one of these impact statements be prepared.

In addition, Regions SA may advise an agency that an RIAS should be prepared. In such circumstances, Regions SA will advise me that it has recommended to an agency the preparation of a regional impact assessment statement, and I will write to the relevant minister to inform them of that recommendation.

On 19 May 2014, cabinet endorsed a cabinet note requesting that South Australian government departments, agencies and statutory authorities be reminded of the continuing requirement and importance of preparing regional impact assessment statements. This note was subsequently presented to the Regional South Australia Cabinet Committee, and work has commenced to reinforce the requirement of these regional impact assessment statements across government.

Regions SA is currently updating the regional impact assessment statement policy and guidelines, which will result in a renewed emphasis on promotion and training within the government. Once prepared, these statements are publicly available on PIRSA's website, along with guidelines for South Australian government agencies on how to prepare a regional impact assessment statement.

There have been a total of 21 statements, and these are publicly available online. No regional impact assessment statements were prepared by agencies during the 2014 financial year. The 21 regional impact assessment statements that have been published on the PIRSA website are the Strzelecki Track upgrade in 2010—

Mr GRIFFITHS: Minister, do not read them all out. I have read that myself.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: You have got the 2014—

Mr GRIFFITHS: There were none in 2014.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: No.

Mr GRIFFITHS: That is what I took as your second to last sentence.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Yes, no regional impact assessment statements were prepared by agencies during the 2013-14 financial year, before my time.

Mr GRIFFITHS: So, am I meant to assume from that that there was no decision made by government in that time that impacted on regional communities?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Member for Goyder, any cabinet submission going forward to the cabinet would have to have a regional impact assessment statement, if it is of significant impact. I do not know what happened in 2013. I have not got a facility to look at the cabinet submissions, and I would not divulge that anyway.

Secondly and lastly, from 2014 onwards, I will be making certain that every significant impact going to cabinet will have a regional impact assessment statement with that. It is very clear that, if it

has a significant regional impact, we need to progress that through the system and have that assessment statement there.

Mr PEDERICK: Minister, I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 35, Program 3: Regional Development, description/objective paragraph one. This objective states that it is the responsibility of the program to:

Facilitate economic activity, job creation, infrastructure investment, regional capacity building and identify, promote and support economic development initiatives throughout regional South Australia.

In light of this, will the government match the Liberal Party's pre-election commitment of a \$5 million grant and a \$10 million loan to the Murray Bridge Racing Club to allow them to kickstart the development of the Gifford Hill racing precinct which is estimated to create 1,000 jobs? If the government will not commit to this, why didn't the minister as the member for Frome ask the Premier to match the Liberals' \$139 million commitment to the regions when the Premier was seeking to form government?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I am advised that the Gifford Hill project can apply for grants through Major Projects if they meet the criteria and they are eligible. I am also aware that the federal government instigated or provided \$5 million towards this project.

Mr PEDERICK: Yes, diversification funding. It was the first out of \$100 million across four states. The rest of the question—why didn't you ask for the extra \$100 million when the Premier was seeking to form government?

The CHAIR: I am not sure that is part of the budget papers, so if you have another question.

Mr PEDERICK: But it has a fair impact on the regions, I can tell you.

The CHAIR: Member for Hammond, I will give you the call if you have another question.

Mr PEDERICK: Okay, seeing that one is too hard, obviously—

The CHAIR: It is not too hard, it is not in order.

Mr PEDERICK: Well, I reckon it is because no-one wants to go near it.

The CHAIR: Member for Hammond, I will have to give the call to the other side.

Mr PEDERICK: Okay, I have one more question.

The CHAIR: One more question.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to the same budget line. When is the minister going to accept my invitation to come to Murray Bridge and have a good look at this project? I am free next week.

The CHAIR: That is not really referring to a budget line.

Mr PEDERICK: It is definitely in relation to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 35.

The CHAIR: Your visit is not in the budget papers.

Mr PEDERICK: Regional Development, Description/objective, paragraph 1.

The CHAIR: The minister can answer, if he wishes, otherwise we will move on to another question.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: To answer the member for Hammond's question, I have invitations from everywhere, from all across the state. I am going from one side of the state, including Kangaroo Island, as you are aware. I am also balancing that out with my own electorate, and I am getting out to each of the regions as quickly as I can, and yours in on the calendar. Certainly, member for Hammond, it is on there and I will get there as soon as I can. I am just trying to get around to the whole of the state.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Minister, we will finish off with some easier ones. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 13. It is just a notation that within the ministerial office resources there are nine full-time equivalents. I respect the status of an Independent member elected to parliament and an

Independent minister. Of the people who work within your ministerial staff, those nine people, how many have actually worked for ministers or other members of parliament in the past?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Member for Goyder, are you asking for the administrative staff or for advisers?

Mr GRIFFITHS: No, minister, I have referred to the nine staff who are identified on page 13 as being ministerial office resources.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Can I just make a comment to the member for Hammond. When I appoint ministerial staff, I have a say in who I may or may not get. The thing is that people who are working for me are loyal to me, and I make that very clear. I do not know offhand if those nine people have worked for a minister or what they may have done, but I find it irrelevant. As I said a minute ago, these people are working for me as Minister for Regional Development and Minister for Local Government, and they are loyal and take their instructions from me.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I pick up on the term 'loyal'. Loyalty is a two-way street, as I understand it. In terms of the people who have been appointed by you to work for you since becoming a minister, are they all currently in their jobs or have any left and, if they have left, have termination payments been negotiated?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: When we first came into this position, staff who were employed were given the opportunity on a three-month trial basis. I still retain them, except for one person who did not go past three months. I still have the same people working there who have been there from the start, to my recollection.

The CHAIR: Do you have omnibus questions, member for Goyder?

Mr GRIFFITHS: I do, Chair.

The CHAIR: Would you like to do those now?

Mr GRIFFITHS: I thank the minister for his response, but was the decision made for the one person who is no longer working for you to leave your decision, or was it made in negotiation with others?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I question the relevance of that to a budget line. Secondly, employment opportunities are in consultation with me. I am not going to make any public comment about why a person may not have been suitable.

Mr GRIFFITHS: The omnibus questions will cover both areas of regional development and local government. They are:

1. Will the minister provide a detailed breakdown of expenditure on consultants and contractors above \$10,000 in 2013-14 for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, listing the name of the consultant, contractor or service supplier, cost, work undertaken and method of appointment?

2. For each department or agency reporting to the minister in 2013-14, or your predecessor, please provide the number of public servants broken down into heads and FTEs that are (1) tenured and (2) on contract and, for each category, provide a breakdown of the number of (1) executives and (2) non-executives.

3. In the financial year 2013-14, for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, what underspending on projects and programs (1) was and (2) was not approved by cabinet for carryover expenditure in 2014-15?

4. Between 30 June 2013 and 30 June 2014, will the minister list the job title and total employment cost of each position with a total estimated cost of \$100,000 or more—(a) which has been abolished and (b) which has been created?

5. For each year of the forward estimates, provide the name and budget of all grant programs administered by all departments and agencies reporting to the minister and, for 2013-14, provide a breakdown of expenditure on all grants administered by all departments and agencies reporting to the minister listing the name of the grant recipient, the amount of the grant and the

purpose of the grant and whether the grant was subject to a grant agreement as required by Treasurer's Instruction No. 15.

6. For each department or agency reporting to the minister, what is the budget for targeted voluntary separation packages for the financial years 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18?

7. What is the title and total employment cost of each individual staff member in the minister's office as at 30 June 2014, including all departmental employees seconded to ministerial offices and ministerial liaison officers?

The CHAIR: There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the proposed payments completed and thank the minister and his advisers for their attendance.

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE, \$501,908,000
ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND
INFRASTRUCTURE, \$10,022,000

Membership:

Mr Goldsworthy substituted for Mr Pederick.

Mr Tarzia substituted for Mr Pengilly.

Minister:

Hon. G.G. Brock, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Local Government.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr A. McKeegan, Acting Deputy Chief Executive, Planning, Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure.

Mr M. Petrovski, Director, Office of Local Government.

The CHAIR: I declare the proposed payments open for examination. I will not read the whole statement, but I remind members that, if they ask a question, they preface it with the line of expenditure. I ask the minister to make an opening statement if he needs to.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Thank you, Madam Chair. As the shadow minister is aware, I have a strong background in local government (as does the shadow minister) from personal experience as a councillor and then mayor of the Port Pirie Regional Council. I am a very passionate supporter of local government and have already visited many councils, including many regional councils, given my interest in the responsibilities of regional development.

Due to recent machinery of government changes, the Office for Local Government was established in the planning division of the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure. This change took effect from 1 July 2014. The Office for Local Government is a small unit responsible for providing advice to the Minister for Local Government on:

- the constitutional operations of the local government system, including legislative framework, governing councils;
- the relationship between the state government and councils and other associated representative groups, including the State-Local Government Relations Agreement;
- whole-of-government and legislative frameworks as they affect local government; and
- and the statutory authorities that are responsible to the Minister for Local Government.

The statutory authorities are the Local Government Grants Commission, the Outback Communities Authority and the Boundary Adjustment Facilitation Panel.

As indicated by the Premier, all government boards and committees will be abolished unless it can be demonstrated that they have an essential purpose that cannot be fulfilled in an alternative way. The authorities I have just referred to are part of that review, and I look forward to considering these matters. The aim is to remove duplication of effort and red tape, as well as providing communities with other ways of more directly accessing the government.

In South Australia, councils are primarily accountable to their communities for the policies they make, the decisions they take, the service and infrastructure they provide, and the rates and charges that they levy. In performing their functions, councils must abide by the Local Government Act 1999 and associated regulations.

While being responsible to the parliament for the local government legislative framework, as minister I do not seek to intrude on the day-to-day activities and decisions of councils. With this relative independence from state government supervision of daily activities, comes significant responsibility for councils to be engaged with and be accountable to their communities.

I issue a challenge to all councils to continue to strive towards the highest standards of accountability and transparency. Councils are free to develop best practice standards in these areas without waiting for legislative requirements to set the bar. That is a sign of good government and leadership—the cultural motivation to improve and do more. This includes consulting carefully about significant policy decisions, using coercive powers strictly according to the law, listening and responding to complaints fairly, and promoting the best interests of their communities.

It is important to note that councils, like other public sector entities, are subject to the jurisdiction of independent investigation bodies such as the Ombudsman, The Office for Public Integrity, and the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption. Local government legislation has been amended in the last 12 months to clarify and strengthen the role of these bodies in respect of local government.

For example, if I believe that a particular council has committed a serious breach of the law I must now report the matter to the Ombudsman rather than directly appointing an independent investigator. Under the act, I have powers to take appropriate action against the council only after receiving an adverse report from the Ombudsman. These changes provide strength and objectivity to the external oversight of the conduct of council's affairs for the public's benefit.

Over the past 12 months, I am advised, a previous minister responsible for local government legislation introduced a number of other reforms, including introducing mandatory codes of conduct for council members and staff and remaking three sets of regulations impacting local government. In addition, a package of proposed amendments to local government legislation was developed to:

- improve local government accountability and governance;
- improve local government elections;
- implement recommendations made by the Ombudsman as a result of his investigations and audits of local government matters; and
- make miscellaneous amendments to achieve a more consistent and contemporary legislative framework for the local government sector.

I have advised the president of the Local Government Association that I intend to take a fresh look at the bill developed at the end of last year and consider other relevant reforms that have arisen since then ahead of seeking to introduce a comprehensive local government amendment bill in early 2015.

I am very keen to work closely with the LGA and councils, for instance, in finding new ways for local government to play a greater role in driving economic development in their communities, especially with the transition of our state economy from traditional manufacturing to growth industries, such as health services and mining and resources. I am also keen to encourage local government to develop greater asset and expertise-sharing arrangements across councils and regions.

South Australia has a long tradition of constructive working relationships between the state government and local government for the benefit of our shared constituency. Although there will, no doubt, be times when we need to agree to disagree, especially when there are resource constraints on both spheres of government, I intend to build on the constructive relationships that exist between the state government and local government, a relationship that is based on cooperation and mutual respect.

Significant achievements in the local government field have included successful completion of the review of the Local Government Grants Commission funding distribution methodology. It should be noted, however, that announcements in the recent commonwealth budget will have significant negative impacts on the commission's capacity to support South Australian councils through general financial assistance grants, especially local road funding.

In addition, the Outback Community Authority successfully introduced the community contribution scheme in Andamooka to assist with the development of infrastructure and services in Andamooka, with the agreement of the local community. In 2014-15, it is proposed to implement a similar scheme in Iron Knob.

In conclusion, I would like to comment on the upcoming 2014 council elections in November this year. I would like to see all of us who are in a leadership position promoting the importance of participating in the local government election process, especially by encouraging local people to nominate as candidates for election to council, thereby strengthening the electoral process by ensuring that there is a good range of candidates, and by encouraging eligible voters to cast their vote.

Low voter turnout presents an easy opportunity for detractors of local government to be negative about the role of councils as democratic institutions. Local government is the tier closest to the people in their everyday lives. As a state, we should all work together to make local government more effective and efficient in order to best serve the interests of our communities.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I recognise the comments from the minister to emphasise the importance of local government. I think it is something like 10,000 employees and between \$19 billion and \$20 billion worth of assets, and they attempt to serve Australians as best they possibly can. I suppose that is why I am a bit disappointed that the budget papers shows only two pages or thereabouts for the Office of Local Government. Minister, all my questions will refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, pages 86 or 87. Minister, can you advise what level of involvement you have had with the Emergency Management Council in ensuring the adequacy of the State Emergency Management Plan?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I am not on that emergency management committee. There is a representative from the LGA on there, but not under my portfolio.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Minister, I am not referring to the committee; I am referring to the council which is, indeed, made up of ministers. My understanding is that the Minister for Local Government is a member of that?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: To answer the question, I have not been advised if there has been a meeting of that council, at this stage, with the necessity for me to attend.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I have to ask a supplementary about that, given the concerns that so many South Australians have expressed in relation to Clovelly Park and Mitchell Park, and not just that immediate area. Your answer does not deny that your ministerial responsibility includes being on that council but just that you have not been involved in it. I would have to presume—and I am sure everybody would—that the council met before it became public about the contamination. So, is it an innocent oversight or a deliberate action, or has someone on your staff not told you about a meeting? I can find a budget reference for it.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Madam Chair and member for Goyder, it is a bit involved; I will ask Mr Petrovski to explain that for us.

Mr PETROVSKI: The council derives its advice through DPC; there is a special section that actually produces the agenda and gathers advice from relevant agencies around government. Historically, the Office for State/Local Government has not played a role in the content of the agenda

or providing advice unless there has been incidental advice sought from our office that might be used to advise the whole of the membership. We do not provide direct advice to the Minister for Local Government as a member of that group.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I appreciate the response. Therefore, if you act upon a request from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, can I presume that it is a deliberate action, or is it just an inability to govern properly where the Department of the Premier and Cabinet has not ensured that a minister who has the responsibility and who, as I viewed on the website this morning, is certainly appointed to that council has not been involved?

The CHAIR: That question would be better put to Premier and Cabinet, wouldn't it?

Mr GRIFFITHS: Chair, there are others in this chamber who will tell me how long, but I think it is 22 or 23 days that it has been in the media. And this especially relates to the impact upon Marion Council and its residents, and I will lead into some questions about that, too. But, minister, are you trying to tell me, therefore, that you have not sought a briefing on it? For example, have you had your staff identify that you should have been involved in discussions? Has anyone looked at the Emergency Management Council to say, 'Oh, hell, Mr Brock's meant to be there, we should have told him about this,' because I am struggling to understand why you have not been.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I will take that question on notice and get more clarity on that. I have not got the information here.

Ms WORTLEY: I have a question in relation to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 86 to 89. Can the minister please inform the committee on the assistance being provided to small and remote councils that may face challenges in meeting the cost of improving their financial governance?

Mr GRIFFITHS: Point of order: the question is actually wrong. It is page 86 to 87, not 86 to 89.

The CHAIR: Again, let's not waste time and get on with the answer to the question.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I can advise that in April 2012, the minister for state and local government relations committed \$150,000 over four years—that is from 2012-13 until 2015-16—to underwrite practical assistance being provided by the Local Government Association for the smallest regional councils. The emphasis of this program is to improve the core financial and asset management skills of councils and enable them to participate more fully in and benefit from a wide range of reforms that have been jointly initiated by the commonwealth government, the Local Government Association and the former office of state and local government relations.

The funding is being used to tailor assistance at the individual council level. A feature of the program is that individual councils determine locally appropriate priorities for the use of most of the available funding. In particular, the program has allowed small regional councils to make the most of opportunities provided by the commonwealth government's Local Government Reform Fund, a project which provided funding of \$2.5 million for SA councils overall.

The district councils of Kimba and Elliston were both provided with funding to enable two highly-regarded officers to participate in a professional leadership program delivered by the Local Government Managers Australia in conjunction with the Executive Education Unit of the University of Adelaide. Elliston, on the West Coast, also was provided hands-on assistance with budget, rating and other financial governance matters.

On an ongoing basis, the Local Government Association provides access for eligible councils to practical support and troubleshooting assistance from one of its officers with expertise in council budgets, annual business plans, long-term financial plans, treasury management and interpretation of Australian accounting standards. Recently, funding of \$6,000 was approved to assist Coober Pedy council with the cost of several initiatives—

Mr TARZIA: Point of order: the minister seems to be reading, and I hate to—

The CHAIR: Member for Hartley, there is no point of order. Ministers read answers all the time. Stop being frivolous. No point of order.

Mr TARZIA: The member is reading from government answers.

The CHAIR: Minister.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I take offence to that, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR: We are not going to pay any more attention to that. Please continue and ignore them. They are being unparliamentary, and I will remind them all of standing order 272, and if it continues there will be trouble.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: The funding to Coober Pedy council assisted with costs in developing council policies on service range and levels, better integrating the council's infrastructure and asset management plan with its long-term financial plan, and developing a budget monitoring and reporting framework which provides clear links to the council's suite of strategic management plans.

During 2012-13, the minister's funding commitment was matched by the LGA, resulting in a \$300,000 fund available for meeting the specific needs of 13 small regional councils with relatively low financial capacity across the state. The councils involved in the program are: Cleve, Coober Pedy, Elliston, Finders Ranges, Franklin Harbour, Karoonda East Murray, Kimba, Mount Remarkable, Orroroo Carrieton, Peterborough, Southern Mallee, Streaky Bay, and Wudinna.

Just going back, Madam Chair: some of the outcomes of the program including an amount of \$52,000 was allocated to all eligible councils (\$4,000 each) to provide additional support beyond that already provided to these councils within the LGA's Business Partners Program. The program helped all regional councils to improve their infrastructure and asset management plans and long-term financial plans, and to ensure that these plans generally are consistent with each other, and with each other's councils' affordable service levels.

An amount of \$124,000 was allocated to augment separate funding available to the eligible councils through the commonwealth government's Local Government Reform Fund. That project included the implementation of a wide range of collaborative opportunities to build regional capacity.

An example of one activity initiated by the LGA involves a videoconferencing pilot program which links a regional cluster of councils with each other, and with training room facilities at LGA House. Karoonda East Murray and Southern Mallee were provided with funding to assist them to jointly establish an internal controls regime under the guidance of a national firm expert in that field.

Further examples of the kind of hands-on experience that could be provide in 2014-15 are:

- to establish an internal controls regime, adopting a successful project between Karoonda East Murray and Southern Mallee;
- support with annual business plans, budget monitoring and reporting;
- subsidising attendance of council members and staff at relevant LGA and other training programs; and
- encouragement and support for a shared services initiative.

Mr GRIFFITHS: If I can come back to my questions in regard to the Emergency Management Council. Minister, you have advised the committee that you are going to provide an update at a later time; I am not sure when that will occur. It might be hard for you to do given that we only have 33 minutes left. When did you first become aware of the contamination concerns at Clovelly Park?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Madam Chair, I think this is delving into what is being discussed in cabinet; therefore, I will not be making any comment on that.

Ms CHAPMAN: It is just asking you if you were aware.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Minister, I—

The CHAIR: The minister is able to answer the question any way he wishes. Do you have another question, member for Goyder?

Mr GRIFFITHS: I do, and it is on this area too, Chair, and this is not a cabinet issue, but indeed the City of Marion. Have you had contact with the City of Marion—one of your 68 council constituents—about Clovelly Park? Have you met with Mayor Felicity-Ann Lewis, for example, and their CEO, and asked what you can do on their behalf within the Emergency Management Council, or within cabinet, or within any government process?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I have had discussions through the LGA. I have not personally spoken to the council itself, but certainly I have had discussions with the LGA, through the president and the chief executive.

Mr GRIFFITHS: As I understand it, the Mayor of Marion is the Australian Local Government Association Chairperson, just to clarify that for the record. Minister, the CE and the Chair of the LGA do not reside within Marion. They do not have the intimate relationship with the residents of Marion. Mayor Felicity-ann Lewis is that person to actually speak to. Is it the intention post-today that contact be made?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: My information is there is a process in place for the EPA and councils to discuss their issues. At that particular point, I did not see that it was necessary for me to get personally involved but, taking on board your comments, post this here I will be organising a meeting with the council.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Chair, I will go to a different question area, if I may.

The CHAIR: Good.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I thought that would please you. This is still on the same page reference though, but it is about the constructive relationship between different levels of government. Minister, are you aware of issues that occurred last Friday in the federal parliament about the Roads to Recovery funding program, and what actions have you undertaken since the decision that occurred on Friday?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I am sure we all agree here that the level of financial assistance to the LGA and all councils across South Australia is a concern. As to what happened in the federal parliament the other day, yes, I have been advised that it never got through and is still sitting there. Secondly, I have arranged for a meeting directly with minister Truss, who is responsible for that, and that should be within the next four weeks.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Again, minister, are you able to confirm what the potential impact in dollar value in the 2014-15 year is on South Australian local government?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Before I answer that, member, I want to get my facts correct. I am advised that we do not have the actual figures from the federal government at this particular point. One of the things I will reinforce here is that I am concerned about the \$18 million that is lost to the supplementary local roads funding.

I am also concerned, as we all would be, about the cessation of the pensioner concessions payment to the state government, which has been honoured this year by the Treasurer. Next financial year, we do not know where that is going to go. I have some concerns about the Financial Assistance Grants (FAGs) funding not being indexed for the next three years. Certainly, I am advised that we have not had the figures submitted by the federal government at this stage. I met with the Local Government Grants Commission last week to get an update on where they currently are.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I appreciate that additional information. For the record, I might tell you it is \$31.48 million for Roads to Recovery, which goes through to the 2018-19 year, including an additional \$31.48 million in the 2015-16 year. So you are nodding your head now but after I have told you the figures. Obviously, I am pleased that you are aware of the decision and pleased that you have made contact with minister Truss for a meeting with him. I would have thought that a staff member sitting next to you would have had that detail available because it goes to the crux of the matter and is significant.

The CHAIR: Let's move on to a question that relates to the budget lines.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Minister, you are rather unique, and I use that term again because you are. In addition to attempting to contact minister Truss and talk to him about it, is it your intention to talk

to other parties who were involved in the attachment of amendments to the legislation which made it necessary for the Coalition to withdraw the legislation? You can put the perspective as an Independent member, ask them to respect what they have done and what the implications of it are.

The CHAIR: The question really needs to relate directly to a budget line, member for Goyder, but the minister may wish to make a comment.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Yes, it is my intention to organise meetings with those people, but my main concern is to talk to the federal government to ensure that the funds will run through to the local councils—and I want more funds going through—but certainly the arrangements are being made at the moment to try to talk to as many people as we can. As you know, from memory, the federal government is in recess at this particular point, but I will be making appointments to talk to the people who put their amendments up.

Mr GRIFFITHS: If I can go to a different question now, minister, still on page 86. I am particularly interested in the Premier's State/Local Government Forum. Can the minister advise if the commitment made by the Labor Party prior to the election for the Premier's State/Local Government Forum to meet at least three times per year will actually be upheld?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: The Premier's State/Local Government Forum is very important, and part of the agreement is to have three a year. That is with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet at the moment. We do not have actual dates, but certainly it is going to happen as far as I am concerned and we just do not have the dates at this particular point. The forum is very important and it was part of the agreement.

Ms HILDYARD: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, pages 86 to 87. With regard to the commonwealth budget impacts on local government, what pressures do South Australian councils now face in the areas of local road funding, financial assistance grants and payment of concessions to part-pensioners and seniors?

The CHAIR: That has sort of been covered, I think. Is there another question?

Ms HILDYARD: Unless you have something to add, I can ask another question.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I think I explained that a minute ago.

Ms HILDYARD: Is it okay if I ask something?

The CHAIR: Another question, yes.

Ms HILDYARD: The next question I have is in relation to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, pages 86 to 89. I note that the program name—

Mr Griffiths interjecting:

Ms HILDYARD: Pages 86 to 87, sorry. I note that the program name has changed to Office of Local Government for 2014-15. Can you advise the committee about the background to this name change?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I can confirm for the committee that there has been a change in the agency arrangements supporting the local government portfolio. On 22 May 2014 the Governor in Executive Council approved several changes to the legislation committed to me as Minister for Local Government. The following additional legislation was committed to the Minister for Local Government: the Outback Communities (Administration and Management) Act 2009 and the South Australian Local Government Grants Commission Act 1992.

These acts are in addition to the existing legislative responsibilities for local government, which are comprised of the Local Government Act 1999, the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999, and other minor local government-related acts. At the same time, the ministerial powers and functions under chapter 11 of the Local Government Act 1999, that is, provisions relating to dealing with local government land, were conferred to the Minister for Planning.

On 1 July 2014, changes were made to administrative arrangements for agencies, reflecting the changes to legislative responsibilities. The Outback Communities Authority and the South Australian Local Government Grants Commission's functions and staff were transferred from PIRSA

to a new Office of Local Government, situated within the planning division of the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure.

The state/local government relations functions and staff were transferred from the Department of Premier and Cabinet to the Office of Local Government. These administrative changes will assist in delivering an integrated approach to local government portfolio matters.

The changes will bring together the three statutory authorities closely related to the work of councils, the Local Government Association and legislation, and a significant part of the responsibility for the relationship between state and local government. The newly formed Office of Local Government comprises 24.1 FTE positions, 15 of which have been transferred from other agencies to DPTI.

Mr GRIFFITHS: On the same budget reference, we have asked the question about the state government local forum, but I am interested in the State-Local Government Relations Agreement. I am aware that a draft was released in October last year when the forum was held. When will the relations agreement be signed and released?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: The State-Local Government Relations Agreement, as you are aware, was first signed by the Premier, the president of the Local Government Association and the then minister for local government in 2004. The agreement articulates the aspirations of the two spheres of government, with the aim of delivering greater benefits for the South Australian community through more strategic collaboration.

The agreement provides the framework for state and local government to work together in a mature and collaborative relationship. It is in two parts: the agreement itself, which sets out the principles of engagement between the state and local government, and a schedule of priorities that outlines annual priorities for each joint action.

A new schedule of priorities was agreed to at the October 2013 forum. However, details of the agreement are still being negotiated with the Local Government Association. It is expected that the agreement will be finalised in the near future. The documents will be signed by the Premier, the president of the LGA and myself, as Minister for Local Government; and that form is with the Premier at the moment.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Just for clarification, if I may; given that councils have to go into caretaker convention, I can only presume that an agreement will not be signed at the time of caretaker because they, in their individual roles as elected members in the first place, are unable to make commitments. Therefore, is it your expectation that we will have something before that early September date, or do we have to wait until after a November election date?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: It is not relevant to caretaker mode; it is between the Local Government Association and the state. Every attempt is being made to get that signed, hopefully before caretaker mode.

Mr GRIFFITHS: An easy one: what is the current level of total local government borrowings?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Highlights of the summary available on councils' finances are that local government as a whole recorded an operating deficit of \$1 million in 2012-13, that is after adjusting for the early receipt of federal financial assistance grants in June 2013. The sector's annual operating deficit has reduced steadily over the last decade or more. The very small or adjusted operating deficit of \$1 million in 2012-13 compares with an operating deficit of \$75 million in 2000-01.

Local government taxation revenue—that is from general and other rates on properties—was \$1.3 billion in 2012-13. Together with their own sources of funding (mainly user charges), approximately 85 per cent of local government income is derived from its own sources. Local government net financial liabilities, being the most comprehensive measures of a council's indebtedness, at 30 June 2013 was \$536 million, which is equivalent to 28 per cent of local government income in 2012-13. This compares with a figure of 36 per cent in 2000-01.

The sector's level of indebtedness of \$536 million is significantly low when put into context of the depreciated land value, buildings, road infrastructure and other non-financial assets as at 30 June 2013, which totals approximately \$21 billion. Gross capital expenditure in recent years has

averaged approximately \$600 million, of which nearly half has been expenditure on renewing and replacing existing assets. While the financial performance and position of local government as a whole has improved significantly over the last decade or more, it should be noted that the current financial condition of individual councils varies substantially.

An independent financial sustainability inquiry of councils initiated by the LGA in 2005 highlighted that, under their then existing revenue and expenditure policy settings, a significant number of councils were financially unsustainable in the longer term. A critically important approach used by many councils in addressing physical imbalances has been to phase out operating deficits in a manageable way, thus avoiding excessive rate increases or dramatic cuts in services. Nevertheless, council members often were presented with and continue to face weighty financial challenges, and that is an issue that we have to face.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I have a point of clarification on that response. Minister, I believe you referred to the \$536 million in net debt and you also referred to 28 per cent of revenue that that represented. My interpretation would be that that debt means the outstanding principal of loans. Given that loans have to be repaid with an interest component, do you have the figures in front of you of the principal and interest payments, and what percentage of revenue that equates to?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: No, we do not have that information here. To get that information we would have to go to each individual council for their borrowing criteria and things like that. But we do not have that.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Chair, if I may ask another question: this refers to the response you also gave about avoiding excessive rate increases, and I believe that was the term you quoted. Given your historical involvement in local government and your desire to ensure that service delivery is the best and the most efficient possible for people, from a policy and initiative opportunity within your area of control now, are you able to give us any details on what you are doing to try to decrease the burden of an increase in rates?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: We are trying to improve the asset management of the sector. As we are all aware, South Australia was the first state to introduce legislation requiring councils to develop and adopt a long-term financial plan supported by an infrastructure and asset management plan. A major package of the amendment to the Local Government Act in 2005 brought into effect a number of key measures to improve financial management practices in local government.

The purposes of a council's long-term financial plan is to express in financial terms the activities that it proposes to undertake over the medium to longer term to achieve its stated objectives. Underwritten by a council's infrastructure and asset management plan, the long-term financial plan enables a council to address the long-term sustainability of its financial performance and position, ensure moneys are available for maintenance, renewal and replacement of existing infrastructure and other assets, and to help make informed decisions based on affordable and responsible service levels.

As stated earlier, councils in South Australia are the custodians of approximately \$21 billion of infrastructure and other assets on behalf of their communities. They have an obligation to ensure that existing assets are managed effectively and efficiently and that decisions regarding the acquisition of new assets, the sale of existing assets and the maintenance and renewal of existing assets, are undertaken in an open and transparent fashion. The requirement to have an infrastructure and asset management plan has helped councils to embrace internationally-recognised tools, policies and procedures to meet this challenge.

Other key initiatives for improving financial management and reporting include the implementation of an annual update of the model financial statements brought into operation in 2010 and the more recent requirement for local government auditors to provide an audit opinion about the accuracy of a council's internal controls. That is under the Local Government (Accountability Framework) Amendment Act 2009.

The model financial statements enable councils to prepare their annual financial statements in a manner that is consistent with Australian accounting standards, incorporating the best practice of the state and other local government jurisdictions in Australia. They have materially improved the

reliability, comparability and consistency of data publicly available on council finances. They have also led to significant improvements in the level of disclosure in the notes accompanying a council's financial statements.

A feature of the model statements is the accounting policy guidance of practical examples included in the explanatory material throughout the document. Internal controls are central to good financial governance and to issues of accountability and public confidence in the financial reporting of councils.

May I also, Madam Chair, relate to my visits to local councils across all the regions and also within the metropolitan area. We are all striving to get the best practices out there. I had the great privilege, along with the shadow minister, of previously being an integral part of local government. I am sure our hearts are headed in the right direction to take every opportunity, and any suggestion about things that we may be able to do as a state—whether in government or in opposition or in the community—would be welcomed by all councils to ensure that they become aware of that.

I have seen some innovative programs across the regions relating to asset management of road infrastructure, road maintenance and so forth. I had the great pleasure of seeing the Charles Sturt council this week, and they gave me an overview of their asset management program and, whilst it was fairly expensive to establish, that program is giving them a great state-of-the-art opportunity to manage their assets across all the regions.

I am encouraging councils to share resources, whether it be IT systems, payroll system or equipment and things like that. I think that we all need to look outside the square to get the best opportunities to ensure that local government has the least amount of duplication out there and that we work together to ensure that they get the best bang for their dollars.

Mr GRIFFITHS: I respect the commitment in the minister's answers, and I certainly sympathise with him. As he has noted in the past, we both have that background. Minister, in the first part of your response, you referred to 2005 and 2010 changes, whereas my question related to more contemporary issues. The changes from those periods have flowed through. I suppose I relate to current times, and by 'current', I mean the last few financial years and what the future years' projections look like being with respect to financial plans they are trying to put in place.

From your position, and I understand that, prior to this year's budget, there was very little opportunity for you to make substantial changes, but is the challenge you are setting for yourself and the people who work with you about not just looking at innovative approaches that have been undertaken but also looking at what occurs around the world to try to either create a reduction in cost or not necessarily a revenue opportunity but resource sharing?

You have said, I think, that the intention is to open up the Local Government Act later this year for review. How seriously is that review going to look at that fundamental issue, where it comes down to what the property owner has to pay every year in council rates?

The CHAIR: We need to have a very quick answer because we need to wrap up the committee.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: As I said earlier, I have been across the whole of the state. I have been out to many councils in the regions, and I am now on the journey of doing the metropolitan councils. I am not only listening to the Local Government Association about opportunities but I am also hearing firsthand from each individual council out there. First up, we are going to hear what the councils are saying, what are their challenges, what are the barriers they may see. I have set a challenge for myself and also for my department to look at innovative opportunities, whether it is in South Australia, Australia or anywhere else, to ensure that we get the best and most efficient and effective operation of councils.

Mr GRIFFITHS: My last question is about pensioner concessions. I know that this was a particularly important issue for you prior to the election, when you had a notice of motion up and you were suggesting an increase from, I think, \$190 per year to \$240. You referred to the challenges in relation to federal decisions that had been made. Is it still your intention to actively pursue this area? I am not sure whether it was one of your charter issues, but I think it was one of the issues you also negotiated with the Premier.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: It is still my philosophy to pursue not only pensioner concessions but also other concessions. I said earlier that I am disappointed that the federal government did cease the payment to the states which was going towards pensioner concessions. This is a discussion I will be having with the relevant federal minister when I get across to Canberra.

As for the supplementary local roads funding, we as a state need to work together to ensure that we get that reintroduced because, if we do not, someone has to pay for it. I certainly want to be able to pursue every opportunity to have that reinstated—as the member for Goyder would want to, and I hope that would be his direction—and also to look at increasing that. Certainly, it is a challenge I have taken on board, and it is not off my radar.

The CHAIR: There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the proposed payments completed, and I thank the minister and his advisers for their time here this morning.

Sitting suspended from 12:29 to 13:30.

DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION, \$998,989,000
ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND SOCIAL
INCLUSION, \$184,930,000

Membership:

Mr Gardner substituted for Mr Tarzia.

Ms Sanderson substituted for Mr Goldsworthy.

Dr McFetridge substituted for Mr Griffiths.

Minister:

Hon. Z.L. Bettison, Minister for Communities and Social Inclusion, Minister for Social Housing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Youth, Minister for Volunteers.

Departmental Advisers:

Ms J. Mazel, Chief Executive, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Mr A. Thompson, Executive Director, Financial Services, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Mr P. Bull, Executive Director, Youth Justice, Community Engagement and Organisational Support.

Ms N. Rogers, Director, Business Affairs, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Ms T. Stephenson, Principal Project Manager, Business Affairs, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Mr D. Caudrey, Executive Director, Disability SA, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Ms S. Wallace, Executive Director, Policy and Community Development, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Ms L. Young, Executive Director, Disability and Domiciliary Care Services, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Ms L. McAdam, Director, Community Connect, Youth Justice, Community Engagement and Organisational Support.

The CHAIR: Rather than read out the entire statement, I remind everybody to be mindful of the procedures for the estimates committee, particularly that questions must be based on a line of expenditure in the budget papers and must be prefaced by the identifiable reference. I declare the proposed payments open for examination and call on the minister to introduce her advisers and to make an opening statement, if she wishes.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Thank you, Chair; I do have an opening statement. The Communities and Social Inclusion portfolio is the cornerstone of the government's commitment to supporting vulnerable individuals and families and building strong, resilient communities. The diverse programs and activities delivered by the department are fundamental to ensuring that all South Australians can live a decent and productive life and contribute to the government's strategic priorities of keeping South Australia an affordable place to live, and building safe communities and healthy neighbourhoods. Over the last year, through this portfolio, much of this has been achieved for the people of South Australia. This included:

- providing close to 900,000 household concessions;
- receiving over 112,000 applications for screening and background checks of individuals who work or volunteer with children, vulnerable adults, or in the aged-care sector;
- over the year, supervising approximately 500 young people on community-based youth justice orders, and 450 in custody;
- providing domiciliary care services to over 6,700 older people across metropolitan Adelaide, helping people to remain independent at home;
- and funding many non-government organisations across South Australia to provide early intervention and community development programs for vulnerable populations.

During the 2014 state election, the government committed to implementing a number of initiatives to ensure that South Australia remains an affordable place to live. These initiatives, to be progressed or implemented in 2014-15, include:

- a \$50 increase to the energy concession to take effect from 1 July 2014, increasing the concession to \$215;
- providing \$1 million over the next four years for new community Foodbank outlets in Port Pirie, Edwardstown and Elizabeth which will allow emergency financial assistance recipients to 'shop' in a dignified environment that offers choice and provides much greater value for money; and
- partnering with Good Shepherd Microfinance to expand the provision of no-interest and low-interest loan products and financial counselling in South Australia.

This new investment will complement the existing investment of around \$4 million that this government has already committed to programs that contribute to making South Australia an affordable place to live. These programs include the emergency electricity payment scheme, financial counselling services, the emergency financial assistance program, the low income support program, the consumer credit legal service and the Utilities Literacy Program.

As a result of a decision taken by the federal government in its last budget, from 1 July 2014 the South Australian government will no longer receive almost \$30 million to provide concessions to Pensioner Concession Card and Seniors Card holders in South Australia. This is \$30 million that is used by pensioners and low-income earners to help meet their cost-of-living expenses and manage their finances.

I am pleased to confirm that the South Australian government will stand by these South Australians and, as outlined in the 2014-15 state budget, make up the shortfall in federal funding to ensure that some of our state's vulnerable citizens still retain the support they need to manage their household expenses.

Resulting from the Debelle inquiry, the government has moved to significantly strengthen employment screening for people working with children, the aged, people with disability and other groups of vulnerable people. From 1 July 2014, new requirements were introduced for screening for

people who seek to work or volunteer in disability services funded under the Disability Services Act 1993. An extra \$1.3 million provided to the DCSI Screening Unit in the 2014-15 State Budget will help minimise the impact of fee increases on volunteers and also enable service improvement initiatives, such as online application processes that will benefit all applicants.

In January and February this year, significant fires impacted on our state. Over 425,000 hectares of land was burnt by numerous bushfires across South Australia. The fires impacted on at least 20 local government areas, as well as state and Crown land. They had a significant impact on private property, housing, farms, farm equipment and stock, and public infrastructure (mainly roads).

The most significant fires occurred at Bangor, Eden Valley and Rockleigh. The whole of government response to the fires was coordinated through the State Recovery Committee, chaired by the chief executive of DCSI. In particular, DCSI provided valuable direct relief and assistance to affected individuals and will continue to work with these fire-affected communities into the 2014-15 financial year.

In 2013-14, the Behaviour Support Framework was implemented across the Adelaide Youth Training Centre. This strategic model promotes a safe custodial environment and provides pathways to increase young people's positive participation in community life. Key to the Behaviour Support Framework is the progression model, which provides individual incentives to encourage and support a young person to develop positive behaviour strategies and take responsibility for their progress. The progression model assists residents to reach short and long-term goals, develop life skills, address dysfunctional patterns of behaviour and take responsibility for choices.

This approach aims to give young people in custody the best possible opportunity to develop the skills and behaviours they will need when they return to their homes and communities. I do not have time this afternoon to outline all the significant achievements in this portfolio, but together these diverse activities have made a significant contribution to the lives of many South Australians and to building safe, strong communities where all can prosper.

The CHAIR: Member for Morphett, do you have a statement or just straight into questions?

Dr McFETRIDGE: We will get straight into questions, thank you. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 118, Sub-program 7.2: Community support services and also Budget Paper 3, page 44 under Taxation revenue screening services. Minister, was the recent price rise for screening an 'announce and defend' process? What consultation was had with the stakeholders before the announcement was made?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Thank you very much for the question. The government has responsibility to protect vulnerable members of the community. The community expects this of us and we take this responsibility very seriously. This means that, depending on the role they perform and the sector they work in, employees and volunteers may require a screening check from my department's Screening Unit. The Screening Unit conducts these screening assessments in accordance with the provisions in the Children's Protection Regulations 2010, the Aged Care Act 1997 and various other administrative arrangements and directives. As well, as from 1 July 2014, the screening unit also conducts disability-related employment—

Dr McFETRIDGE: Minister, there is no argument about—

The CHAIR: Point of order?

Dr McFETRIDGE: There is, just on relevance, because we really need to know what consultation there was with the stakeholders before the announcement of the price rises.

The CHAIR: The minister is answering the question.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Fees for the DCSI screening services increased as a result of increasing costs associated with conducting these important checks. In line with increasing community expectations and the nature of the scope, the screening process has changed, making it more complex and more expensive. The 2014-15 budget includes increased net appropriation of \$1.3 million in 2014-15. This ensures the impact of fee increases on volunteers is minimised, as well

as enables important service improvements such as an online application process that will benefit all applicants.

Screening assessments are not a revenue raising strategy for government, and the fees, even with increases, will still not be equivalent to costs. The 2014-15 budget papers show increased operating expenses, funding for screening services, as over \$4 million per year and \$4.5 million in 2014-15. Revenue raised in the increase in fees is projected as considerably less.

Dr McFETRIDGE: I have been very patient here, minister, but can you tell me what consultation was there with stakeholders before the announcement?

The CHAIR: Just before the minister goes on: had you finished your answer, minister?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: No.

The CHAIR: No; so, we need to actually—

Mr GARDNER: She has not started it, ma'am.

The CHAIR: I am sorry, the standing orders are very clear: the minister is able to answer the question in any way she wishes; she is answering the question.

Mr GARDNER: That is not what the standing order says exactly, though, is it?

The CHAIR: I am advised that she is able to answer the question and she is answering the question. Minister.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Thank you. The levels of fees were set to better reflect the actual cost of delivering the service. Since the introduction of the new fees, both I and my department have held meetings with affected organisations and other stakeholders, including an information session that stakeholders were invited to attend. These meetings have focused on providing information, discussing—

Dr McFETRIDGE: So, announce and defend—it was an announce and defend.

The CHAIR: Order! We need to establish that the standing order about interrupting is still in practice here today. The minister is answering the question—

Mr GARDNER: Just not the one about relevance.

The CHAIR: Well, the minister is able to answer the question, I am informed, in any way she wishes, as long as she keeps to the budget paper line; she is answering the question.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: The screening fees increase were part of the budget process.

Dr McFETRIDGE: Part of the budget process? Thank you, minister. On that same budget reference—in fact, I might just pass—

Mr GARDNER: Yes, can I have a question first? On Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 125, the objective is to 'provide secure youth training facilities for young people who are detained.' Minister, in Corrections estimates on Monday, minister Piccolo was asked about whether the government had any plans to utilise either of the youth justice facilities at Cavan to hold adult prisoners—especially at times of surge, is what I have in mind, but at any time. While he has said the government did not have any plans to do so, he refused to rule it out. Minister, can you please rule out any possibility that either of the youth justice facilities at Cavan will be utilised to hold adult prisoners?

The CHAIR: Before the minister answers, can the table just establish that this is part of your responsibilities?

Mr GARDNER: Yes; the gentleman on the right is responsible for Youth Justice.

The CHAIR: I am asking the minister, if that is alright. Is this part of your responsibilities?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Yes; the youth training facility is. We are signatory to both international and national conventions and standards in respect to detainment of children and young

people in criminal justice systems. I am not aware of the situation that you have spoken about but I will ask Peter Bull to elaborate.

Mr BULL: The department has no plans to use either facility for adult prisoners at this point.

Mr GARDNER: And is the minister able to rule out, in this financial year, for example, that is upon is in this budget or indeed in the future, that either of those facilities will be used to hold adult prisoners?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I think Peter has made that clear.

Mr GARDNER: So that is a no? No to ruling it out, as minister Piccolo refused to?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Peter will just elaborate on the current situation.

Mr BULL: Just to be clear: we do have some residents that are over 18, but they are from the Youth Court orders. So, in terms of what we are talking about here—just to clarify; we are talking about prisoners that have come through the adult corrections—

Mr GARDNER: I am talking about prisoners sentenced as adults.

Mr BULL: Yes, that is right. There would be no possibility that we could put adult prisoners in either of those facilities in this financial year.

Mr GARDNER: And in future financial years, which was also part of the question?

Mr BULL: That is probably more a policy decision, but we have got no plans to do that.

Dr McFETRIDGE: Back to the previous reference on the screening programs, minister, just as a blood test is really a picture of a moment in time, does the government still think a three-yearly, or even an annual, screening is an acceptable way of detecting 'monsters in our midst'?

The CHAIR: Detecting or exposing?

Dr McFETRIDGE: Detecting.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Thank you very much for your question. I think that we have seen that the community expects that government will screen people who are in situations where they are in contact with children, the vulnerable and the aged. I think I have been very clear when I have spoken about this that, while we have a very robust screening unit, it is a risk assessment. It is based on actions of people in the past. I believe it is a robust system.

Obviously, we cannot predict the actions that a person will perform tomorrow, but we can look at actions in the past, and that is what the screening unit will assess. I think I have detailed before—and I can go through it again—the different levels of screening that we go through, depending on the type of check, but I do not think that is the nature of your question here.

Dr McFETRIDGE: The question goes on to: what progress has the government made with other states and territories in progressing a national screening system? Will screening protocols be updated in real time to give alerts to government departments and/or police?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: As you would see in the budget, there was an initial \$1.3 million put into the screening unit for this year, and we are investigating point-in-time processes for screening.

Dr McFETRIDGE: Minister, how will you keep screening costs down but ensure rigorous screening protocols are in place?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: We do already subsidise the screening. As I think we have discussed in the past, volunteers will only be asked to pay once for their screening at that point of application. This will be a challenge. I think that greater efficiencies in the system, including online applications, will mean that those costs will come down, and we will be looking to gain greater efficiency.

Dr McFETRIDGE: Minister, why then are some NGOs, particularly those dealing with people with disabilities, screening every year when really they only have to do it every three years? Are you

aware of the severe financial impact of the screening charge increase on the NGOs? I know of one NGO who will be paying an extra \$250,000 to have their volunteers and their employees screened.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: We have our screening process, and we will be giving people a clearance letter. Most of that is employer driven, whether that be a volunteer or by paid employment. We also know that different organisations have their own policies in regard to screening, some of which, as you are saying, might be asked to screen on an annual basis.

This has been raised with me by SACOSS, and I said that I want to work collaboratively with them to understand what the concerns are about. I feel our system is robust, but it is a risk assessment. I want to understand what it is that those individual organisations are seeking by doing their own risk assessment, and see what we can do to collaborate and have more of an understanding.

I think one of the key things is we have seen that the use of screening has come into each of the states and territories in Australia. I think this is something that the community expects and, in fact, the community demands of us, and that we will see more discussion about how different organisations do their screening and how the government screening works as well.

Dr McFETRIDGE: On the same reference, minister, are our screening protocols accepted by all the other states and territories?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I understand that we have had some discussions, but I will ask Peter to elaborate.

Mr BULL: There is no transferability across Australia, as far as I am aware, at the moment. The national program is still being discussed, so there is no national screening policy as yet.

Dr McFETRIDGE: Minister, then how far away are we from a national screening protocol? Have you any idea, any indications, from any COAG meetings that you might have been to?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I am not aware of a COAG meeting in relation to this. You might be aware that the federal government cancelled many of the ministerial councils that may have covered this. I think it is covered in the Attorney-General's, which I am not part of, but I will ask Peter to make comment about that.

Mr BULL: I am not aware of what the time line might be on that. It has been going on for some years. I think there is some goodwill around Australia to try to have one, but there are differences in the types of information and the screening processes that each state uses, so what on the face of it seems like something that should be quite simplistic has turned out to be fairly complex, with states wanting to maintain their respective positions. South Australia uses a lot of additional information to try to provide the most thorough screening check we can, so we are a little bit reluctant to advise against reducing that position, and I think other states are probably somewhat similar in their approach.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Perhaps I could add that I am advised that child protection matters are being discussed in the context of the current royal commission against child abuse. Potentially, I suggest we will have some more collaboration following out of that, but I am very happy to come back to you with an answer if you wish.

Dr McFETRIDGE: Certainly, minister. I would particularly like to be included in any proposed changes so that we can work in a bipartisan way on this. Just going on with the financial impact of the screening charges increase, what will you be doing for NGOs which are having difficulties? In one case, a school was considering cancelling its school camp because the cost of screening for volunteers was making it impossible for them to hold that camp. I think it was in minister Piccolo's electorate. What are you doing to make sure that, say, Riding for the Disabled does not fall over?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I am aware of the policy changes that have triggered this next level of screening within both the disability sector and the child safety framework. It is often the introduction of those policy changes that has made the requirement for screening to be at this next level. I am aware of the concerns of the community and the impact of their fees, and I have been meeting and will continue to meet with the representatives to discuss their concerns. I will monitor

the issues very closely and any consideration of special funding measures will be on a case-by-case basis.

The CHAIR: I need to clarify if there are any questions on my right. There are?

Mr HUGHES: Yes. I refer to Budget Paper 1, page 6. Will the minister advise how the government is protecting South Australian pensioners and low income earners from the federal government's cuts to concessions?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Members would be aware that as part of the most recent federal budget the Abbott government made the unilateral decision to cease the National Partnership Agreement on Certain Concessions for Pensioner Concession Card and Seniors Card Holders. As a result of this decision, from 1 July 2014 the South Australian government will no longer receive almost \$30 million to provide concessions for pensioner concession card and Seniors Card holders in South Australia. That is \$30 million that is used by pensioners and those on low incomes to help meet the cost of living expenses and help manage their finances.

I am pleased to confirm that the South Australian government will stand by these South Australians and make up the shortfall, as outlined in the 2014-15 state budget, in federal funding to ensure that some of our state's vulnerable citizens still retain the support they need to manage their household expenses. As outlined by the Treasurer, we will maintain concession entitlements in 2014-15, despite the federal government ceasing the national partnership and cutting the funding.

We will continue to honour our election commitment to increase energy concession, which from 1 July took effect, raising the maximum annual rate from \$165 per annum to \$215 per annum. This is almost a \$30 million shortfall from the federal government and makes up a significant proportion of the total expenditure on concessions in South Australia.

As a result of their decision, the long-term future of a number of concessions in this state is now at risk. That is why this government will join with non-government organisations, advocacy groups and pensioners themselves to advocate with the federal government to reverse the decision and commit to the national partnership agreement that was set to expire in 2015-16.

Ms HILDYARD: I refer to Budget Paper 6, page 27. Can the minister advise how the state government is easing cost of living pressures experienced by households on low and fixed incomes?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I thank you for the question. I am pleased to advise that on 1 July 2014 this government increased concessions in this state by \$50. This increase is being administered through the energy concession, bringing the amount that an eligible individual can claim per annum to \$215. This is a significant increase and will help many South Australian households on low and fixed incomes meet their household budgeting requirements.

Providing this increase with an energy concession, as opposed to another concession, ensures the greatest number of concession recipients receive the increase, as energy concessions are available at the same rate to both homeowners and tenants. To ensure that residents of residential parks and caravan parks also benefit, the residential parks concession scheme has also been updated to incorporate this \$50 increase.

I am also pleased to advise that the state government is extending this concession to those South Australians who have chronic medical conditions that are severely exacerbated by changes in temperature and need to frequently operate air-conditioning and heating systems. That means in excess of 2,000 South Australians currently receiving the medical heating and cooling concession will also receive the \$50 increase, which in fact is a potential \$100 per annum increase should they also be eligible for the normal energy concession.

The increase follows a concerted effort by this government to ease cost of living pressures for South Australians on low or fixed incomes. Since coming to government, we have significantly increased the concessions and remissions amount that South Australians on low or fixed incomes can receive.

Most recently, we increased the water concession from 1 July 2013, and now we continue our good record in this area by increasing the energy concession. This is, of course, in addition to many other concessions and remissions that South Australian households on low or fixed incomes

may be eligible for, such as remissions for council rates, concessions for water and sewerage charges, emergency services levy, fixed property and public transport concessions.

Ms WORTLEY: Minister, would you please outline how low income households will benefit from the state government's decision to provide a further grant over the next four years to Foodbank SA to fast-track new food outlets planned at Edwardstown, Elizabeth and Port Pirie? The reference is Budget Paper 6, page 26.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: During the last state election, Premier Jay Weatherill announced the government's intention to commit \$1 million over four years to support the extension of new community Foodbank outlets at Edwardstown, Elizabeth and Port Pirie. This will improve the safety net for those struggling to access nutritious and affordable food. This new initiative will build on the valuable work that Foodbank SA already does, distributing healthy food to groups working with disadvantaged South Australians.

The government, through the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion, will collaborate with Foodbank SA to develop and deliver this initiative. Foodbank has a proven reputation, working with the food and grocery industries, to distribute donated food to welfare agencies. The community Foodbank model allows people presenting for emergency food relief the opportunity to receive a Foodbank SA voucher and redeem it within a community Foodbank outlet. This approach allows recipients to shop in a dignified manner. It offers choice and it provides much greater value for money.

The community Foodbank model is currently operating in the Bowden community. Through partnership arrangements in place at this outlet, Foodbank SA provides additional support services to address the underlying issues that the recipient is facing. The government's investment to support the establishment of additional outlets will enable improved accessibility to these services for people residing in Elizabeth, Edwardstown, Port Pirie and surrounding areas. I am confident that the establishment of the community Foodbank outlets in these additional locations will have significant benefits for those who reside in those communities by improving access to vital services.

Dr McFETRIDGE: I refer to the same budget reference on screening programs. In Budget Paper 3, page 44, it shows, over the forward estimates, \$14 million coming in from revenue for screening services. Was a social benefit analysis undertaken before the decision—the announce and defend decision—was made on increasing the fees and, if not, why not?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Thank you for the question. I think one of the things we should consider is why the screening unit has become more of a focus and more of an expectation of risk assessment. That was partly through the Debelle inquiry, which made several recommendations to strengthen screening. I think it was very clear in the recommendations in that report that this is one of a series of aspects that was considered to have a greater focus.

Dr McFETRIDGE: So, really, for the 12½ years that your government has been in power in South Australia, it has only been in the last 12 or 18 months that you have realised that you need to up the screening processes, but in the meantime there has been no assessment or evaluation of the impact of these increases on the NGOs; there was no social benefit analysis. I think if you were to do that there is no argument whatsoever that you would not be increasing these fees; you would be carrying the cost because, like all volunteers and employees, these NGOs return far more than the state can ever pay.

I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 110, Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation, APY food security reports. Minister, have you received the third and final food security evaluation report, and what is the current status in relation to assessing and implementing these recommendations?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: There was the APY lands food security strategy 2011-2016, and I acknowledge that the member for Morphett has always had an interest in the APY lands and continues to do so. The strategy required sustained action by state and commonwealth governments, working with APY, to look at structural and systemic problems that stand in the way of achieving food security.

In July 2013, the responsibility for the lead of this strategy was transferred to DCSI for 12 months, and the strategy priorities were redefined to align with the World Health Organisation's

framework of essential elements for food security: food availability, food accessibility and food use. During 2013 14, the focus of DCSI's work was on food availability. Building on the findings of previous freight feasibility reports, commissioned by the Department of State Development, Aboriginal Affairs Reconciliation Division (AARD), and recognising the need to work with APY lands stakeholders, it was agreed that Foodbank explore a way of providing lower cost and better quality food to stores on the APY lands.

The department partnered with the commonwealth government to fund the development of a business feasibility plan for Foodbank to consolidate purchasing, logistics and freight functions to deliver food and other goods from Adelaide. The intention of this business plan is to improve food security, through improved freight and logistical arrangements, and deliver fresher, high-quality produce into the stores. The business plan received in June this year identified the need for funding to support the project through a transitional phase. The business plan is being considered by the commonwealth and state governments.

Dr McFETRIDGE: Will the third and final report be tabled in this place or will it be released publicly, with the recommendations?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: The report is due at the end of August, but I will not be the responsible minister, as it will be under AARD. The question would be best directed to that minister.

Dr McFETRIDGE: Can I quote minister Hunter on Monday. He said, 'I can advise that responsibility for food security has been transferred to the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.' That is what he told the Aboriginal affairs—

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: It was as I have detailed: for the past 12 months it was with DCSI.

Dr McFETRIDGE: It was and it is going back again, is it, now?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: That is what I am advised.

Dr McFETRIDGE: So, wait and see. Just on the same issue, the purchase of food security backup generators: how many generators were purchased, how were the locations determined, and why was Pipalyatjara—which the member for Giles and I visited just a few weeks ago, one of the most remote communities in South Australia—not equipped with a backup generator?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I thank you for the question. I do not have the answer and I will take it on notice.

Dr McFETRIDGE: I refer to the same budget reference program, the APY Task Force. Since the task force was established in 2004 there has been about \$5 million per annum in services and programs in the APY lands. What is the total budget for the APY Task Force in 2014 and has all this money been allocated to specific programs and projects?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I am advised that the task force is managed by AARD, and we only get a small proportion of that task force money, about \$2.3 million.

Dr McFETRIDGE: Once again, I would have to find the exact quote from minister Hunter, but from my recollection (and I do not think I am wrong) he said that the APY Task Force responsibility had been changed across to DCSI. Is that another one with a yo-yo of responsibility?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I do not believe that the task force has been the responsibility of DCSI.

Dr McFETRIDGE: Well, Mr Hunter has some questions then. Moving on—

An honourable member interjecting:

Dr McFETRIDGE: They do not know who is running the show, you are right. Just on a very particular issue, in Volume 1, page 118, Sub-program 7.2: Committee Support Services—the Hackham Community Centre. During the election campaign the Liberal Party promised to fund the Hackham Community Centre with \$60,000 a year. Is the state government considering that same offer and, if not, why not?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: The government recognises the important contribution community centres make to the wellbeing of many members of the South Australian community. In 2013-14 DCSI provided \$1,702,781 to community centres across the state as part of the Community and Neighbourhood Houses stream of the Family and Community Development program.

The department also provided about \$300,103 of funding to Community Centres SA, the peak body for community centres and neighbourhood houses across South Australia. This includes \$142,395 of core funding and an additional one-off payment of \$157,708 to deliver 'Results Based Accountability' training across the community sector. The peak body provides its members with services, support, advice, advocacy and professional development opportunities.

Junction Australia operates a range of services, including the Hackham Family Connection Centre which has a focus on providing programs and opportunities for families with children aged 0 to 12 who live in the Onkaparinga area. In 2013-14 DCSI provided Junction Australia (formerly Southern Junction Community Services) with \$1,738,196 to deliver a range of initiatives including homelessness, domestic violence, youth and parent/adolescent counselling services and programs.

We also support community centres in the southern region. We provided \$281,935 of funding to the City of Onkaparinga for its Southern Suburbs Community Centres program for 2013-14. The City of Onkaparinga allocated this funding to its eight council-supported community centres in order to provide programs responsive to community need, with a focus on disadvantaged communities.

Dr McFETRIDGE: I refer to Budget Paper 3, page 38, DCSI concessions. According to the budget papers, there is \$194.4 million, over the forward estimates I assume. Is the Concessions and Seniors Information Service (CASIS) working as planned now? I have asked questions before in question time about this, but I want the committee to be certain that that is working properly now, that only valid, eligible concession recipients are in place. What is the status of the clawbacks from the people who were inadvertently paid incorrectly?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Can I get you to confirm again? You have asked me several questions on CASIS in the house. You are specifically asking about the concessions—

Dr McFETRIDGE: Can you tell us how many concessions recipients there are now? How many are you trying to get back the money from of those people who were inadvertently paid, and is this system working as planned now? I forget what the cost was, but it has blown out from tens of millions to hundreds of millions, I understand.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: As you know, CASIS not only involves the development of a new IT system but also substantially revises business processes in dealings with third parties, such as SA Water, energy retailers and local government. The project is driven by two key outcomes: to create a single client view of concessions so that DCSI can ensure that each client is receiving all of the concessions to which they are entitled; and the need to comply with Auditor-General recommendations regarding reconciliation of client payments.

DCSI is now using some of the CASIS functionality to improve the integrity of all concessions data and to enhance data exchange with concessions partners. This identified some variance between departmental records and those held by concession partners.

A major data-matching exercise commenced in mid-2013 to ensure that DCSI, energy retailers, SA Water, Lands Title and Centrelink records matched, not only to determine eligibility but also for other customer details, such as address. DCSI was unable to match 5,173 concession payment records between the total active records in the concessions and rebates tracking system and the files of active concession recipients provided by energy retailers.

As at 11 June, from these records it has been determined that 2,026 customers were entitled to continuing concessions and 987 were ineligible for a concession. As at 11 June, concessions totalling \$311,157 were overpaid to 569 of these customers. Of the remaining 418 ineligible customers, DCSI is waiting for further information from energy retailers.

The concessions for the customers who have not responded to two requests to make contact to ascertain their eligibility have been ceased, with an effective date of 28 March this year, as stated in correspondence to them. If the customers believe that they should be receiving concessions, they

must now make an application to DCSI to enable assessment of their eligibility. DCSI will seek the recovery of any overpayments made to customers from energy retailers.

Dr McFETRIDGE: On that same topic, minister, I asked you in this house on 18 June, 'Has the final cost of CASIS been settled at \$4.5 million, considering that it started at \$600,000?' and you could not answer then. Can you give the committee an answer now? That is over a seven-fold increase.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: The total cost of the life of the project (from 2008-09 to the end of the 2013-14 year) for the development of CASIS is estimated at \$5.8 million. The initial budget needed to be amended once the full complexity of the system was identified and the scope fully developed. All payments for this project were made within existing resources.

Dr McFETRIDGE: I have one further question. Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 122, Office for the Northern Suburbs. Minister, hasn't the Office for the Northern Suburbs been a waste of money, considering the calls by *The Advertiser* and others for a minister for the north?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: No.

Dr McFETRIDGE: Can you provide examples of connections, partnerships and collaborations that have developed with the office, and do you think we need a minister for the north?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I feel that the Minister for Automotive Transformation—which has a key focus on the north, given the transition that is happening in relation to moving away from automotive—I believe that within that portfolio she will cover those issues adequately and effectively.

The CHAIR: We now move to the social housing portfolio.

Membership:

Mr Knoll substituted for Dr McFetridge.

Mr Pengilly substituted for Mr Gardner.

Departmental Advisers:

Ms J. Mazel, Chief Executive, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Mr A. Thompson, Executive Director, Financial Services, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Mr P. Fagan-Schmidt, Executive Director, Housing SA, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Ms R. Hulm, Director, Corporate Services, Housing SA, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Ms N. Rogers, Director, Business Affairs, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Ms O. Bennell, Director, Homelessness Strategy, Housing SA, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Mr G. Myers, Principal Coordinator, Strategic Projects Business Affairs, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

The CHAIR: Minister, do you have an opening statement?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Yes, I do. Firstly, I would like to pass on my thanks to my predecessor, the Hon. Tony Piccolo, for his contribution as the previous minister for social housing. Housing is central to the health and wellbeing of families and individuals. The government's goal is for an integrated housing and homelessness sector which supports people in accessing safe, affordable and appropriate housing, especially people who are vulnerable and at risk.

Housing SA's vision, 'Connecting People to Place', defines its strategic direction as supporting people to maintain their housing, and helping them to connect with their communities. The Housing SA Blueprint, released in 2013-14, outlines a number of areas of rapid change in the current environment which are driving significant change to our services. When considered collectively, these areas of people, policy, funding, and services create a compelling case for change.

Over recent years the profile of people living in social housing or waiting for housing and homelessness services has changed, with increasing levels of complexity and vulnerability. A variety of housing options must be available to meet these changing needs.

Changes in client circumstances have necessitated a change in policy. Our policies seek to ensure that our highest subsidised services are targeted to those with the greatest need. Housing SA's ongoing viability and the resilience of a multi-provider social housing system are reliant on an appropriate funding model. We will continue to work with our national counterparts to negotiate a more sustainable framework.

As well, Housing SA's services have expanded, with a majority of its clients assisted through private rental support—more than 30,000, compared to 2,500 new public housing tenancies. I would like to note a number of key achievements over the past year. The Better Places, Stronger Communities reform package is progressing, with a transfer of around 1,100 public housing properties to the community housing sector, the amount for the first half of 2015. Two community housing providers have been selected to each manage these areas. Households affected by the transfer have been individually contacted and consulted and will continue to receive extensive support and information in the lead-up to the transfer.

In August 2012, South Australia committed to participate in the National Regulatory System for Community Housing Providers under the Community Housing Providers National Law. This national system was developed to align regulatory practice across all jurisdictions and assist in growing the community housing sector. In November 2013, the South Australian parliament passed the Community Housing Providers (National Law) (South Australia) Act 2013, and the act came into operation on 1 April 2014.

The construction of properties funded through the \$50 million Affordable Housing Stimulus Package announced in June 2013 are well underway. All are on track for completion by the end of 2014. This government has committed significant funding towards the construction of new disability-specific dwellings to address current unmet need and prepare for increased demand, which we anticipate as a result of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Eight properties funded through the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan disability project achieved practical completion during 2013-14, with all 90 dwellings for people with disability due for completion by the end of 2014. Another significant achievement was the establishment of Access 2 Place Ltd to provide disability-specific tenancy and property management for social housing assets.

With funding through the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, we have continued to provide support to the most vulnerable members of our community through the provision of homelessness services. The state government has recently signed a new partnership agreement for 2014-15 matching the commonwealth's offer of \$8.87 million for a further one year. This will enable us to maintain current levels of service provision in the homelessness sector.

However, as minister I am deeply concerned that the commonwealth has not confirmed funding past 2014-15. Unfortunately, our process of redesigning the existing homelessness sector must therefore commence to accommodate reduced funding in the 2015-16 financial year. We will continue to make our concerns known with the commonwealth in this critical area of government investment.

The next 12 months will therefore continue to be both challenging and exciting in the social housing portfolio. We are growing community housing, developing new affordable housing supply options, transforming our services to make it easier to access housing, and strengthening the sustainability of our multi-provider sector.

Before I conclude, I would also like to speak on the issue of Clovelly Park. There is obviously a high level of public interest and concern on these matters. Since 2008, Housing SA has been acting on the advice of the EPA and SA Health with regards to its properties in the area, any risks to the health and safety of tenants and any action that should be taken. In response to the draft VIRA Report, senior executives met on 6 June to consider options and subsequently advised their ministers of possible agency responses. I was notified of the possible agency responses on 11 June, with a formal briefing being given to me by my department on 16 June.

At a further meeting on 19 June, the senior executives agreed that a strategy be developed to allow for the coordinated and orderly relocation of residents over the next six months as a precautionary measure, recognising there was not an immediate risk to residents.

The process for both communicating with affected residents and relocating them was formalised and agreed to by officials on 25 June. The government agreed to the proposal which would see residents notified. Relocation is always a possibility when site contamination has been identified, but the decision to adopt this precautionary approach was only made after extensive consideration of all advice, including that from SA Health, the Environmental Protection Authority and Housing SA.

On the 2nd and 3rd of July 2014, Housing SA tenants and other residents in the affected area were visited by representatives of the EPA, SA Health and Housing SA advising that an orderly relocation of tenants on Chestnut Crescent and the northern side of Ash Street would take place over a six-month period commencing mid-July. Housing SA has committed dedicated resources to work with tenants and to assure relocation occurs promptly and as smoothly as possible.

All 23 affected households have been given the highest priority for relocation, and have had individual meetings with Housing SA staff with regards to their preferences, needs and concerns. There are currently 39 people residing in the 23 Housing SA properties affected. These residents are a diverse group, including nine children, with the average age of the adult residents being around 48 years. There are nine residents over 60 years of age, with four of those being elderly people in their 80s.

This is an established community, with six residents having lived in this area for around 25 years. I have also extended an invitation to any tenants within the area identified for relocation to speak with me directly. I will continue to be available to individual tenants. As of 22 July, I am advised that 10 tenants have indicated their wish to move to an alternate accommodation as soon as possible. Another 10 have indicated their preference to relocate over the next six months, and three tenants are currently reluctant to relocate.

Housing SA expects to commence making offers of alternative accommodation in the next week. The government, through Housing SA, will meet the reasonable cost of relocating residents, including assistance with packing household contents, skip bins for disposal of unwanted goods, the relocation of household contents, and utility reconnection fees.

Ms SANDERSON: My question is referring to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 113: Social housing. What is the total number of people that were housed, and that were on the Housing SA waiting lists for 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15, and if that could be broken down into each category? How many of those were aged 25 years or under?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Can I just clarify; you said how many were housed, how many on the waiting list?

Ms SANDERSON: That is right; for each category for the three years mentioned, and if you do have the breakdown of how many were under the age of 25.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Let me just go through detailing the categories: category 1 on our waiting list is people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness; category 2 are people with high needs; and category 3 are people with housing affordability issues. The average wait time for allocations to category 1 is eight months. You asked me about the waiting list, and I have the totals here: as at 31 May 2013-14, there were 21,306, and—

Ms SANDERSON: Is that the total?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: On the waiting list, that is the total. In 2012-13, the waiting list total was 21,298. You have asked for the breakdown in the categories. I have in front of me the current breakdowns on the waiting list as at 31 May. On category 1, there were 2,971. On 30 June 2013, to compare the two years, there were 2,424. On category 2, as of 31 May this year, there were 6,120 applications and, at the same time last year, there were 6,341. On category 3, once again on 31 May this year, there were 12,129 applications compared with 12,446 applications last year. Sorry, you asked how many are housed?

Ms SANDERSON: Yes.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: The details I have for you are in regard to the 11-month period from 1 July 2013 to 31 May 2014. There were 2,047 allocations: category 1, 1,767; category 2, 184; and category 3, 95. It appears we do not have the information on the previous years. Would you like me to take that on notice and come back to you?

Ms SANDERSON: Yes, that would be great, thank you, minister. Also, if possible, it does not have to be by category, but could you provide the total of people under the age of 25 who were on the waiting list, if that is separated out at all.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: We will also take that on notice.

Ms SANDERSON: Thank you. On Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 113, how many Housing SA properties are currently vacant?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I think I took this on notice in the house.

Ms SANDERSON: That is right, and I have not received an answer.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Are you asking me the same question again?

Ms SANDERSON: I did not get an answer in the house.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: No, because I took it on notice and would write back. The number of vacancies available for rental as at 31 May is 909.

Ms SANDERSON: Has Housing SA reintroduced rent and occupancy reviews and, if so, what were the outcomes of those reviews?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I do not have that detail, so I will pass over to Phil.

Mr FAGAN-SCHMIDT: We have an ongoing program of rent reviews. There is automatic updating through a data exchange arrangement with the commonwealth government and Centrelink which allows for automatic updating for the majority of our tenants. We also have a systematised review that allows for updating, where information includes things other than rent and changes in household structure, and that is just a regular part of our business.

Ms SANDERSON: Is that once a year or is there a set time period?

Mr FAGAN-SCHMIDT: I am happy to advise on the second part. The first part—the adjustments to Centrelink—is on a six-monthly basis, so the adjustments in that automated process will occur on a six-monthly basis. The CPI adjustments to our rents are six-monthly.

Ms SANDERSON: To the minister, how many Housing SA tenants are on permanent contracts? I believe the system now is that they are put on for a certain amount of years—three, five or 10—but, prior to that new policy, how many are still permanent?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Are you seeking the number who pre-1983 have lifetime tenure?

Ms SANDERSON: I guess, the people who are still there now who have the lifetime tenure.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I am advised that those people who are on the two, three, five or 10 are on the permanent contracts. We do not have those details, and we will take that on notice.

Ms SANDERSON: So, there is no-one on a longer term than 10 years? Everyone is now on a time period?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Phil will provide some detail around that, although we do not have that specific figure for you.

Mr FAGAN-SCHMIDT: There are really three natures of tenancies that we have. With the majority of our tenants we have honoured the conditions of tenancy as they have gone in, and there are almost three different categories. There is an early category that effectively had tenure for life and had a particular set of rights associated with it that are probably more akin to rights you might experience in home ownership, particular rights that were established in part through common law principles. That then changed in the mid-1950s to a more traditional tenancy arrangement, but it was still not a fixed-term tenancy arrangement, and then a couple of years ago we moved so that all new tenants now move into fixed-term tenancies.

They commence with a probationary period. At the end of the probation, they will be offered a fixed term that relates to their need and circumstances. Part of what we are trying to achieve here is to meet people's needs at the point in time, not necessarily assume that those needs will remain long term—they may be able to enter the employment workforce and the like—and also to give us an opportunity to extend probation if that tenancy does not work out in relation to what we ask tenants to do, which is really around paying the rent, looking after the property, being a good community member.

Ms SANDERSON: I believe there are about 45,000 Housing SA houses. I am wondering if it is possible to come back to the house with a breakdown of the three categories: how many would be in the life, how many would be in the change that was in the mid-1950s and now on fixed contracts?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Certainly. I can tell you that at 31 May our lettable stock was 41,693, and we can base that information on that figure.

The CHAIR: Are there some questions on my right? Member for Torrens.

Ms WORTLEY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 114. Minister, how is the state government assisting people living in social housing to reduce household electricity bills?

Mr Pengilly interjecting:

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: During the state election, the government announced two initiatives to support people living in social housing to reduce their energy bills and greenhouse gas emissions and provide a means of reducing household cost of living. To extend the benefits of lower utility cost to people living in social housing, the state government is providing \$5.5 million for the replacement of 1,000 electric and LPG hot water systems in large family homes with solar hot water systems.

This will help tenants reduce their energy bills, as well as their cost of living, estimated to be up to 30 per cent on current energy bills. This replacement of electric hot water systems with solar hot water systems will also reduce carbon dioxide emissions by almost two tonnes per annum.

Housing SA is currently identifying properties suitable for solar hot water systems, targeting large family homes with multiple occupants and taking into consideration a range of other factors, including site orientation of the dwelling. Once suitable dwellings are identified and the supply of hot water units confirmed with the supplier, Housing SA will develop a project plan to arrange the installation of the units.

During the state election, the government also committed to pilot a solar panel scheme in public housing to reduce electricity bills for tenants. Up to 200 homes will be selected for the trial and, if successful, the scheme will be introduced more broadly to include up to 5,000 homes over the next five years. Under the pilot, Housing SA will identify suitable dwellings and consult with the occupants.

The tenants in the identified houses will then have the option to voluntarily enter into an agreement, such as a power purchase agreement or other similar commercial deals with a selected

solar company. Under these agreements companies install and maintain the solar system without an up-front cost and the occupant makes payments based on the electricity that is generated.

Following advice and consultation, a specification will be designed and a public request for a proposal called for the provision and installation of 200 solar systems. Subject to specific approvals, primarily related to roof structure and orientation, Housing SA currently allows tenants to install solar systems on their rental dwellings at their own cost once they enter into a deed of agreement. Between June 2011 and 14 July 2014, Housing SA approved 303 deeds of agreement.

Mr HUGHES: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 114. Can the minister advise the committee about the domestic violence facility in the western suburbs and the services provided by Housing SA to assist clients affected by domestic violence?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: The construction of a supported accommodation facility for domestic violence services in the western suburbs was completed in April 2014. The facility will provide accommodation for up to seven women and their children at any one time. The facility will be run by the western branch of the Central Domestic Violence Service, and is custom designed and purpose-built, providing security for tenants with a residential amenity. It provides supported on-site accommodation for women, and their children, experiencing domestic violence or Aboriginal family violence.

There are also administrative facilities, counselling rooms, education, and training spaces. Support will be provided through a comprehensive case management system which has a holistic, systems and strength-based approach to engage clients. Case management services include in-centre and outreach support, early intervention, post crisis and homeless children support. The facility was constructed with \$3.1 million of commonwealth government funding, which was provided through the Crisis Accommodation Program.

Ms HILDYARD: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 114. Can the minister provide an update on the implementation of the \$50 million affordable housing stimulus package, which was announced in the 2013-14 state budget?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: The government announced the affordable housing stimulus package in the 2013-14 budget, where \$50 million was made available through commonwealth government debt forgiveness as a result of savings in interest and guarantee fees. The package includes \$20 million for a capital grant program for community housing providers to deliver 130 new rental properties and \$30 million for a social housing investment program to construct a total of 108 dwellings on South Australian Housing Trust land, of which 21 per cent will be suitable for tenants with disability and 35 per cent will be constructed in regional locations.

Legal agreements have been finalised, with nine community housing providers approved for funding, and land has been secured for 130 dwellings to be constructed under the Community Housing Capital Grant Program. As at 31 May 2014, seven dwellings have been completed, 73 are under construction and the remaining 50 are contracted. All 130 dwellings are scheduled for completion by the end of December 2014.

Housing SA, on behalf of the South Australian Housing Trust, is responsible for managing the delivery of the social housing investment program. One hundred and four new social housing dwellings will be constructed, targeting category 1 applicants on the waiting list who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness. Four dwellings will be constructed for children living with disability. The program will also provide a significant financial contribution towards the purchase of land and the construction of eight dwellings in Lightsview for people living with a disability.

Through a competitive procurement process, contracts for 104 of the dwellings have been awarded and four disability dwellings are at the planning stage. As at 31 May, construction commenced on 90 dwellings, while 14 dwellings were to commence by 30 June. The remaining four dwellings will commence by 31 December. It is anticipated that five dwellings will have achieved practical completion by 30 June, while 99 dwellings are scheduled for completion by 31 December. The remaining four dwellings, along with additional dwellings at Lightsview, will be completed by 30 June 2015.

Ms SANDERSON: I refer to page 113. Can the minister please explain why no attempts at remediation, re-use or rebuild have been undertaken on the properties in Clovelly Park that have sat empty for up to five years?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Thank you. I will ask Phil to detail this.

Mr FAGAN-SCHMIDT: If I can just clarify the first point about vacant properties, there are six properties that have remained vacant. However, two of those properties are associated with the Unity Housing development. In 2009, the advice of the EPA and Health was that, within the complex owned by Unity, testing indicated that as a precautionary measure there should be tenant relocation.

So, Unity, which owns those properties under a debenture, undertook the relocation. There were two properties there that originally passed the EPA tests or for which no unreasonable levels of contamination were found. However, in testing later on, EPA and Health found levels above an acceptable level and advised Unity not to tenant those. I think the first point is that those two properties date back to the Unity Housing circumstance.

The other four vacant properties then—all of them have been vacant for no period of time. The earliest vacancy occurred on 1 March 2013 and then there were subsequent vacancies on 22 March, 24 May and 28 February. Those four vacancies are vacancies that really were under the management of Housing SA, and those vacancies occurred at the time that there was a fair bit of activity in terms of testing and further testing. Just prior to that there had been various advice that had come from Monroe's about testing and further testing and a local decision was taken within Housing SA to not re-tenant those, really for three reasons.

The first reason, I guess, is that, given the nature of our tenants being vulnerable, when a whole lot of testing was taking place, for tenancy management reasons, we chose not to offer a long-term tenancy there. Secondly, for property tenancy management purposes, there are costs associated with vacancy management, so we wanted to understand where the testing was occurring. Thirdly, around that time there had been some communication with Monroe's, who were talking about funding a remediation experiment, I guess, to see if ventilation of properties in situ was possible. We felt at that time—again, a local decision—that it was prudent to not re-tenant those, but I would point out those decisions date back about 16 months, not any period longer than that.

Membership:

Mr Marshall substituted for Mr Knoll.

Mr MARSHALL: Who made the decision not to re-tenant? Was that an executive decision or was it a ministerial decision?

Mr FAGAN-SCHMIDT: The delegation for that decision was at a local regional manager level. So, it was a local regional manager who made that for local operational reasons.

Mr MARSHALL: So the first that it became available was in March 2013?

The CHAIR: Through the minister.

Mr MARSHALL: I was asking the minister.

The CHAIR: The minister can indicate if she wishes.

Mr FAGAN-SCHMIDT: The data that I have from our mainframe shows that the first of those four properties, if you are talking about the vacant properties, was on 1 March 2013.

Mr MARSHALL: So when the announcement was made on 2 July or 3 July there were only four Housing Trust properties that were vacant?

Mr FAGAN-SCHMIDT: There were four Housing Trust properties, plus the two properties that were previously owned under a debenture arrangement by Unity and which had been returned, or the debentures had been lifted as a result of the conclusion of the management of that stock by Unity Housing.

Mr MARSHALL: How many people remain on the priority 1 waiting list for Housing Trust homes at the moment?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: We have already covered that.

Mr MARSHALL: Okay. It just seems an extraordinary number, minister, to keep six properties vacant when you have so many people waiting for a house.

The CHAIR: Is that a comment or a question?

Mr MARSHALL: Do you think it is acceptable to keep six properties vacant, some of them going back to March 2013, when you have so many people waiting for a house in South Australia?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I think that it was obviously an operational matter and an operational decision made at the local level and—

Mr MARSHALL: Did they make the right decision?

The CHAIR: Hang on, the minister is still answering the question.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I am aware of the waiting list numbers. The waiting list is handled between categories 1, 2 and 3, with category 1 being at risk of homelessness. I support the decision that was made on 1 March.

Mr MARSHALL: What were the reasons they were made?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: That has just been covered, I feel.

Mr MARSHALL: But you just said that you are supporting the decision. Why are you supporting the decision? What are the reasons you believe that those houses should have been kept vacant?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: The decision was obviously made at a local level and it has been outlined that there was considerable testing happening at the time and the operational decision was made that it was best for them to remain vacant at that time.

Mr MARSHALL: Minister, what plans do you have to ensure that once people have vacated those Housing SA properties—I think by the end of this year—that this will not turn into a ghetto and we will not have a repeat of what happened in Mead Street at Birkenhead, where squatters moved into those homes? What precautionary practices will you put in place?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Obviously, when the tenants relocated, questions had been asked about that. We will talk about a few different options that are available and I will ask Phil to detail what they may be.

Mr FAGAN-SCHMIDT: Yes, the situation with this form of contamination is that, as you are aware, the science has evolved over a recent period so there is no clear textbook that EPA and Health can give us on how to completely remediate it. I think the first point we have to recognise is that we are in a period where we are all working as best we can, like many modern cities that have an industrial past, to find solutions.

It is our intent to focus on the tenants that we need to relocate for the next six-month period. When we have completed those relocations we will then focus on remediation and redevelopment options. We are aware that an earlier offer was made to trial or tests some remediation where there is ventilation under the slab. This would be an experimental approach and in an experimental approach clearly we would seek to do it in a couple of houses and then test it for a period of time under the guidance of the EPA and Health to make sure that there was no health risk.

I would also point out (and I think this is fortunate in some ways) that James Brown has recently completed a development which in fact was a redevelopment, and part of the reason they redeveloped was because of the age of the previous stock. They undertook quite a different approach which was to establish a new membrane, with the advice of EPA and Health, which meant there was no ability for any vapours to move through there. I have spoken to the CEO of James Brown and he has explained a little to me about how they have gone about it and has offered for us to look at that approach.

In summary, it is experimental. We will focus immediately on the tenants and, at the end of the tenants, we will focus on options to remediate or redevelop. This area is valuable for us. We are a property owner, like many other property owners in the area, and we have an important social responsibility. We will be looking to do what we can early in the new year to redevelop or remediate to bring properties back into proper tenancy situations.

Ms SANDERSON: Page 113 still. Can the minister please explain how it took until May this year to receive the results from tests conducted for TCE in November 2013 when the industry standard is five to 10 working days for results (or 48 hours if you pay more) and most companies shut for only one week over Christmas.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: That is a question that will be answered by the Minister for the Environment.

Ms SANDERSON: Can the minister please advise whether there is a memorandum of understanding between the minister, the EPA and the health department for ongoing testing in the areas affected, similar to that of the Port Pirie lead implement program that tests lead levels in children through blood testing?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I am advised that there is not an MOU. There are working arrangements. I do not have any detail of formal arrangements. In regard to Port Pirie, can you repeat the essence of your question?

Ms SANDERSON: In Port Pirie, there are concerns of contamination due to lead, and in Clovelly Park, there are health concerns due to the contamination of TCE. You mentioned earlier that there were nine children living in the area. Do you have plans for health checks and to follow those through over time to see how those children and adults are faring, similar to what occurs in Pirie, where they keep an eye on it and check?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: That is a question best answered by the Minister for Health.

Ms SANDERSON: Thank you. Are Housing SA staff and contractors mandatory reporters and, if not, do you have plans to make them mandatory reporters?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Housing SA staff are mandatory reporters. Can I clarify your question: it was in regard to—

Ms SANDERSON: Also to contractors. What I am trying to establish is: when Housing SA or contractors go in to do a review of a home or to make repairs and they notice that there are children living in squalor, which potentially could be signs of neglect, would they then report that on so that their families and the child protection unit would be aware of that?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I am advised that, at this stage, we do not believe that the contractors are mandatory reporters, but we will take that on notice and come back to you with further detail.

Ms SANDERSON: I refer to page 114, Social Housing, stock transfer. What is the current status in relation to Manitoba, Playford and Pope Court properties as far as transfer of Housing SA stock to Renewal SA? Have these properties now been returned to Housing SA stock, and can the minister confirm that these properties will not be redeveloped?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: They never did leave the South Australian Housing Trust. At this stage, there is no intention to develop those sites.

The CHAIR: Final question, member for Adelaide.

Ms SANDERSON: Can the minister provide a detailed breakdown of the debt position of Housing SA client debt (I was given a total, in question time, of \$21.8 million, but I am unsure of the breakdown), and how much of that debt was written off as bad debts in the 2013-14 year?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: We have multiple causes for debt increasing, including: water charges, because we did some increase in the last financial year; and increases in private rental assistance, both the amount of assistance provided and the rising value of bond guarantees; and the reintroduction of annual home visits, which identifies more tenant charges for damage.

We have had some increases in water charges and private rental assistance. We note that that the Private Rental Assistance Program comprised about 21.3 per cent of the debt. There are 14,192 clients with an outstanding debt, and these include current Housing SA tenants, ex-tenants and people who have received bond assistance. I think that your question was about the specific breakdown of that debt?

Ms SANDERSON: That is right. I have part of it that was given, but I do not have the full amount. I am happy for you to take that on notice.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: We will take that on notice.

Dr McFETRIDGE: Thank you, Chair. Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 113, and the minister's opening statement about contamination at Clovelly Park. Minister, do you think that the environmental contamination and exposure to residents at Clovelly Park is a public health issue? Are we talking about a public health issue here?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: That question is best directed to the Minister for Health and the Minister for the Environment; I believe they have given quite detailed answers in their estimates.

Dr McFETRIDGE: Do you personally think that it is a public health issue?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I will be advised by the EPA on public health.

Dr McFETRIDGE: So, you have no thoughts on it?

The CHAIR: That is three questions; so that being the final question for this section, we will now move to the Multicultural Affairs portfolio.

Membership:

Mr Pisoni substituted for Ms Sanderson.

Mr Speirs substituted for Mr Knoll.

Mr Tarzia substituted for Mr Pengilly.

Departmental Advisers:

Ms J. Mazel, Chief Executive, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Mr A. Thompson, Executive Director, Financial Services, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Ms S. Wallace, Executive Director, Policy and Community Development, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Mr P. Bull, Executive Director, Youth Justice, Community Engagement and Organisational Support, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Mr G. Myers, Principal Coordinator, Strategic Projects Business Affairs, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

The CHAIR: Minister, would like to make an opening statement?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Thank you. South Australia has been built upon successive waves of immigration, and from the earliest days of white settlement this has included diverse cultural groups. Over the years, although the sources of migration flow have changed, a great commonality remains: people come to South Australia with hopes and aspirations, seeking a better life for themselves and their families. Together, these immigrants have helped build the South Australia we have today—a colourful and diverse community enriched by the differences and with an outstanding level of community harmony.

Multicultural SA has an important role in supporting and promoting an open, inclusive, cohesive and equitable multicultural community across our state. There are currently over

200 different cultural groups in South Australia which underlines the complexity of the area in which multicultural SA functions. For example, some of the long-established migrant groups, such as Italians and Greeks, have an ageing demographic. Therefore, ageing issues are of great concern to them. More recently arrived groups include many who are fleeing violence and persecution.

One of the key tasks of Multicultural SA is to manage the multicultural grants program. This government has continued to increase the funding available for multicultural grants to support community groups to promote and share their culture. From \$75,000 a year when we came into office in 2002, the grant program has been gradually increased, including by \$50,000 in 2013-14, to \$650,000. In 2014-15, \$1 million will be made available for multicultural grants, delivering on the government's election commitment to increase grant funding by \$350,000 per annum.

Under the program there are a range of funding opportunities, including major festivals, performance grants and one-off grants. Major festivals funding is provided to identify multicultural and ethnic organisations that deliver significant and established annual festivals.

Performance grants provide funding to increase ethnic community participation in major public events so that culturally diverse communities can feel and be seen as active members of the broader community. The most significant funding available under the Multicultural Grants Program is through one-off grants, with funding provided to community organisations to develop and strengthen multicultural communities.

The process for organisations seeking funding from the multicultural grants program changed to an online system in November 2013. In addition, the program guidelines were revised, with removal of fixed opening and closing dates for applications. Therefore, organisations are now able to submit their applications at any time of the year, with grants made available four times a year. Over the 2013-14 financial year, funding was provided to approximately 200 community organisations for festivals, events, equipment and furniture, cultural awareness programs, and education and learning projects.

The CHAIR: Minister, can I just ask you to hold on. If the noise in the gallery continues, we will have to ask you to leave the gallery; we just cannot hear down here. I am not sure who is up there, but if you could just keep the noise right down or perhaps leave the gallery while you are talking. Thank you, minister.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Access and equity guidelines have been developed by the South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission (SAMEAC) in consultation with Multicultural SA to support state government agencies to embed the principles of access and equity into their programs, services, information and policies. They will apply to agencies that provide direct services to the public and any employee or agency that engages and communicates with the broader community. The guidelines contain strategies which constitute best practice in supporting access and equity in the areas of communication, program and service delivery, policy, accountability, human resources and leadership.

In November 2013, the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion hosted South Australia's inaugural Multicultural Festival in collaboration with the Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia, the Adelaide City Council and a wide range of community groups. The festival was extremely successful, providing an opportunity for many smaller and newly-arrived communities to showcase their culture to a broad audience.

Interest in the festival from both culturally and linguistically diverse communities and the general South Australian public was high and undoubtedly helped build community awareness and understanding of diverse communities. The multicultural community values the support of the government of South Australia, not only through the grants but through the presence of elected officials at many community events throughout the course of the year.

Finally, I note that it has been a great privilege for me as a new minister to meet and share with so many groups across our community. I know the support of elected officials is very valued by our multicultural communities. Personally, it has been enriching for me to have the opportunity to speak with so many South Australians and learn their cultures and traditions. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of my predecessor, the Hon. Jennifer Rankine, in this regard.

Mr PISONI: My first question relates to FTEs.

The CHAIR: What page?

Mr PISONI: This is on Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 120. Are you able to advise whether Vicki Antoniou is still working the department of multicultural affairs?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I am advised she is not.

Mr PISONI: Did she leave of her own will?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I understand that when there was a change of government she went back to her substantive position in the Attorney-General's Department.

Mr PISONI: I take you to page 95 of that same document. There is an office accommodation consolidation amount there of \$403,000 that was unbudgeted for in the estimated result. Can you advise what that was for?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I understand that it is budgeted for, and I reflect that in the 2012-13 estimated result, which was in last year's budget paper, \$650,000 was reported for this project. Of that amount, \$247,000 was spent in 2012-13 on the Chesser House fit-out, \$143,000 was classified as operating expenditure, and the balance of \$403,000 was carried over into the 2013-14 year, of which \$9,000 was expected to be spent.

Mr PISONI: Is Chesser House still used for Multicultural SA?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Yes; I am advised it is used by SAMEAC, but also by other members of the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion, including some Housing SA staff.

Mr PISONI: How many staff in total are using Chesser House?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: You are asking for Multicultural SA staff? I am advised about 55 in total.

Mr PISONI: Fifty-five staff over various departments? How many in the Riverside office?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I have already answered questions for Communities and Social Inclusion. Are you specifically asking—

Mr PISONI: You do not have any Multicultural SA staff in the Riverside office?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: My apologies. I am advised that approximately 16 Multicultural SA staff are located there, but I would like to take that on notice and come back to you with a detailed response.

Mr PISONI: Did you say there were 55 in Chesser House? That is more than Multicultural SA staff. How many Multicultural SA staff are in Chesser House?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: You are asking how many are Multicultural SA staff in Chesser House?

Mr PISONI: Yes; we have established that there are 15, I think you said, in Riverside, so how many in Chesser House?

The CHAIR: I will just check if there are any questions on my right.

Ms HILDYARD: Yes.

The CHAIR: As soon as we have finished here, we will go onto the member for Reynell.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I will get the chief executive to talk you through the split of staff.

Ms MAZEL: We have a combination—the Chair of SAMEAC is in Chesser House, and then there are three support staff supporting him. In addition to that, the rest make up a total of about 55; the rest of them are from Housing SA.

Ms HILDYARD: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 121. Can the minister advise what action is being taken by the state government to improve service delivery to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Thank you for the question. South Australia's population is characterised by the wonderful diversity of cultures, languages spoken, religious affiliations and heritage. This is part of what makes our state a great place to live and work.

The Access and Equity Guidelines for a Multicultural South Australia were drafted by Multicultural SA in consultation with the South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission. The guidelines aim to ensure that state government agencies are accountable for the provision of services which are designed and delivered in a manner which is responsive to people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and result in equitable outcomes for all.

The guidelines contain 27 strategies that constitute best practice in supporting access and equity in the areas of communication, program and service delivery, policy accountability, human resources and leadership. Key strategies include:

- promoting services in culturally appropriate formats, media and relevant languages;
- providing appropriate and accessible information about the rights of people from CALD backgrounds;
- developing and interpreting a translation policy to ensure appropriate access to professional interpreting and translating services;
- collecting and using information to assist in planning and delivering evidence-based programs and services; and
- consulting with CALD communities and client groups when developing policy and regulations.

The intent is for state government agencies to adopt all of the strategies in the guidelines into their practices over time, thereby improving their service delivery responses to people from CALD backgrounds. Agencies will be encouraged to self-assess their performance against the indicators and identify measures to address areas requiring further development.

SAMEAC and Multicultural SA will support agencies to use the guidelines by offering advice and providing online resources, including fact sheets that outline elements of best practice. They can also provide assistance in assessing whether their policies, processes and culture support access and inclusion for people from CALD backgrounds. I am currently reviewing the guidelines and anticipate they will be released in the near future.

Ms WORTLEY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 120. How does the state government work with multicultural organisations to share their culture with others in order to promote community capacity and community harmony?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I thank the member for her question. During 2013-14, approximately \$950,000 in state government funding was provided to multicultural community organisations through a range of initiatives. The multicultural grants program provides funds to multicultural and ethnic community organisations to:

- increase understanding of the culturally diverse community in which we live;
- celebrate and value cultural diversity;
- improve quality and acceptance in society; and
- increase participation by South Australians of all backgrounds in our society.

In 2013-14, the multicultural grants program budget was increased from \$600,000 to \$650,000. The increase was due to savings achieved from the realignment of Multicultural SA within the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Over that financial year, a total of \$668,705 was provided to approximately 200 community organisations for festivals, events, equipment and furniture, cultural awareness programs and education and learning projects. The additional \$18,705 provided in grants was sourced from unspent grant funding returned by community organisations.

The 2013 Multicultural Festival, which was held in Rundle Mall on Sunday 3 November 2013, showcased and celebrated multiculturalism in South Australia. The festival included 40 performing groups and 34 stallholders, representing 66 culturally and linguistically diverse community organisations representing 50 different ethnicities.

The stalls showcased art, craft and food, and the performances included dance and music from around the world. This was a highly successful day, with over 80,000 people attending. Multicultural SA provided a total of \$18,029 in 2013-14 to support this event, with the Rundle Mall Management Authority providing \$15,000 in sponsorship.

Multicultural SA administers a land tax relief grant that provides grants to eligible multicultural for-profit community organisations to cover the cost of their land tax bill where they can demonstrate that paying their land tax will cause financial hardship. These grants enable organisations to spend their money on services to their communities rather than on land tax on their property. A total of \$40,220 was provided in land tax grants in 2013-14.

With respect to not-for-profit multicultural organisations, from 1 July 2013 they have been able to apply to Revenue SA for an automatic ongoing exemption from land tax. Recurrent funding of \$272,000 was removed from Multicultural SA's budget in 2013-14 due to the replacement of the Land Tax Relief Grant Scheme for not-for-profits with the land tax exemption. In addition, Multicultural SA provided several grants and contributions totalling \$230,460. Organisations that received funding in 2013-14 included:

- Ethnic Broadcasters Inc. that received \$22,000 to support the 2013 Radiothon;
- Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia that received \$25,000 to assist it to build functional independence in community organisations servicing or representing new and emerging communities;
- Multicultural Communities Council of SA that received \$125,000 to cover the reasonable costs incurred in undertaking its core activities;
- National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters that received \$52,460 as the state's annual contribution to the national body established to set, maintain and promote high standards of translating and interpreting and to implement a national quality assurance system; and
- TAFE SA that received \$6,000 as Multicultural SA's contribution to support the delivery of the Women's Leadership Course.

I am delighted to say that I was able to attend the graduation and it was a fantastic event with a great diversity of women. In 2014-15 Multicultural SA will allocate approximately \$1,274,000 in grants and contributions. This represents an increase in the amount of grant funding allocated in 2013-14 as a result of the commitment by the government to provide additional funding of \$350,000 per year to support more projects, events and activities in our multicultural communities.

Mr HUGHES: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 121. Can the minister advise how the state government is contributing to the development of the National Settlement Framework to improve services and settlement outcomes for migrants in South Australia?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: In 2012-13 the South Australian government and other jurisdictions contributed to the drafting of a national settlement framework by the Council of Australian Governments Select Council on Immigration and Settlement. The aim of the framework is to provide a common set of guiding principles and focus areas to improve services and settlement outcomes for immigrants. In particular, it is envisaged that the framework will strengthen coordination of settlement-related service delivery within and across jurisdictions.

The work of the National Settlement Framework was due for release in mid-2013 but was delayed due to the federal election in September of that year. The commonwealth government has recently announced that it will continue to support the development of a national settlement framework. In March 2014 the Hon. Kevin Andrews MP, Minister for Social Services, invited Sue Wallace, who is to my right, as the executive director responsible for Multicultural SA to join the Senior Officials Settlement Outcomes Group.

This group will finalise the National Settlement Framework and will engage in key settlement issues. The first meeting of the Senior Officials Settlement Outcomes Group was held on 2 May 2014 at which a revised National Settlement Framework which incorporates comments previously received by jurisdictions was considered. In 2014-15 the South Australian government will continue to work with other jurisdictions to finalise the National Settlement Framework which is anticipated to be released in August to September 2014.

Mr PISONI: I will take you back to page 120 regarding FTEs. How many of those FTEs operate within the Interpreting and Translating Centre?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: In 2013-14 actual full-time equivalents employed by the Interpreting and Translating Centre include nine full-time in-house staff and over 300 casual interpreters and translators who undertake at assignments equivalent to 24.3 FTEs.

Mr PISONI: And they are included in the 57 FTEs?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Yes.

Mr PISONI: How many of them work on a casual basis or contract basis for other translating companies?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I do not have that information.

Mr PISONI: Well, they have to seek permission to do so.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I will need to take that on notice.

Mr PISONI: A memo was written by Con Sgoutas in December 2011 outlining the services of ONCALL. That memo for Joslene Mazel and Roger Lean explains that ONCALL had a contract to provide translating services, but that on 31 May 2011 ONCALL Interpreters and Translators agency ceased trading. It was unable to trade out of its debt, as it was incurring \$500,000 a week in debt. This happened because the ATO had determined that the contractors that it was hiring were entitled to full superannuation, long service and other entitlements.

They appealed that decision, and that appeal was unsuccessful, and they had debts of \$5 million. This memo went on to explain the details of that and the major reasons for the weekly loss being incurred in the ATO ruling, enforced by the courts, and losses of \$4.5 million from a subsidiary company called Deep Seas Fisheries. The memo goes on to explain that they invested \$4.5 million in a fishing farm in Turkish Cyprus. Is it appropriate for a government that has been so supportive of the Greek Cypriot community to be in business with the Turkish Cypriots who invest in Turkish Cyprus?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I am sorry, the nature of your question is that you are asking about a company that we have a contract with and how they invest their superannuation fund?

Mr PISONI: There is more to it, but what I have explained so far is that the company was running at a loss and was wound up, and it was then repurchased by the same directors, and their debt was wiped.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Through the ATO?

Mr PISONI: No; they could not claim it because the company did not exist anymore. The memo to the chief executive at the time states:

Many South Australian-based interpreters and translators who were former employees of the On-call Interpreters and Translators Agency Pty Ltd have lost some or all of their employee entitlements. A high percentage of those are also casually employed by the ITC as public servants.

The edit from the administrator's report states that they lost \$4.5 million investing in a fish farm in Turkish Cyprus, and the director was a Turkish Cypriot. The question that I am asking you is whether it is appropriate for a government that has been so supportive of Greek Cypriots to be in business with Turkish Cypriots.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: In regards to the superannuation debt, which you touched on, I understand that it totalled \$6 million and that has now been fully repaid to the Australian Taxation

Office. In regards to where they have invested their superannuation fund, that would be a decision of the board members of that company, and I have no further comment.

The CHAIR: We could probably refer this to the Speaker to give you a ruling on. I ask you to move on to something a little bit more constructive.

Mr PISONI: If you do not mind, Chair—

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Which budget line does this relate to?

Mr PISONI: This refers to expenses and it refers to employees. Your own memo says that public servants from your interpreting service were also working on contract for this organisation. There was a recommendation that the contract be reviewed: 'It is recommended that legal advice is sought from the Crown Solicitor's Office before the state government decides to cease using ONCALL.' I have invoices that go up until June last year for services from ONCALL. Are you still using ONCALL for interpreting services?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I am advised that we are still using their services. I am also advised that the memo that you refer to—there is no record of any such memo. In fact, Multicultural Services SA were part of the Attorney-General's Department and not DCSI in December 2011.

Mr PISONI: I will go back to you as the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. Is it appropriate for a government that has claimed to be so supportive of the Greek Cypriot community to be in business with Turkish Cypriots?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I have answered that question.

Mr PISONI: You have not, no; you have not said yes or no.

The CHAIR: She is giving you the answer she is giving you, so do you want to move on to another question, member for Unley? The member for Hartley.

Mr TARZIA: We are grateful for the support that your ministry gives to community groups. You spoke of 200 that are supported by grants, or thereabouts.

The CHAIR: What page are we on?

Mr TARZIA: Sub-program 7.3: Multicultural Services.

The CHAIR: Page 120.

Mr TARZIA: Agency Statements, Volume 1, but it is quite broad. I am happy for you to take this on notice: could you please provide a list of the community groups and the amount of money that they received via grants throughout the year? I understand that there will be a lot, so I am happy to take it on notice if you like.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I do not have the full list, but I am happy to discuss some of those that we do:

- Adelaide and Metropolitan Malayalee Association, towards the cost of venue and equipment hire for the 2013 Onam was \$5,000—this is 2013-14;
- Adelaide Sarvajanik Ganeshotsav Samitee Incorporated, towards the cost of venue, equipment, bus hire and kitchen utensils, \$1,400;
- Associazione Molisani Adelaide South Australia Incorporated, towards the cost of hall hire, pamphlets and posters for the Australian Briscola Championship, \$1,000. I note that both the member for Unley and yourself attended their annual winter feast the other Sunday;
- Australia Day Council of SA, towards the cost of workshops to assist three ethnic community organisations to make props for the 2014 Australia Day Parade, \$4,000;
- Australia-Sri Lanka Association, towards the cost of hall hire, lighting and sound equipment for the ASLA Calypso Family Night, \$1,500;

- Badenya Association of South Australia, towards the cost of hall hire for the cultural performances for the Mandingo Cultural Songs and Dance Initiative, \$1,500;
- Chinese Welfare Services of South Australia Incorporated, to the cost of venue, tables, chairs and sound equipment for the Yuan Xiao Festival, \$1,500;
- Ethiopian Community Association of South Australia, towards the cost of venue and equipment hire for the Ethiopian New Year Celebration and Cultural Show, \$2,600;
- Grandparents for Grandchildren SA Inc., towards the cost of marquees to support cultural performance at the Grandparents Day Event, \$1,500;
- Greek Orthodox Community of South Australia Incorporated, towards the cost of printing, marketing and exhibition for the 2013 Adelaide Hellenic Cultural Festival 'Odyssey', \$8,000; If I remember correctly, the member for Unley and I both attended that event;
- Hungarian Club of SA Incorporated, towards the cost of venue and bus hire for the 15th Australian-New Zealand Hungarian Cultural Convention, \$3,000;
- Iraqi Families United of South Australia, towards the cost of equipment hire and decorations for the Together for Iraq event, \$1,800;
- Islamic Student Society of the University of Adelaide, towards the cost of cultural activities for the Islam Awareness Week 2013, \$750;
- Jewish Community Services Incorporated, towards the cost of the exhibition for the 70th commemoration of the escape of the Jewish internees from the Sobibor Internment Camp during World War II, \$4,950;
- Karenni Community of South Australia, towards the cost of insurance, office equipment and flags, \$1,500;
- Laziza Festival Incorporated, towards the cost of equipment hire for the Mediterranean Festival, \$6,230;
- Malaysian Club of South Australia Incorporated, towards the cost of promotional material and cultural decorations for the Rasa Sayung Malaysian Cultural Night, \$1,200;
- Maltese Returned Services League Sub-branch, towards the cost of venue hire for three annual events, \$1,700;
- Malual Community Association of Australia, towards traditional costumes, \$1,200;
- Pooraka Farm Community Centre, towards the cost of advertising for their community cultural day and birthday celebrations, \$1,000;
- Port Lincoln Tunarama, towards the cost of transport, freight and venue hire for the Cultural Inclusion Project at the festival, \$2,000;
- Salisbury Town Centre Association, towards the cost of equipment hire for the Salisbury City Centre Multicultural Music and Food Festival, \$1,500;
- Serbian Film Festival, towards the cost of venue and equipment hire for the 2013 Serbian Film Festival, \$1,000;
- Somali Bantu Community Association of Australia, towards the cost of equipment and venue for the 2013 Eidul Adha Celebration, end of Ramadan, \$1,700;
- South Australian German Association, towards the equipment hire costs for the 2014 Schutzenfest, \$20,000;
- South Eastern Liberian Association of Australia Incorporated, towards the cost of hall hire, cultural materials and instruments for the Liberian Cultural Celebration and SELAA first anniversary celebration, \$1,200;
- Surf Life Saving South Australia, towards the On the Same Wave program, \$2,250;

- Tao Phung Indochinese Elderly Association of SA, towards the cost of equipment hire, advertising and decorations for the 20 years anniversary of the Tao Phung Indochinese Elderly Association of SA, \$1,500;
- Tatar-Bashkurt Association of Australia Incorporated, towards the cost of venue and equipment hire and promotion of the Tatar Sabantui Festival, \$1,500;
- Teo Chew Association of South Australia Incorporated, towards the cost of hall and equipment hire for the Chinese Full Moon Celebration, \$1,500;
- The Society of St Hilarion Incorporated, towards the cost of equipment hire for the St Hilarion Feast Day 2013, \$2,000;
- Timorese South Australia Students Group, towards the cost of hall and sound equipment hire, flagpole and stand, decorations for the Proclamation of Independence Day and graduation celebrations, \$1,500;
- Ukrainian Women's Association of South Australia, towards the cost of venue hire and advertising for the 2013 Ukrainian Festival, \$1,500;
- Wec Nyin Australia Incorporated, towards the cost of venue hire for the cultural show, \$2,500; and
- Working Women's Centre, towards the cost of props for the World of Women Choir project, \$750.

Thank you for asking that question. As you can see, the grants were quite diverse. I do not understand that that is a full detailed brief and there could be more. The full list is published on the web page.

Mr PISONI: Are you able to advise whether on-call translating services are still being used and, if so, can you provide the total value of invoices for the 2013-14 year?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Can I just touch on a previous question. I mentioned a memo and I said not to Jos Mazel; a record search located a memo sent to Roger Lean by the then business manager of Multicultural SA, in 2011. I just wanted to clarify that.

Mr PISONI: So that memo does exist that warns the government about consequences of continuing a contract with ONCALL?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: It was in the Attorney-General's Department; it was not directed to the CEO.

Mr PISONI: But it was specifically for Multicultural SA. It was an email that was sent to Roger Lean from Con Sgoutas, for Multicultural SA that described the events, and that was sent on 8 December 2011. That was an abridged version, if you like, of the report.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I will ask Joslene Mazel to give details on that one.

Ms MAZEL: We are not able to locate that minute having been sent to me, but we do have a record of it having been sent to Roger Lean but, again, that was in December 2011, when multicultural affairs was in the Attorney-General's Department.

Mr PISONI: Yes, but it is still multicultural affairs; it does not matter where it is sitting now. This questioning is about multicultural affairs, so consequently it still relates to multicultural affairs. You are going to come back to me with a list of the value of contracts or do you have that there?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Yes. Can I clarify: that was invoices for ONCALL use?

Mr PISONI: Yes, on-call and other contracted translation service providers.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Yes, we will take that on notice.

Mr PISONI: When was the department advised that employees had been reimbursed their superannuation entitlements, and was the state government reimbursed all payroll tax entitlements?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I will have to take that on notice.

Mr TARZIA: I will get the omnibus questions out of the way, Chair. There are seven questions here.

The CHAIR: The member for Hartley.

Mr TARZIA: The questions are:

1. Will the minister provide a detailed breakdown of expenditure on consultants and contractors above \$10,000 in 2013-14 for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, listing the name of the consultant, contractor or service supplier, cost, work undertaken and method of appointment?

2. For each department or agency reporting to the minister in 2013-14, please provide the number of public servants broken down into heads and FTEs that are (1) tenured and (2) on contract and for each category provide a breakdown of the number of (1) executives and (2) non-executives.

3. In the financial year 2013-14, for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, what underspending on projects and programs (1) was and (2) was not approved by cabinet for carryover expenditure in 2014-15?

4. Between 30 June 2013 and 30 June 2014, will the minister list the job title and total employment cost of each position with a total estimated cost of \$100,000 or more—(a) which has been abolished and (b) which has been created?

5. For each year of the forward estimates, provide the name and budget of all grant programs administered by all departments and agencies reporting to the minister and, for 2013-14, provide a breakdown of expenditure on all grants administered by all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, listing the name of the grant recipient, the amount of the grant and the purpose of the grants and whether the grant was subject to a grant agreement, as required by Treasurer's Instruction No. 15.

6. For each department or agency reporting to the minister, what is the budget for targeted voluntary separation packages for the financial years 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18?

7. What is the title and total employment cost of each individual staff member in the minister's office as at 30 June 2014, including all departmental employees seconded to ministerial offices and ministerial liaison officers?

The CHAIR: Member for Unley, do you have a final question?

Mr PISONI: Yes. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 121, Financial commentary. Can the minister advise why the Lieutenant-Governor has moved into the Department of the Premier and Cabinet?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Until August 2013, Multicultural SA provided support to Mr Hieu Van Le in his role as Lieutenant-Governor as well as Chair of SAMEAC. In the interests of clear governance arrangements, and to avoid any confusion about roles and responsibilities relating to the two positions that Mr Le holds, a realignment of the functional responsibilities took place. Under this realignment, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet assumed responsibility for support to Mr Hieu Van Le in his role of Lieutenant-Governor, while Multicultural SA retained responsibility for support to Mr Le in his role of Chair of SAMEAC.

Mr PISONI: What was the cost of the support to the Lieutenant-Governor for 2013-14?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: This is for the Department for the Premier and Cabinet, or for my department?

Mr PISONI: For your department.

The CHAIR: And that is your final question, member for Unley.

Mr PISONI: Thank you.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: The full year budget impact of the transfer in 2014-15 is \$186,000 and 1.5 FTEs.

The CHAIR: That being the final question for the session, I thank the minister and her advisers for their attendance. We now move on to the portfolio of Office for the Ageing.

DEPARTMENT FOR HEALTH AND AGEING, \$3,070,300,000

Membership:

Dr McFetridge substituted for Mr Pisoni.

Ms Redmond substituted for Mr Speirs.

Mr Pengilly substituted for Mr Tarzia.

Minister:

Hon. Z.L. Bettison, Minister for Communities and Social Inclusion, Minister for Social Housing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Youth, Minister for Volunteers.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr D. Swan, Chief Executive, SA Health, Department for Health and Ageing.

Mr D. DeCesare, Acting Chief Finance Officer, Finance and Business Services, SA Health, Department for Health and Ageing.

Ms S. O'Brien, Executive Director, Policy and Commissioning, SA Health, Department for Health and Ageing.

Ms J. Walters, Manager, Policy and Programs, Office for the Ageing, SA Health, Department for Health and Ageing.

The CHAIR: I declare the proposed payments open for examination and I ask the minister to introduce her new line-up of advisers and to make her opening statement, if she wishes. In the meantime I remind members that the estimates procedures are informal and there is no need to stand to ask or answer questions.

I remind members that we would like them to preface their questions with the lines of expenditure in the budget papers for the benefit of *Hansard* as well as all members attending the committee. Supplementary questions will be at my discretion, obviously. We are being as generous as we can be today. Do you have an opening statement, minister?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Yes, I do. It is often cited that South Australia is the Australian mainland state with the highest proportion of older residents. They are a uniquely diverse group. In the 2011 census it was noted that almost 18 per cent of South Australians aged over 65 years were born in countries where the main language spoken is not English. Impressively, over 125 countries are represented in South Australia's over-65 community. The 2011 census also identified that more than one third of South Australia's total population of 1.6 million was aged over 50 years with 25 per cent of this group—

Mr Pengilly interjecting:

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: —being the baby boomers, born between 1946 and 1964. There is more than one baby boomer present in parliament today.

The CHAIR: Name them!

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I think someone has already named themselves—thank you member for Finniss.

Mr Pengilly interjecting:

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Looking at our Aboriginal community of 37,408 people, 6,952 are aged 45 years and over, 4,976 are 50-years plus, and only 1,383 are aged over 65 years. This proportion needs to grow. There are no surprises in our population projections. Between now and 2036 and beyond—towards 2050—the proportion of people aged over 65 will increase from 16 to 25 per cent, while the over 80s will almost double, from 5 to 9 per cent.

I am always mindful of the issue of dementia, the single greatest cause of disability in Australians aged 65 years and over. In my own family, my grandmother suffered from dementia, and it was a very, very difficult time, when we felt we lost her five years before she passed on. Nationally, more than 332,000 Australians live with dementia, and by 2050 this number is projected to increase to 900,000. In South Australia, Access Economics has projected that the number of people living with dementia will increase from 21,760 in 2010 to more than 50,000 by 2050.

Over the last year, the Office for the Ageing has been working hard to provide policies, plans, programs and projects that reflect the diverse views, opinions, needs and priorities of older South Australians. In October 2013, the government released 'Prosperity Through Longevity: South Australia's Ageing Plan—Our Vision 2014-2019'.

Our state ageing plan outlines a new vision for ageing in South Australia under the priorities of health, wellbeing and security, social and economic productivity and all-ages-friendly communities. Visions need actions, and so in February 2014, 'Prosperity Through Longevity: South Australia's Ageing Plan—Our Action Plan' was released. The action plan features projects across a broad range of areas.

In 2013-14, the Office for the Ageing delivered a range of initiatives for older people under Prosperity Through Longevity, enabling the office to fulfil the objectives and functions of the Office for the Ageing Act 1995. Key amongst those has been the 'Strategy to Safeguard the Rights of Older South Australians 2014-2021', which I had the very great pleasure to launch on 16 June this year at Adelaide's 2014 World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

The strategy focuses on raising community awareness of the abuse of older people carried out by someone the older person knows and trusts, especially thinking about prevention and early intervention. It will guide future work in this state, contributing to the key priorities of Prosperity Through Longevity. In 2014-15, Office of the Ageing will work on an action plan to drive the implementation of this strategy.

The removal of mandatory age-based annual medical testing for car class licences to commence on 1 September 2014 is another important policy under the new state ageing plan. An expert group has provided advice on strategies to enhance reporting systems and increase awareness amongst both health professionals and the community on mandatory car licensing reporting requirements for all age groups regarding their ability to drive.

Other key ageing plan projects include 'Partnering to Build an Age-Friendly South Australia', with Office for the Ageing working with local governments and Alzheimer's South Australia to make our communities friendly for people of all ages and for people with dementia; and Planning Ahead Day, to support the community-wide implementation of our new state advance care directives and other legal instruments that enable choice at times of illness or at the end of life.

I have a particular interest in our older workforce and note that several work-related projects commenced under our ageing plan's action plan. In 21st century South Australia, our older population will work and remain active for much longer than previous generations. After all, in 2011, Baby Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) accounted for approximately 27 per cent of the South Australian population and over 38 per cent of the South Australian workforce. At that time, people aged 45-plus accounted for 47 per cent—almost half our state's workforce—and almost one-third of

the workforce was comprised of people aged 55-plus. In 2011, almost 10 per cent were 65 years and older.

Grants are also very important. In 2013-14, a funding package of \$400,000 supported the ever popular Positive Ageing Development Grants and Grants for Seniors. Positive Ageing Development Grants provide incorporated community-based organisations with a one-off grant of up to \$25,000. They fund the development of projects which provide opportunities for participation and enable greater choice for older people. These grants are a great boost in the creation of all-ages-friendly communities.

An example from 2013-14 is the \$25,000 one-off funding provided to Minda Incorporated to enable 15 individuals aged 55 to 65 with an intellectual disability to move from active work to community volunteering, allowing participants to maintain their community contribution and a sense of purpose and dignity while transitioning to retirement.

The Grants for Seniors program provides one-off grants of up to \$5,000 to incorporated community bodies. These grants promote older people's involvement in their local communities. They fund smaller projects, such as buying equipment or paying for an instructor to run activities, and are very well received by seniors and the community organisations that represent older people.

An example from 2013-14 is the Intergenerational Interaction for Senior Farmers on Kangaroo Island project. A grant of \$2,800 has been provided to enable semi-retired and retired farmers to gather together for networking and socialising. The project also involves intergenerational learnings, enabling both young and old to gain understanding and respect for each other.

In 2013-14, we once again supported Council of the Ageing (COTA) SA with funding to celebrate the annual statewide Every Generation Festival which honours the contributions and achievement of older South Australians. This is a very popular festival.

South Australian seniors greatly appreciate the state government's Seniors Card Program. In June this year, there were over 340,000 members: 26 per cent were regionally based, and 74 per cent metro based. Members look forward to receiving their annual Seniors Card Discount Directory—

Ms REDMOND: They do not get any concessions.

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: —'Your Lifestyle Guide', as well as *WeekendPlus*, a digital magazine emailed to 40,000 subscribed members fortnightly. Our state Seniors Card is not just a symbolic benefit. All Seniors Card members are eligible for discounts and benefits from hundreds of sponsoring businesses across the state, as well as state government concessions including rebates on council rates—

Ms Redmond interjecting:

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: —and discounted and free (outside peak hours) public transport. From December 2013, the free travel period for Seniors Card holders was extended to 9.01am to 3pm and 7.01pm to 7am on weekdays, and all day on weekends and public holidays.

The commonwealth government funds the government of South Australia to administer the Aged Care Assessment Program on their behalf in South Australia. In 2013-14, SA Health, through the Office for the Ageing, received funding of \$8.95 million to carry out this vital service. The ACAP, as it is known, provides frontline comprehensive assessment services for older people, with 9,784 completed assessments undertaken during the period of July 2013 to March 2014.

In 2013-14, the South Australian Aged Care Assessment Program has undergone significant reforms both at a state and commonwealth level. As a consequence of the 2013 review of the Aged Care Assessment Program, which looked at efficiency, governance and structure of the assessment teams and program, a new structure for the Aged Care Assessment Teams came into effect from 1 July of this year. Three teams will be established within Central Adelaide Local Health Network,

Northern Adelaide Local Health Network and Southern Adelaide Local Health Network, and will better service clients across these three local health networks.

Housing is very important to older South Australians. Retirement villages provide an alternative housing option for some seniors, and the Office for the Ageing protects their interest by administering the Retirement Villages Act 1987 and the Retirement Villages Regulations 2006. Currently, there are 523 retirement villages in South Australia providing a total of 17,711 dwellings. These villages are spread across the state, with 111 villages in regional local government areas.

There is continual growth in the retirement village industry. Consequently, it is timely to consider the act which governs it, with the act needing to be flexible enough to allow changes in offered products while maintaining the protection of residents' rights. In November 2013, a parliamentary select committee, chaired by the Hon. John Hill MP, tabled its report into a review of the Retirement Villages Act 1987. The report contained 34 recommendations, featuring approximately 80 possible changes. I note that both the member for Morphett and the member for Heysen were members of that select committee.

I am pleased to advise that the majority of recommendations have been supported, especially where they relate to clarification of provisions within the act or legislative amendments that will enhance transparency for both operators and residents. There are a number of recommendations that the Office for the Ageing are investigating further. This is to ensure there is a clear understanding of the consequential changes caused by legislative amendments prior to progressing draft legislation. It is my plan to release draft legislation later in the year for consultation and further comment by all interested parties.

Dr McFETRIDGE: I do note that Flinders University said to me four years ago, I think, that you are not considered old until you turn 80 nowadays.

The CHAIR: Eighty is the new 40.

Dr McFETRIDGE: Eighty is the new 60, I think 60 is the new 40, and down we go. Age and experience will always beat youth and enthusiasm, let me tell you. The interesting thing about South Australia, as you have pointed out, minister, is that it is a state of this state that we are getting older. Unfortunately for the people of Hindmarsh and Morphett, their demographics are that we reflect what Australia is going to be in 25 years, they tell me—and I use the royal 'we' there, as the proud member for Morphett. The wonderful people of Morphett, though, have returned me with a 3 per cent swing at the last election, and I am here to do my—

The CHAIR: What budget line is that?

Dr McFETRIDGE: That was an introductory statement. We will move on and get into this. Ageing is a very topical issue because it is not just for people who are getting older: it is also for the people who may have to look after them, their families, the connections, the businesses—every one of us.

Minister, this is just a general question. In your opening statement, you referred to older South Australians and concessions and free travel on public transport. On the administration of that, surely it could just be opened up to seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Oldies are not going to travel when the trams and buses are packed anyway. Has the Office for the Ageing had any discussions with the Department of Transport about reducing and removing the need to enforce that?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: My understanding is that some conversations have taken place with the Department of Transport. At this stage, we will not be proceeding, but we will continue to discuss with them our thoughts around full accessibility of transport.

Dr McFETRIDGE: Just on that same issue, when older drivers go to renew their licence, part of the process is having a medical check. I have had older South Australians come to my office and complain about the fact that not only is there a sign-off by their GP on the fact that they are fit to drive but, during that process, an extensive medical history is recorded and then passed on to the Department of Transport.

I see that as an unnecessary expansion of information across government departments. Surely, a final sign-off by a licensed medical practitioner would be enough. Can you assure my

constituents and older South Australians who undergo these tests that those records are held in strict confidence and are not shared at all?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I am advised that the information is held under very strict confidential arrangements in the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure. However, I would like to note that, in December 2013, the previous minister for health and ageing announced that the policy of mandatory annual fitness-to-drive testing for ages 70 years and over will be abolished from 1 September 2014.

To address your question and some of your concerns, this has been at top of mind, and this has been part of the discussion in regards to moving forward on that. We think that removing the mandatory testing age is a key part of the ageing plan, which aims to support older residents to be more active and engage in the community.

The policy change will move South Australia to a system that will focus on actual fitness to drive for all drivers. We have had an expert group that has been convened to advise us of any measures that may support this policy change. The group has had wide representation, including the RAA, the Council on the Ageing and the Australia Medical Association, and is due to report back to myself and minister Piccolo (Minister for Road Safety) shortly, with any recommendations.

Dr McFETRIDGE: Minister, just on that, will all the information that has been gathered and is on file now in the medical files that are held by, I assume, the Department of Transport, be deleted, and can we be certain that that will be a thorough process?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: We have not had a discussion in relation to those health records. I think that we can take that on notice and raise that in our collaborative meeting.

Dr McFETRIDGE: I think that would be a good thing for all South Australians who have those records being held by numbers of departments now. Minister, the big issue that came out of the budget was the changes to the emergency services levy and the removal of concessions. My understanding is that all state Seniors Card holders will lose their emergency services rebate. If it is not all, how many will? What is the impact, and what are the penalties if you cannot afford to pay the full ESL?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Just to clarify, for 1 July this year the ESL concession of up to \$46 will only be available to eligible pensioners, other Centrelink beneficiaries and self-funded retirees who hold a commonwealth seniors health card, meaning as I think you have raised not all Seniors Card holders will be eligible to receive the emergency services levy concession. My understanding of that is because that Seniors Card is not based on income.

Dr McFETRIDGE: Do you know how many Seniors Card holders will be losing the rebate?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: We do not keep their financial information. Seniors Card is based on age and working hours.

Dr McFETRIDGE: So, that would probably be a good thing to go back and find out exactly how many seniors will be affected because I would think that now there would be a lot of seniors who just cannot afford to pay that increase. Have discussions been had between the Office for the Ageing and Treasury, say, for allowing an instalment plan or something like that to pay the extra money?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: To be perfectly frank, I think the best way of supporting them would be to ask the federal government to change their view on the National Partnership on Certain Concessions and reverse their decision.

Dr McFETRIDGE: No, this has nothing to do with that. The state government has made the decision to remove this concession and people will be put under extra financial stress, so with this particular issue of the emergency services levy is there an opportunity for state seniors to pay in instalments?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: The state government will remove the general remissions provided on the fixed property of the emergency services levy for 1 July. However, the eligible pensioners and low income households will continue to receive the concession on ESL for their principal place of residence—

Dr McFETRIDGE: But you do not know the numbers on that?

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: —and the self-funded retirees who have a commonwealth seniors health card will also be able to receive an ESL concession.

Dr McFETRIDGE: But the state Seniors Card holders, that is the thing that I think—

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: The state Seniors Card, as I spoke about before, is about people over the age of 60 who are working under 20 hours—

Dr McFETRIDGE: Yes, I understand that.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: It is not based on income, whereas obviously when we are looking for concessions it would be predominantly on an income basis.

Dr McFETRIDGE: But state seniors are actually losing the concession from what I have read.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I am sorry, say that again.

Dr McFETRIDGE: The state Seniors Card holders actually lose that concession, and I was surprised how quickly that actually appeared on the Treasury website on the evening of the budget, because I was looking at the concessions. Do you know how many?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: No, I do not have that information.

Dr McFETRIDGE: Can you bring that back to the committee? Thank you.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Well, I am actually not sure if that information is available because we do not look at their income.

Dr McFETRIDGE: But how many Seniors Card holders? Surely you would have an estimate there of how many people have Seniors Cards?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I think your question is: how many people have Seniors Cards but do not have a commonwealth seniors health card? Is that—

Dr McFETRIDGE: Well, if that is the answer, then how many of those are there?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I think that information will be very difficult to provide to you; however, I will take it on notice and endeavour to come back with a response.

The CHAIR: Do we have some questions on the right? Member for Torrens.

Ms WORTLEY: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 16—Policy, Clinical Services and Administration, and pages 24 to 27—Policy and Commissioning. Minister, can you advise the committee on the provision of community development grants to support increased community participation amongst older people?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: The government, through the Office for the Ageing, provides annual one-off grants in the order of \$400,000 to a range of community organisations to promote opportunities for older people to be involved and active in their communities.

In 2013-14 the Grants for Seniors Program provided funding to 58 projects to purchase equipment and to support cultural, educational and sporting activities and programs. Samples include seniors keep fit classes for the Sikh Society of South Australia, sporting equipment for the Crystal Brook and Districts Senior Citizens Club, and kitchen equipment for the Mount Gambier RSL and District Bowling Club.

A further 12 projects were funded as part of the Positive Ageing Grants. These projects had a focus on projects that support positive perceptions of ageing, participation and learning, and enable independence. Examples include a project to support the transition to volunteering for older workers with intellectual disability; a program for older men, particularly widowers or those in a caring role, teaching health and cooking skills and reducing isolation; and a project to teach older Italian women

basic computer skills through documenting their life stories and posting them on the internet. These stories will be shared through a website to celebrate and recognise these older women.

There is a number of other grants provided through the Office for the Ageing to support activities for older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to celebrate older lives and to assist older people to ensure they are aware of their rights. Funding is also provided to peak bodies for research, representation, and advice to decision-makers and ageing sector consultation and coordination. These grants support the new state ageing plan.

Mr HUGHES: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, sub-program page 24. Can the minister provide advice on the government's response to the Select Committee on the Review of the Retirement Villages Act, including the establishment of an advocacy service?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: On 20 May 2014 I tabled the government's response to the select committee report on the review of the Retirement Villages Act 1987. The select committee report made a number of important recommendations about improving the clarity and transparency of the act to support both residents and operators.

Some of the more salient recommendations included the following: a proposal for the introduction of standard disclosure documents prescribed by regulation to assist residents in understanding their rights and financial obligations; to prescribe additional protections for holding of funds in trust; ensuring greater transparency of operations and financial management; to increase the dispute resolution processes and tribunal powers; and to increase the powers of investigation and compliance and provide the ability for the appointment of an administrator, receiver and manager where a village is being mismanaged.

This was the first major review of the act since it was first established. Much has changed since this time. In particular, the number of retirement villages and retirement village residents has grown. As such, the government is now focused on what changes are required to the act to reflect the needs of residents and operators today. Important considerations included the improved protection of resident funds, increased transparency, contractual disclosure and further expansion of dispute resolution processes.

The government has largely supported the select committee's recommendations. Further investigation is being made ahead of the introduction of legislative amendments later this year to ensure that the right balance is achieved between the needs of operators and residents. Better practice guidelines are also being developed in line with draft legislative amendments to promote good practice across the industry.

The 2014-15 state budget also announced the establishment of an advocacy service for residents of retirement villages. This service, through the Aged Rights Advocacy Service, will commence in 2014 and will provide an important service for older South Australians in advocating and providing information to retirement village residents on their rights under the act. I am grateful to the Aged Rights Advocacy Service and key stakeholders from both operator and residential peak bodies for their support and input in developing the model for this service.

Ms HILDYARD: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 24. Can the minister tell the committee about what actions the government's undertaking to ensure the safety, security and well-being of older South Australians?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: On 16 June I launched the Strategy to Safeguard the Rights of Older South Australians 2014-21 at the South Australian World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Conference. There is no excuse for abuse. The strategy focused on preventing the abuse of older people carried out by someone the older person knows and trusts. It raises awareness of physical, psychological, social, sexual, chemical and financial abuse, accidental or deliberate, that can occur, particularly during times of increased vulnerability. It includes recognition of the diversity of our older population and acknowledgement of the rights that the strategy seeks to safeguard, including dignity, self-determination and security.

The strategy also sets out how to recognise the risk factors for elder abuse and the signs, and how to take appropriate action. The strategy has been developed with the assistance of an expert steering committee and it is the first major policy initiative released under the 'Prosperity

through longevity: South Australia's ageing plan 2014-2019'. An action plan is being developed over the next 12 months outlining the implementation of the strategy. It will include strengthening elder abuse prevention policies and practices and reviewing legislation to enable consideration of reforms. This is a critical policy initiative to ensure whole-of-community awareness and action, ensuring the safety, security and wellbeing of older South Australians.

Ms REDMOND: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 25, the matter about the Retirement Villages Act. Minister, you mentioned in response to an earlier question that there are 523 retirement villages in the state. I wonder if you could tell me how five have therefore closed since the Office for the Ageing issued their annual report in October last year? That report says there are 528, of which nine are inactive, making 519 active.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Thank you for your question. I take it you are saying there is a difference of five. As we know, some retirement villages choose to make the decision to operate no longer and some new ones are opened. We are happy to take this on notice and come back with the specifics for you.

Ms REDMOND: Minister, you said specifically that there were 523, but the report from October last year—the annual report of the Office for the Ageing—says that there are 528, of which nine were inactive.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: That would be the difference between October last year and today's date. They do have to seek approval and give notice before they close, I am advised. Therefore, we can detail the information and get back to you.

Ms REDMOND: According to the report, nine villages were closed, resulting in 519 active villages. Does the minister have any idea as to which villages closed—whether they were under a single ownership and a single corporation or whether there were any particular reasons for the closure? If you look at the graph that appears in that report, it is obvious that until now there has been a steady increase in the number of retirement villages and then suddenly, between the year 2011-12 and 2012-13, we find closures of retirement villages and a decrease in the numbers.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I am advised that often these villages consolidate or they may merge together, but I do not have the full details of the difference. We can take that on notice and come back to the committee.

Ms REDMOND: Thank you. The minister pointed out that the member for Morphett and myself were both on the select committee. I note that, in fact, they were unanimous recommendations from a committee which consisted of the former long-term minister for health, John Hill, who was chairing it, as well as two members of the Labor Party and the then Independent member for Frome. There were 23 unanimous recommendations; can the minister tell me which of those the government found unsupportable?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I am advised that none of the recommendations is unsupported by the government. What we are seeking to achieve during this time of consultation is a balance between the needs and desires of the residents and those who are operating retirement villages, and we are going through a process of negotiation to find an outcome at this time. I think it would be clear to say that at this point it is not that we do not support the recommendations but that we are working on a process to find that balance between the two groups.

Ms REDMOND: Obviously, the select committee also considered trying to get a balance. Can the minister give an undertaking that the entirety of those recommendations will be brought into the new proposed legislation?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: The principle of the recommendations will be supported with, obviously, the focus on the protection being clear to residents or potential residents of retirement villages. Some ways that could result are through legislation, whereas we believe that some of the areas of recommendation could be achieved through guidelines.

Ms REDMOND: Still on this area of retirement villages, I think it would be fair to say that the committee had some concerns about the willingness of the generation of baby boomers (about whom you said so much in your opening statement) to enter into retirement villages. Has any thought been

given as to what is going to happen if that trend that appears in the report—of a decrease in the numbers—continues and villages fail to attract people willing to go into them?

The average age in the retirement villages, if you read that report, is quite high; it is over 80 now. As those people die and if the new lot of baby boomers do not go into the village, has the government given any thought to what is going to happen if there is a financial failure because of a failure of people to enter into retirement village living over the next few years?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: We have a good relationship with the industry and we are going to work closely with them. I am advised that we believe that the numbers do not reflect the trend, and we expect that there will be growth in the retirement villages area.

I have a particular interest in this area of ageing. Older people, like all people, are quite diverse in their choices. I guess, as a government, we want to work with industry to provide people with a range of opportunities. I think most people have expressed a desire to stay in their own home—and I think that is quite a high percentage—so part of that will be about home-based support and home care. Obviously, some of that will be around social inclusion. The majority will at some point be living on their own in what will be the family home—how do we engage them?

Obviously, there is also the aged-care sector and the retirement villages. I think from a government point of view this is only at the start of some of the discussions we will be having about the different types of facilities and different types of lifestyle arrangements and supported ways that people can live as they age. I think we will find that there will be an increased need for retirement villages. I suspect that the market will be segmented and that there will be more choice and more variety in the market.

Dr McFETRIDGE: Just to assist the committee on that, I will give a personal example. One of the volunteers in my office has moved from a retirement village that was okay (that is probably the best way to put it) to a much nicer one, but the problem is that there are units vacant in the village she has moved from, and her unit is now vacant.

They are having problems marketing those units, so she is still paying fees and will be, according to her contract, for up to six months. Can the minister assure the committee that the government will not be delaying any changes to the Retirement Villages Act to make sure that people are not being trapped because they want to move onto better facilities?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Obviously, I have said very clearly that I am looking to bring draft legislation forward on this. As to the specifics between sales and people paying fees, I am not in a position to make a comment on that. I do know that this is one of the areas of transparency so that, when someone enters a retirement village, they are very aware of their obligations, rights and responsibilities if they do choose not to continue to be at the village.

I think that what is most important (and I think that both the member for Morphett and the member for Heysen touched on this when they spoke in the house) is that people need clarity about what they are contractually obliged to sign up to, and I think that will be the key aspect of this legislation.

Ms REDMOND: Minister, I understand that the government has indicated its rejection of the proposal for a web-based calculator that consumers and residents can use to calculate the exit fee scenarios which might apply. Is that case and, if so, on what basis does the government reject that?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I will ask Sinead to detail those specifics.

Ms O'BRIEN: In relation to the web-based calculator, when we have looked into that in more detail, with the logistics around trying to do that, with all of the variables that it involved, it was felt that it would be extremely difficult to be able to provide people reassurance and accuracy in relation to that. The key and most important thing that we have picked up from the recommendations is that transparency and that people are fully aware of the risks, the issues and any termination clauses that are in there.

We are working with both the industry and the consumers in this space to make sure that the outcome we look at is appropriate and fits the purpose for both. But the variables appear to be too great in the web-based calculator, as I said, to find an accuracy that would be able to find somebody

a finite answer when they were embarking on something they may want to terminate three years down the track.

Dr McFETRIDGE: I refer to the same budget reference. In the annual report there is a figure on page 14 that indicates that there was a 27 per cent reduction in the number of telephone calls to the office because staff were working offline to assist with the legislative review, I understand. What is the reason that this number of calls was either unanswered or unable to be dealt with? I do not think that a 27 per cent decrease in calls is something that would be a natural change. Having received evidence during the committee stage, I think the concerns are increasing, if not exponentially increasing, in many cases.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I apologise but I missed the end of your question. Your question was specifically about the 27 per cent reduction in phone calls into the Office for the Ageing?

Dr McFETRIDGE: Yes. What is the reason for it? How many staff were working offline to assist the legislative review, and does this mean that there are insufficient staff in the office to take phone calls and did phone calls go unanswered? Certainly, the impression I got from my time on the select committee was that the number of concerns was increasing. The number of calls, as shown in the diagram on page 14, went from 1,414 in 2010-11 to 2,513 in 2011-12, and then there was a dramatic drop to 1,842 (a 27 per cent drop) in 2012-13.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I do not have a specific answer as to why there has been a drop. One might think that perhaps people are using other ways to get in contact, such as email, but I will have to take that one on notice.

Ms REDMOND: Minister, on the issue of elder abuse—and I think you mentioned in response to a previous question, if not in your opening statement, some things that you are doing—there will no doubt be some settling-in time for the advance care directives, but the major area of elder abuse tends to be financial rather than physical and emotional, and so on. The biggest area is financial, and that often occurs under the use of powers of attorney. I understand that they are still in place as opposed to the advance care directives, which are largely the medical and care side of things.

Is the government considering any steps which might help to protect older people from abuse under a power of attorney, given that the act like the Retirement Villages Act was written a long time ago and has very basic provision that basically says that anyone who is acting for someone under a power of attorney and agency has to do so in the best interests of the person?

It frequently occurs that—and I am sure the minister has had it in her own electorate office—people come in, concerned about the fact that someone who has power of attorney is abusing that power and taking the money for their own purposes. The only way to deal with that at the moment is by basically taking an action in the Supreme Court which is time-consuming and stressful and costly, and a whole lot of other things. Is the minister or the government considering any way of better protecting those who are having their financial affairs managed pursuant to a power of attorney?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I thank the member for her question and her interest in this area. When I launched the safeguarding rights of older South Australians it was just the beginning of this process, so we will follow that up through an action plan that has short, medium, and long-term outcomes. I would propose that this issue in regard to the powers of attorney would be addressed during those action plan times. I think that some of the action plans will result in some legislative change, and that may well be one of the areas that we consider.

Ms REDMOND: Perhaps if we move to the aged-care assessment teams. Minister, you mentioned that you have a new structure for aged-care assessment teams, and I was wondering whether you could tell me how we compare, in terms of those assessments, both as to numbers and the speed with which assessments are made for what I think are termed category one, category two and category three. How do we compare in this state with national figures, and to what extent will the new system improve things?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Thank you for the question. In the year 2013-14 approximately 13,100 face-to-face assessments were completed. This was consistent with the number of assessments in 2012-13, however, slightly less than those that were projected, and this was due to

an improved screening process undertaken by the Access2HomeCare service, which ensures people are directed to the service that best meets their needs.

As a result of this, we have improved the timelines of assessment. As I said, we went through a review and successfully implemented a new system known as eACAT to a number of the regional assessment teams. This system enabled the electronic transfer assessment information to Medicare, which meant quicker access to services by consumers and quicker access to payments for aged-care providers and we expected that would be rolled out to the rest of the assessment teams.

Turning to the specifics of your question on a comparison between South Australia and other states, as this is paid by the commonwealth there is an expectation by the commonwealth for us to make key performance indicators, and we have matched those.

Ms REDMOND: So are we at the same level as other states, or are we slower or faster?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: We do not have that data to see if they are better or worse. I guess that would be an answer probably directed to the commonwealth minister.

The CHAIR: Did you have another question over there, member for Torrens?

Ms WORTLEY: Yes I do, thank you, Chair. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 24 to 27. Minister, can you provide the committee with information about the new state ageing plan and key projects that are being rolled out under the action plan?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Prosperity Through Longevity, our state action plan, was launched in October 2013. It outlines a strong vision for older people in our state, a vision which encourages participation in our community, provides opportunities for older people to let government know what is important to them, and values the contribution that older people make to our state. The action plan released in February 2014 outlines a range of programs and initiatives that implement the new state ageing plan.

Key projects and initiatives under this plan include the removal of mandatory medical testing for drivers at 70 years of age to commence by 1 September 2014. As I have mentioned, there is an expert working group providing recommendations on this implementation ahead of the introduction date. On 16 June, I launched the 'Strategy to Safeguard the Rights of Older South Australians', as I have detailed.

It also focuses on a mature workforce forum experience, and it has got Experience: The Business Benefit, and that will be held tomorrow in partnership with Business SA. I will be there at the opening, and this event will bring together local businesses to hear about the benefits of employing older workers. Bunnings and Taylors Wines are two of the organisations who will talk about how they have made the most of the experience of older workers. The event will also be used to discuss the barriers to employ older workers and what can be done to assist.

Also in the planning is a project to develop and trial a new approach to food in aged care settings through the Maggie Beer Foundation's 'A Good Food Life For All'. They will work with local aged care facilities to bring fresh, well-presented and nutritional food to the plates of residents. SA Health's Mount Pleasant Hospital is one of the facilities participating in this project.

A veterans' wellbeing event with Brigadier General Rhonda Cornum (retired) was held in February 2014, where older veterans, their families and key organisations involved with veterans came together to learn about new approaches to wellbeing developed especially for veterans. I actually had a chance to hear her speak at a Northern Business Breakfast. She is incredibly inspiring with the work that she has done on wellbeing and resilience, and that is based on the work of Martin Seligman, who was one of our Thinkers in Residence.

A Conversation with Aboriginal Elders forum was undertaken on 18 June as part of the full meeting of the South Australian Aboriginal Elders. The forum was used to discuss the state ageing plan priorities and the areas of importance for older Aboriginal South Australians. In particular, our focus on ways to prevent elder abuse and the early detection of dementia were key areas of interest.

This initiative seeks to help inform and guide future projects under the plan. Just as I said, the action plan has short, medium and long-term aspects. I would expect that we will be starting those discussions on those different areas in the near future.

Mr HUGHES: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, pages 24 and 25. Can the minister provide information about mature-aged employment in South Australia and strategies to assist increased participation?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: South Australia is equalled only by Tasmania in our significant and growing older population—people aged 50 years and over. In 2011, there were 569,000 aged 50 and over out of a population of 1.6 million, and baby boomers aged from 50 years to 65 make up 57.7 per cent of South Australia's 50-plus population.

Meaningful engagement with the community through social and economic activity is a vital part of maintaining personal wellbeing. It is also an active imperative for South Australia that boomers keep actively participating in the economy as workers as well as consumers. The government, through the Office for the Ageing, is establishing a new dialogue with business, community leaders and the older population to enable increased opportunities and reduce age discrimination.

The Office for the Ageing is addressing mature workforce issues in 2014-15 through two key projects that come under the Volunteering section of the Ageing Plan. As I mentioned just before, experience—The Business Benefit, a mature workforce forum, will be held tomorrow, and that will see up to 100 private businesses and key stakeholders provided with information about the benefits of employing mature-age workers, including the financial incentives available. The forum will feature experts from business, academia and industry, providing specialist commentary on the South Australian business landscape.

The other project is the greatest asset—Overcoming Age Discrimination is a project supporting the state's ageing plan, funding by the Office for the Ageing and delivered by the Equal Opportunity Commission. This project will promote increased recruitment and employment of older workers in the private sector. It will also raise awareness of and combat age discrimination in employment.

Workforce is a key strategic focus for my government. The state government is providing community leadership in promoting the positive community benefits in greater engagement of older South Australians as workers and vital contributors to the state's economic prosperity.

Ms REDMOND: Minister, further to the answer you have just given, you mentioned financial incentives available for the employment of older workers. Can the minister advise specifically what the financial incentives are that are available for employing older workers and whether those financial incentives only apply to people up to normal retirement age, or whether they are available for people, for instance, over the age of 65?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: These financial incentives are from the commonwealth government. There was something previously and they have just changed it slightly. I do not have the details; I assume it would probably go up to the age of 67 now, which I think is the official retirement age. Those financial contributions rely on someone having been on Centrelink benefits for a certain amount of time, and then after that period of time the employer is paid, from my understanding, on commencement and then after six months, I believe. I do not have that in my portfolio—that is a commonwealth responsibility—but that is my understanding of those arrangements.

Ms REDMOND: Thank you. Minister, you mentioned in response to an earlier question—it might have actually been in your opening statement—the fact that in our aged care facilities we have an increasing number of people for whom English is not their first language. It is clear that as people particularly go into dementia they will often revert to their original language because—it is described as like peeling an onion: the layers of your most recent memories peel away and so people with dementia often go back to very early memories; they cannot tell you what they had for lunch, but they can tell you who was at their 12th birthday party.

Consequently, a lot of those people, even if they have been living here for a long time, are likely to revert to their original language, so that is going to be an increasing issue for us. Has the government done any work on how you are going to recruit people into the aged care sector for employment specifically to address that issue, and/or has the government contemplated taking on a computer system which I saw demonstrated probably eight years ago at Tailem Bend Hospital?

This system had been developed and was only at a cost then of around \$20,000, which did things like take a person's native language and interpret for a staff member so that a person coming into serve that particular person could simply, by pressing a button, have an interpretation of that person's need, speech and all sorts of things like that. It did a range of things; it was quite remarkable.

I am not a fan of technology, but this thing enabled, for instance, exercise using either feet or hands to get the exercise, but with a screen showing a picture going around the person's farming property. It could have on it things about their early life so that some of them would sit there and just read through and look the pictures of their early life. Has the government given any consideration to adopting that sort of technology to address that specific issue?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I do not have the specifics on that. I think that sounds like very interesting technology. I have a particular interest in the opportunity that South Australia could have in this aged care technology sector. Not only in our own country, but across the OECD region we have an ageing population, and our nearest neighbours in the north have an ageing South-East Asian population.

I am very interested in looking at those different tools and applications that we could use. I do not have any knowledge about us specifically looking at that program. I think you have touched on a very important issue; that is, the support and development of our aged and disability care sector and the growing need for recruitment of personal care attendants and in other areas.

Some of the focus on that would have occurred through our Skills for All training that supported people to go through certificates I, II and III. The specifics of that are probably best directed to the Minister for Higher Education, but I know that this is at the core and at the forefront of the growing needs.

As I am also the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, I am very aware that, while we have some very well-established volunteer meal delivery services in both the Greek and Italian communities, we will see increased needs potentially in our Vietnamese population, which is one of the most significant ageing cohorts that we have. I think we are just at the beginning of understanding the many different layers of supporting people going forward.

It is often referred to as a triumph of civilization that many of us will get to live to 85; however, I think that we are at the start of the journey to understand what it means to live a fulfilling, engaged life. If language is one of those barriers, how do we support people? Whether it be language or mobility, these are some of the things that we need to understand, and that is why the ageing plan is so important, but more important are the actions that come from that ageing plan, acknowledging that this is a growing need within our community.

The CHAIR: That being the final question, I declare the examination of the proposed payments completed and thank the minister and her advisers for their attendance. In accordance with the agreed timetable, I advise that the committee stands suspended until 5pm.

Sitting suspended from 16:47 to 17:01.

Membership:

Ms Sanderson substituted for Dr McFetridge.

Mr Williams substituted for Ms Redmond.

Mr Wingard substituted for Mr Pengilly.

Departmental Advisers:

Ms J. Mazel, Chief Executive, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Mr A. Thompson, Executive Director, Financial Services, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Ms S. Wallace, Executive Director, Policy and Community Development, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Ms N. Rogers, Director, Business Affairs, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Mr G. Myers, Principal Coordinator, Strategic Projects, Business Affairs, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

The CHAIR: We are beginning with the Office for Youth. It is already open and has been on the table this morning. Minister, would you like to make your opening statement?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Every day young people contribute their talents, enthusiasm and creativity in many different ways right across our state. They are the future of our community. It is they who will shape and lead the South Australia of tomorrow. Recently, I took some time to see the Youth Parliament and I think they are pretty keen to take the leadership as soon as possible. It makes sense, therefore, for the government and community to invest in our young people and support their development and participation, particularly those young people who face barriers to their participation because of social, cultural or economic circumstances.

The Office for Youth has an important role in supporting the state government's effort in relation to young people. This is principally a strategic and policy role, including through youth sector support, advocacy and events which promote and celebrate the contributions of young people. The direct funding of services to young people occurs in other portfolios, such as education and child development, health and further education, whilst the commonwealth government also has an important role, for example in income support, employment and higher education.

During 2013-14, the Office for Youth continued to manage two youth grant programs. The *youthconnect* grant program provided funding to the youth sector to implement projects and programs that are aligned with South Australia's current youth strategy. During 2013-14, grants totalling \$500,000 were awarded to 14 organisations to deliver initiatives across the four funding priorities of young volunteers, young carers, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) young people, and young people with disability.

The Youth Network Grants program provided approximately \$56,000 in funding to 13 networks to support 26 activities. The aim of this funding is to increase the capacity of the youth sector to deliver high quality, effective and coordinated services for young people. Four of the funded networks are located in metropolitan Adelaide. The remaining nine are located in the greater Adelaide and country regions.

During 2013-14, the Office for Youth also implemented a new program. The Leadership, Engagement and Partnership Program, referred to as the leap program, is designed to fund activities which encourage and support young people to be involved and engaged in the community. Importantly, organisations assisting young people who are not involved in formal education are eligible for funding under this new program. This means that the activities funded will be available to some of our most disadvantaged and disengaged young people.

The previous 12 months also saw the release of several resources for the youth sector to support them to work with young people. The 'Youth Development—applying the positive approach' resource seeks to assist organisations adopt a positive approach to youth development. It outlines a number of program values and characteristics associated with this approach. It provides examples of how to put a positive approach into practice.

The 'Working with Vulnerable Youth—key concepts and principles framework' is designed for youth sector organisations. While most young people manage the challenging transition from childhood to adolescence to adulthood successfully, a minority do not. This guide identifies key concepts and principles relevant to understanding and working with vulnerable young people.

Over the next 12 months, the Office for Youth will continue to have a positive impact on young people by establishing a regional student internship program to provide opportunities for regionally-based students to access work experience opportunities in government departments and/or parliament. The state government has also committed to establishing a scholarship program

to enable more young people from regional areas to participate in the highly successful Youth Parliament program. The Office for Youth is currently scoping the development of a range of implementation options for the scholarship and regional student internship programs for my consideration.

The Office for Youth's mission—to make a positive impact for young people—is challenging, given the small size of the portfolio and the key roles of other departments and levels of government. However, its strategic value is significant, both through the grant funding it provides and for the focus it maintains on the interests and wellbeing of those young South Australians towards whom we as elected officials, and the community more generally, have a special responsibility.

The conclusion of *youthconnect* later this year provides an opportunity for the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion to review the strategic direction of the youth portfolio and to ensure that the Office for Youth's activities are aligned with and support the broader direction of the department. I look forward to working with the office during 2014-15 as it identifies a new strategic role in direction for the youth portfolio.

Ms SANDERSON: Some of this may have just been answered in your opening statement; however, just to reiterate, the Office for Youth no longer delivers the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. The active8 program has been remodelled, and I believe you said that is now the leap program. You also mentioned that the *youthconnect* policy does not go beyond 2014. When will the minister be releasing the new youth policy?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Perhaps I can start with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and then touch on the other areas. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is an international youth development program open to young people aged 14 to 25 years to undertake activities in four key areas: physical recreation, skill development, community service and an adventurous journey. We have held the South Australian state licence for approximately 20 years, and the Office for Youth previously delivered the award on the minister's behalf.

In June 2013, the South Australian government approved the transition of the award out of the state government. From 1 January 2014 the delivery of the award transferred from the state government to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award National Award Authority. The award transitioned successfully, with no negative feedback received from South Australian stakeholders. This is how the award is delivered in most jurisdictions across Australia, including the NT, Victoria, Tasmania, Western Australia and the ACT. That, I think, answers that portion that you were asking about.

Ms SANDERSON: Can I just ask a quick supplementary on that while you are on that topic?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Yes.

Ms SANDERSON: Do you expect, with the new national management of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, that there will be an increase in the number of participants? Is that the idea?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Perhaps I can reflect on that. In 2013-14, the target was reduced to 500, reflecting the six-month delivery of the program by the government prior to transitioning. From July to December 2013, 540 new participants commenced the award. It is estimated that there will be 648 active participants in the award as of 31 December 2013. I think that answers those questions. I am advised that the National Award Authority has a target of 1,000 new participants for the 2014-15 financial year, and it is a performance indicator in their funding agreement.

Ms SANDERSON: When will you be releasing a new youth policy that will account for the changes in the *youthconnect*?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I have a particular interest in the Office for Youth, and this year we will look at strategically reviewing the role and direction of the youth portfolio to identify priority actions. In this time we will continue to provide funding to the community sector to support organisations that deliver services or programs for young people who face risks to their positive participation with the social, cultural and economic life of their communities.

I had an opportunity to speak at a YACSA breakfast the other day, and I decided that we should facilitate some debate about what are some of the priorities for youth. While *youthconnect* is a very detailed document and a very thorough strategy, I am very keen to get a little more specific

when I work with youth about key projects we can work on. In some preliminary discussions with people who were represented, working in the youth sector, mental health and wellbeing was probably the key aspect that they talked about. That is just one of their key areas.

As we look at the development of this strategy, I am very keen to follow on what we have done in the volunteer sector, which is when we did a series of round tables with different people from the sector and different participants, and from that time we developed the strategy. Post that, we have some specific working groups working on particular projects. I am keen for us to look at that model as a way of engaging people most deeply through the youth sector and for youth, so that will come out. I see that that will happen throughout the latter half of this year.

Ms SANDERSON: I refer to page 127, Performance Indicators, regarding youth volunteering. There has been a considerable decrease in the number of young people volunteering in their local communities. What programs are in place to increase the number of young people volunteering, and how much funding has been allocated, if any, to promote youth volunteering programs? Do you think the cost of screening and police checks will be a deterrent to youth and lead to a further drop in numbers?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I touched briefly on volunteering previously. We have just launched the volunteering strategy. One of the reasons we have seen a change in the number of volunteers has to do with the Duke of Edinburgh Award and how it is accounted for in those numbers. Since the launch of the volunteering groups, in the working group for volunteers we put in a governance framework for the strategy and implementation, and those working groups with independent chairs are working on implementing the strategy.

Two of the focus areas are to invest in the foundations of volunteering and to promote/inform on the benefits of volunteering. In the lead-up to the development of the strategy, the Minister for Volunteers hosted a youth volunteer forum as an integral part of the consultation process to develop that strategy. It was the recommendations from the forum, and its accompanying survey, that included specific actions for government, business and volunteers to increase the opportunities for young volunteers.

Some of the areas we saw were minimising red tape and providing better information on relevant volunteering opportunities (and that is being addressed through that strategy). We also saw that in 2013-14 organisations were awarded funding of \$248,420 through the Office for Youth through the *youthconnect* grant to deliver initiatives to support young volunteers, such as:

- \$37,740 to the Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers to fund a team leader and trainer to lead conservation volunteer field training for 48 young people;
- a camp, protective equipment and delivery of the Conservation Volunteers training program;
- \$40,200 to the Hutt Community Centre to deliver leadership and development opportunities for 15 young people;
- recruitment, training and placement of 100 young volunteers, and the recruitment and training of 40 organisations in youth volunteering; and
- \$45,900 to Northern Volunteering SA towards the development of an identification tool to assist in placing volunteers, and the delivery of Volunteer Ready to assist 30 disadvantaged young people prepare for volunteering.

In addition, last year the state government provided funding of \$25,500 for the Youth Volunteer Scholarship Awards, which recognises and encourages young volunteers. The scholarships provide up to \$3,000 to assist young volunteers pursue study options with a university, TAFE SA or vocational college. We also did some community capacity program building, and \$100,000 was directed to that to engage students with community service organisations.

I got to go to the launch of this recently: the Community Voices program, in partnership with Flinders University. It sees students working with community organisations to produce television commercials or short documentaries for volunteer recruitment and community education; and the Sustainable Online Community Engagement program, in partnership with the University of South

Australia, connects students with volunteer groups to help build websites, produce promotional materials and market their services.

Ms SANDERSON: I refer to page 127. What was the actual number of youth engaged throughout the 2013-14 year? We have the estimated results here, but now we have completed the year we should have the final results.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: The completed results will be in next year's budget, so it is an estimated result for the year.

Ms SANDERSON: Thank you. Can the minister please outline how activ8 has been remodelled? I think you may have said it was now the LEAP program, but if I could have more detail.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Certainly. The LEAP program is the Office for Youth's new youth development program. It will support the youth sector to deliver site-specific programs of structured activities for young people between 12 and 25 years to build their skills, encourage them to engage with their community and promote partnerships. It is the LEAP program, which is Leadership, Engagement and Partnerships, and is being delivered as a two-year pilot with two funding rounds.

The program provides a framework for community organisations, local councils and schools to develop youth development with the following elements: 12 months of structured regular activity that builds skills for specific groups of young people; incorporating youth participation; developed in conjunction with young people; participants manage a project within the program which addresses an issue in their local community; involves organisations for at least two different sectors (e.g. community organisations, local councils, schools, other government agencies); of course, the participants have to be between 12 and 25.

In 2013-14, nine organisations were successful in receiving \$123,550 to deliver programs to engage 163 young people. I have some details of the programs for round 1. The City of Mitcham received some money for Empowering Teen Girls, which was to deliver a program to support 20 selected young women between the ages of 13 and 16 to gain vital life skills for handling relationship stress, body image, peer pressure, bullying, emotional ups and downs, and improve resilience to support them achieve healthy levels of emotional health and wellbeing.

The City of Playford had the project My Address, which was led by and for young people and brought together young volunteers, youth services and homeless young people, and delivered a number of projects that target youth homelessness. The project has been developed and will be run by young people, with the support of City of Playford, Anglicare, Headspace and HYP.A. Through early intervention projects, large scale community solutions and the My Address backpacks project, the young people involved aim to create significant change.

The District Council of Mount Barker's project was Activate, Facilitate, Create and Recreate. That was a program that was shaped and delivered by 15 young people aged between 12 and 18 and responded to the express needs of the skater and BMX communities in the provision of activities and public art. The project improved young people's engagement in public space and active citizenship and provided them with leadership opportunities.

The District Council of Streaky Bay project was Be the Best You Can Be, and this program supported people between 12 and 21 who are isolated from services and not engaged locally, to gain skills in goal setting, healthy lifestyle, safety and engagement with local services.

The Migrant Resource Centre did the Living in Multicultural Equality project. That was actually delivered in Bordertown, in Tatiara and Limestone Coast, and looked at a specific culturally appropriate youth program for young people recently resettled in the Bordertown community. The objective of that program was to reduce isolation and encourage social inclusion and community engagement. The project has various components that will address skill building, participation in multiple areas, and particular knowledge of local sporting, recreation, musical and service clubs.

At Ocean View College, Ocean View Clowns supports 20 young men and women between 12 and 17 to gain skills in clowning and running workshops and become self-motivated. They had partner organisations Cirkidz, Adelaide West and Planet Teal. That was delivered in Taperoo and Yorke Peninsula.

Reconciliation South Australia looked at the feasibility of an SA Aboriginal youth council and helped 20 young Aboriginal people between 17 and 20 who wanted to provide leadership in the Aboriginal community to gain skills in leadership, mentoring, advocacy and lobbying. The program will support them to achieve the establishment of a peak Aboriginal youth council in South Australia. That was a statewide program.

We had a program in Port Lincoln called NRGise (maybe I am not hip enough to get quite what that means). Young people identified the need for space of their own and more activities to do in the community, as well as social issues that were concerning them. That had leadership camps involved and the opportunity to contribute at council meetings.

The last one is the Young Christian Women's Association of Adelaide's SHE Meets. That was a program to support 18 young women between 20 and 23 seeking safe social space for informal networking, support to increase their skills, confidence to improve their community, raise the profile of issues they care about and increase their ability to advocate. That was held throughout the state.

Ms SANDERSON: I refer to page 127. Can the minister explain the reasoning behind the Office for Youth being moved to five different departments and having eight different ministers during Labor's term? How is Youth fitting into DCSI and are there any plans to move Youth again?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: As the Minister for Youth, I can say that it fits incredibly well within the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion, along with Multicultural Affairs and Volunteers. I think that what we have in this department is a way to look across the board in South Australia at how best we can support people, capacity build, and reach out to those people who need us to support them. It fits perfectly well in Communities and Social Inclusion and it will stay there.

Ms SANDERSON: I refer to page 127 again. Has the South Australian Vulnerable Youth Framework been released? If not, when will that be released?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Perhaps while we get that specific answer, I will say that the Vulnerable Youth Framework identifies key concepts and principles in understanding and working with vulnerable young people. This resource will assist the youth sector in ensuring that services are appropriate and effective. Relevant youth sector organisations were consulted and involved in the development of the resource. It was part of the South Australian Youth Strategy 2010-14 and focused on prevention and early intervention for young people. I am advised that it was released last financial year.

Ms SANDERSON: If that was the framework for 2010-14, is there a new one that is the 2014-18 that has been released?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: No, that strategy actually committed to the development of this strategy so it was not one of the commitments.

Ms SANDERSON: Right, thank you. I was wondering if the minister would not mind going through the breakdown of the amounts spent and also the amount of participants of different programs. I have a table from estimates of last year. I believe that for the *youthconnect* program normally \$500,000 is allocated and this year would be the last year because you are changing that structure. I just want to confirm whether the 2013-14 year was also \$500,000.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: So you were after the expenditure?

Ms SANDERSON: Yes, that is right, the breakdown of the different programs.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: What I have here is grant funding. For community sector grants, we have \$650,000 allocated for this year, 2014-15. The discretionary grant line is \$9,000, 2013-14, and \$20,000, 2014-15. The LEAP program (which I have detailed), 2013-14 was \$123,550 and this year the budget is \$430,000. National Youth Week was \$90,000 and that is projected at the same this year. Port Augusta Social Vision Program was \$215,000 last year and is the same this year. The Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre was \$25,000 last year but we have not budgeted that this year. The Youth Affairs Council has some allocated funding of \$234,811 this year. Youth Network grants increased from \$56,374 to \$80,000 this year. Youth Parliament will remain the same.

I can read out the Youth Network grant recipients, which is a different program to the LEAP, but I do not have the participants and will have to come back to you about that. Just to break it down:

- Adelaide Hills Youth Sector Network, \$5,000 for professional development;
- Central Workers for Youth Action Network, \$3,864, including some fast-track maps printing and update professional development;
- Eyre Regional Youth Network, \$5,000 for professional development;
- Gawler Youth Workers Network, \$5,000 for development of mobile application;
- Mount Gambier and District Youth Groups, \$5,000 for Mount Gambier and district needs analysis;
- Murraylands Youth Sector Network, \$5,000;
- Playford Youth Network, \$5,000 for professional development training and core funding;
- Riverland and Mallee Youth Sector Network, \$5,000 for grant writing workshop;
- Salisbury Youth Services Network, \$5,000 for professional development training, mental health training and core funding;
- Southern Fleurieu Youth Network, \$4,750;
- Western Workers With Youth Network, \$5,000 for core funding;
- Yorke Peninsula Youth Workers Network, \$760 for core funding; and
- Youth Barossa.

The total of that Youth Network grant program was \$56,374. We will have to come back to you about the participants.

Ms SANDERSON: Is that separate from the Youth Advisory Committee? Is that a separate thing? I am wondering if you have details as to how many advisory committees there are and the number of total participants.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: You would like to know how many people are on the Youth Advisory Committee as it stands?

Ms SANDERSON: Yes, and how many there are. I believe it is run through councils, so there is a certain number of them.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I will ask Sue to detail those changes.

Ms WALLACE: The Office for Youth has funded youth advisory committees to operate through local councils in general for approximately 10 years now. I do not have the numbers of youth advisory committees that are operating at the moment, although there were approximately 60 operating up until the end of this last financial year. From this financial year the department is not providing funding to support the youth advisory committees. That funding has been redirected to the LEAP program, but the LEAP program does include the capacity to support youth advisory committees as part of the program.

The CHAIR: That was the final question, so we thank the minister and the advisers for the youth section. We turn now to the volunteers portfolio.

Membership:

Mr Pengilly substituted for Mr Williams.

Departmental Advisers:

Ms J. Mazel, Chief Executive, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Mr A. Thompson, Executive Director, Financial Services, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Ms S. Wallace, Executive Director, Policy and Community Development, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Ms N. Rogers, Director, Business Affairs, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

Mr G. Myers, Principal Coordinator, Strategic Projects, Business Affairs, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

The CHAIR: Minister, I invite you to now proceed with your opening statement for volunteers.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Thank you, Chair. Volunteers make an enormous social and economic contribution to the fabric of the South Australian community. Already I have had the great privilege of meeting with many volunteers across our state, and attending significant events of celebration and acknowledgement. Volunteering brings many benefits to the community. It builds and strengthens communities, and fosters belonging, connection, neighbourliness and engagement.

Through volunteering local people care for their community and neighbourhood and take action on issues that are important to them. Volunteering also gives back to the individual volunteers as they establish friendships, develop new skills and gain a sense of purpose and achievement.

The Office of Volunteers has a whole-of-government role to promote and facilitate volunteering in South Australia. It does this by providing leadership in volunteer policy, providing information, resources and other support programs for volunteers and the volunteer sector, and funding the volunteer sector through a number of volunteer grants programs.

The government values the contribution that volunteers make to our community. This contribution was recognised in 2013-14 through a number of programs, including the South Australian Volunteers Day concert held on the state Volunteers Day public holiday in June. I note that the member for Adelaide and the member for Morphett also attended that concert. We were very fortunate to have some participants from the Cabaret Festival which was on at the same time to perform for our volunteers.

In addition, the South Australian Volunteer Awards each year recognise an outstanding contribution by an individual, a group and a corporate entity; and certificates from the Premier and from myself, as the Minister for Volunteers, enable organisations to formally recognise their volunteers including those who have made a particularly significant contribution.

During 2013-14, the Office for Volunteers partnered with the Local Government Association, Volunteering SA & NT and Business SA to develop the Volunteering Strategy for South Australia. I just want to make mention that I had the opportunity to be the chair of the Ministerial Advisory Group on Volunteering and I was put in that position by the previous minister for volunteers. It was a great group which worked on the development of this strategy—very diverse as our volunteers are—and it was a great opportunity for me to really understand the diversity of our volunteering bank. The strategy's development was underpinned by a consultation process with input sought from a broad cross-section of the volunteering community.

Launched on 14 February 2014, this is a joint strategy between government and the community that aims to build the capacity of volunteerism in South Australia. It is intended as a collaborative blueprint for action between the four partner sectors. It articulates a joint commitment, highlights the key issues and addresses the barriers to volunteering. The implementation of the strategy will be overseen by the Volunteering Strategy Partnership Board appointed by the signing partners. I also acknowledge the contribution of the former opposition spokesperson for volunteers, Dr Duncan McFetridge, the member for Morphett, for his bipartisan approach to this important strategy.

During the 2014 state election, the government announced two initiatives to recognise the invaluable contribution made by volunteers. These are the development of a time-exchange program and a volunteer recognition scheme. Time exchange allows volunteers to 'exchange' their donated

hours to redeem benefits from individuals or volunteer organisations offering a service they require. Generally known as 'time banking', this system has been implemented in several countries and is now established in New South Wales.

The government has allocated \$600,000 over four years in the 2014-15 budget for a trial of a time-exchange program. The volunteer recognition scheme has been identified as a priority to be actioned under the Volunteering Strategy for South Australia. Volunteer contribution can be recognised in a number of ways, and volunteers could potentially be rewarded with discounts, free tickets and promotional offers with participating businesses and organisations. The money has been committed in the budget to the establishment of this, delivering on the government's election commitment. Both of these important initiatives will be progressed by the Office for Volunteers this year.

In closing, I acknowledge the contribution of the former minister for volunteers, the Hon. Tony Piccolo, for the significant contribution he made to this important portfolio, particularly in regard to the development of the Volunteering Strategy for South Australia.

Ms SANDERSON: Also referring to page 125, the time-exchange recognition scheme, has the minister completed a feasibility study, including a cost-benefit analysis, into both the time-exchange program and the volunteer recognition scheme?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: At this time, we will be scoping and developing the time-exchange pilot program. You will notice that we have allocated \$600,000 over four years, and they will have an annual budget allocation of \$150,000 that will be available. While we scope and develop that time-exchange program, we might take into account some of those tools to assess the program as it is developed.

Ms SANDERSON: What consultation has been undertaken with those who would be required to keep the time records and the amount of time and administration costs that would put on the volunteer organisations?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Both the time-exchange and time banking came out of the conversations developing the volunteering strategy, and some of those issues you have raised are being discussed through the four working groups we have.

Ms SANDERSON: Given the government's previous ventures into online systems, such as EPAS and Oracle, which experienced a blowout in costs and in time and were reprofiled to provide less than they originally planned, how realistic is it that the minister's new time-banking program would even be capable of handling the some 900,000 volunteers in South Australia?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Obviously, I do not think that all 900,000 volunteers will participate in these programs. It is something that was raised during the strategy, and we are interested in developing it. Obviously, we always take into consideration administration costs in developing something like time exchange or the banking. We do know that it has rolled out in other states and in other countries, so we will be taking their experiences onboard and recognising how they use their systems before we roll this out.

Ms SANDERSON: If it has been rolled out in other states, in theory you would already have the cost-benefit analysis done before you announced the policy?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: At this point, while we are developing the specific nature of how this will operate through the strategy working group, we would not be able to do that analysis at this time.

Ms SANDERSON: It sounds very similar to a barter system if you are time banking, so I have queries about whether volunteers would be required to keep time books and what the tax implications would be, because barter is considered taxable. They would have to be reporting their time that they have received back. Have you got a tax ruling or has the ATO been involved in this process?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: All these elements obviously would have arisen with some of the other states that have rolled out this program. We will take those into consideration as we develop

the nature of this program. Obviously, there are different ways that you can do it. If there were some tax implications, we would identify that and take advice.

Ms SANDERSON: Given that they are already rolled out in other states, what are the tax implications? You would already be aware of those, and is there an ATO ruling?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I do not have that information. While we are aware of the other states' programs, we are still developing the nature of the program that will be here. Obviously, if other programs have had to have ATO rulings, we would take into account what triggered that ruling and whether that would be part of our program or not. I think that to guess what the ATO would make a decision on is outside of my portfolio.

The CHAIR: Member for Torrens, do you have a question?

Ms WORTLEY: Yes, I do. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 124. Minister, can you provide information on the state government's support for the Volunteering Australia's 15th National Conference on Volunteering?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I had the opportunity to pop by the 15th National Conference on Volunteering held here in Adelaide on 4 to 6 September 2013. The conference was themed Lead, Partner, Build, Sustain, and was organised and hosted by Volunteering SA&NT, with funding support provided by the state government through the Office for Volunteers.

The conference brought together a range of Australian and international experts who provided conference delegates with the current national and global thinking on volunteering. Attracting more than 500 participants, the conference program provided cutting edge concepts and knowledge to improve volunteering practices and leadership in the community. An allocation of \$55,000 in state government funding through the Office for Volunteers was provided to support the conference, in particular, for attendance scholarships.

The funding covered the cost of national research scholarships for academics and postgraduate students attending the conference; and inclusion scholarships, providing one conference registration fee per organisation for volunteer board members, chief executive officers, managers and/or supervisors from remote or small organisations or where the representative was 18 to 25 years of age.

As a result, 11 national research scholarships and 20 inclusion scholarships for South Australia were awarded, enabling a wider cross-section of the volunteer community to benefit from attending the conference.

Mr HUGHES: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 124. Can the minister advise how the Sustainable Online Community Engagement Project benefits the South Australian voluntary sector by promoting volunteer participation?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: This is something I am really pleased to talk about today because I think that we can only do more and more in collaboration with our universities. We have our three foundation universities here in South Australia who I think have an enormous amount of research potential.

The Office for Volunteers Sustainable Online Community Engagement Project, run in partnership with the University of South Australia School of Communication, International Studies and Languages, has been delivering an innovative approach to promoting volunteer participation since 2001.

The program builds information communication technology capacity in the community sector and develops relationships between younger people and volunteer organisations. The connection with students through the UniSA curriculum brings a program with a range of skills in public relations, film and video, multimedia journalism, creative writing, publishing and community.

Through the program, students work closely with community organisations to help them build their own websites. It is hosted free of charge and they produce a range of multimedia promotional materials to promote their organisations and services and develop the skills to maintain and update

their new products. Since 2001, over 500 websites and other promotional materials have been delivered to community organisations across South Australia through the program.

This program delivers a real win-win for both the university and the community, providing students with real-life experience as part of their education while delivering capacity-building services to community organisations. I believe the program exemplifies the principle of partnership, participation, inclusion and communication that this government seeks to nurture in South Australia.

Ms SANDERSON: I refer to Budget Measures Statement page 25, Screening services. What consultation did the minister undertake with the volunteer sector before implementing significant changes to the screening requirements, and why was only two weeks given for them to be implemented?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: The increase of the fees, as I understand you are aware, is actually part of the budget process bid, so that was specifically there. We have always run the Screening Unit—and I say this as I take on my community and social inclusion portfolio—on a cost recovery basis. That has not always been able to be achieved, and particularly with the dramatic increase numbers (we have gone from about 67,000 to 112,000) that has been something that we have had to put on new full-time equivalents for. So, in order to seek some cost recovery, we have had to realign.

The cost recovery is not just the increase in applications, it is the depth of what we look at with applications. I have gone through several times about what we look for in regards to working with children, aged, vulnerable and disability and a general screening.

Since the introduction of the new fees, both my department I have held meetings with affected organisations and other stakeholders. We included an information session that stakeholders were invited to attend. These meetings are focused on providing information, discussing issues and concerns and identifying potential over-servicing—that is where organisations were requiring their employees and volunteers to have multiple types of screening checks.

The 2014-15 budget includes net appropriation to the department of \$1.3 million, and that ensures that the impact of fee increases on volunteers is minimised as well as enables important service improvements, such as application processes that will benefit all applicants.

I am aware of the concerns of the volunteer community about the impact of the fees and I will monitor these issues very closely. Any consideration of special funding measures will be on a case-by-case basis. My department and I will continue to work across government and with the sector to monitor these impacts.

I just want to make note, although as the Minister for Volunteers obviously this goes to increased costs to volunteers, that it is often the change of policies in the areas of disability and the child safety framework that has now made it compulsory for these checks to go ahead.

Ms SANDERSON: With due respect, minister, holding information sessions after making an announcement is not in any way consultation. Many, many people in the volunteer sector are very angry that there was no consultation about this at all and it was implemented with only two weeks' notice, which I think is completely unacceptable.

Do you have any plans to perhaps extend the time period for volunteers to get their clearances, given that it can take several months? You give people two weeks' notice, you have expanded how many have to have the clearances—it is not possible to achieve. Your office could not even service that in two weeks.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: As the Minister for Volunteers, I am not responsible for those policy triggers that required particular organisations to have that next level of screening of their volunteers. However, as the Minister for Volunteers, I am very open to talking to people on a case-by-case basis about how we can support them through this process and this new requirement.

Mr HUGHES: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 125. Will the minister advise how the Volunteering Strategy for South Australia will improve the outcomes for organisations that use volunteers and improve the experience of volunteers?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: Thank you very much. On 14 February 2014, the then minister for volunteers, Hon. Tony Piccolo MP, endorsed the Volunteering Strategy for South Australia 2014-2020, along with three other partners: Volunteering SA & NT, Business SA and the Local Government Association of SA. As a community we depend on over 900,000 volunteers for essential services and community wellbeing.

Volunteers are experiencing increasing demands in the dynamic environment in which they work. There is much research on the issues and barriers facing volunteers. These include demographic changes, new technology, volunteer rights, and recruitment and recognition. We want to ensure that the number of volunteers continues to grow, even in the face of changing community norms, an ageing population and emerging technology.

The Volunteering Strategy is a collaborative blueprint for action between four sectors: volunteer-involving organisations, business, local government and the state government. Since the launch in February, a governance framework has been put in place for the strategy's implementation. The framework includes the Volunteering Strategy Partnership Board, which is made up of representatives from each of the four partner organisations and an independent Chair, Ms Rosina Hislop.

Ms Hislop is a board director and strategic consultant with over 20 years' experience in Australia and the UK advising business and government on strategy, risk management, business reviews, alliances, financial reporting and audit. Four working groups, also with independent chairs, are charged with implementing the strategy through a three-year operational plan.

These groups are comprised of hardworking individuals from across the volunteer sector, business and government. The strategy formally commenced on 16 May 2014, with a plenary meeting of all board and working group members.

The four areas of the strategy are: investing in the foundations of volunteering, promoting and informing on the benefits of volunteering, implementing leading practice and high-quality standards, and working together to achieve change.

I am pleased to see that the quarterly reporting to the signing partners will commence in September 2014 through the partnership board. In addition, an annual review of the strategy will take place, commencing in 2015, to measure progress and to make sure that the operational plan remains current.

Ms SANDERSON: Can the minister please advise whether any modelling was done on the impacts of the changes to the screening services and the implications for the number of volunteers in South Australia?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: No, I am not aware of any of that modelling.

Ms SANDERSON: Can the minister advise whether grandparents visiting or volunteering at schools will now need some form of clearance? If so, which one, and how much will that cost?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: While I am the Minister for Volunteers, I am not responsible for the Department for Education and Child Development's policies, and I think that question is best directed to the minister for that area.

Ms SANDERSON: In regard to service clubs, then, which are in the volunteers area, will members of clubs such as Lions, Rotary and Kiwanis need to have screening? What about people delivering Meals on Wheels, for example? If so, what level of screening?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: What I am advised is that it always depends on the roles they are performing. Of course, I cannot sit here and know what those service clubs are and what roles volunteers will be performing. Obviously, it depends on the nature and the contact in regard to the Disability Act and the child safety framework. In most circumstances, however, volunteers will not be required to have a screening check.

Most people, if their organisation requires it, will still be able to use the volunteer organisation authorisation number and that will be the free police check. I think I should be clear that when people are required to get this higher level of screening, whether it be child, vulnerable, aged, or disability,

it is the nature of the volunteering work they do that will determine whether they need that level of screening. It is not across the board as a volunteer that you need this screening. It is to do with the nature of that volunteering.

Ms SANDERSON: Generally, service clubs might hold barbecues or put up shadecloth in a school ground, but generally they are not working directly with children, so perhaps it sounds like it might be the police clearance. But, for example, with Meals on Wheels, you are working with older people. Would they be considered vulnerable; therefore do you need a higher screening, or do you need any screening at all?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: That would be a conversation that we will need to have with Meals on Wheels. What we also find is that, depending on how people are supported through the service level agreement or government contract, that might require people to have a certain level of screening. So, it would determine whether they feel that their contact with aged or vulnerable people would then require them to have that screening. Mostly, if it is not because of a policy requirement, it would be potentially because of a contractual requirement from either the state or the commonwealth.

Ms SANDERSON: I am getting a lot of calls to my office and I have not been able to work it out from the website and from ringing your office; I cannot clarify all these. Will some information sheets be sent out to all the service clubs, the Probus clubs, schools, grandparents for their grandkids, because people are very confused? What is the definition of 'vulnerable', as well?

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I will take on board your concerns. Obviously, from the screening unit, we sent out to people who were regular users of the screening unit who are in community groups and offered them a briefing. I am very happy for us to take things to that next level. If people are calling you, I would ask you to pass them to my office, and I will work with my department. My door is always open to discuss with them.

I think in many of these situations it would be a discussion with the board or the executive committee of that service club, because if they make a decision as an organisation about something that has not been triggered through a contractual obligation or a policy, then they as an organisation—and we have seen this with many of them—have made the decision that they would like this higher level of screening. I think that we need to be clear about the level that we are talking to.

The CHAIR: This is the final question; we have some procedural things to do before the end of this session.

Ms SANDERSON: Yes, sure. For example, in my electorate office, we certainly work with people with disabilities that come into my office, and we work with people I would determine to be vulnerable, but I am not sure of your exact definition. Does that now mean all staff in electorate offices need either a police check or some sort of screening? That is the level of confusion that I have.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: That is not my understanding. If you provide me with specific examples, I am happy to provide a response.

Ms SANDERSON: My staff, for example, if I am not available, might cover for me on Meals on Wheels. If I need a clearance, does that now mean everyone else needs a clearance? People coming into my office are certainly vulnerable.

The Hon. Z.L. BETTISON: I take it if they are your staff they would be volunteering their time to work at Meals on Wheels, and I think we would have to, as they are employees of the state government, take that on notice, and you would have to get Treasury and Finance approval, or understanding about that role.

The CHAIR: Regrettably, we have to consider that the last question; I know we would all like to keep going. I thank the minister and her advisers for their assistance and declare the examination of the proposed payments completed. I lay before the committee the draft report for committee A.

Mr HUGHES: I move:

That the draft report be the report of the committee.

Motion carried.

At 17:59 the committee concluded.