

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
Thursday, 26 November 2020
ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Chair:

Mr P.A. Treloar

Members:

Hon. A Piccolo
Mr D. Cregan
Mr F.J. Ellis
Mr E.J. Hughes
Mr S. Murray
Mr L.K. Odenwalder

The committee met at 09:00

Estimates Vote

SOUTH AUSTRALIA POLICE, \$897,376,000
ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIA POLICE, \$63,000
DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORT, \$1,083,155,000
ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND
TRANSPORT, \$4,728,000

Minister:

Hon. V.A. Tarzia, Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services.

Departmental Advisers:

Ms L. Williams, Deputy Commissioner, South Australia Police.

Mr I. Parrott, Assistant Commissioner, South Australia Police.

Mr S. Jihinke, Director, Business Services, South Australia Police.

Ms J. Formston, Executive Director, People and Corporate Services, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

Ms E. Kokar, Executive Director, Road and Marine Services, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

Ms S. Clark, Director Road Safety, Policy and Research, Road and Marine Services, Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

The CHAIR: Welcome everybody to the final day of Estimates Committee A. I have a short statement to begin with. The estimates committees are a relatively informal procedure and, as such, there is no need to ask or answer questions while standing. I understand the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition have agreed an approximate time for the consideration of proposed payments, which will facilitate a change of departmental advisers. Can the minister and the lead

speaker for the opposition confirm that the timetable for today's proceedings previously distributed is accurate.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes.

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes.

The CHAIR: Changes to committee membership will be notified as they occur. Members should ensure the Chair is provided with a completed request to be discharged form and I will deal with that shortly. If the minister undertakes to supply information at a later date, it must be submitted to the Clerk Assistant via the answer to questions mailbox no later than Friday 5 February 2021.

I propose to allow both the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition to make opening statements up to about 10 minutes each should 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 not on the committee may ask a question at the discretion of the Chair. 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 proceedings may submit them as questions on notice for inclusion in the 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, it is purely statistical and limited to one page in length. All questions are to be directed to the minister, not the minister's advisers. The minister may refer questions to advisers for a response.

The committee's examinations will be broadcast in the same manner as sittings of the house are broadcast, through the IPTV system within Parliament House, via the webstream link to the internet and the Parliament of South Australia video-on-demand broadcast system.

The portfolio is road safety and the minister appearing is the Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services. I declare the payments open for examination and call on the minister to make an opening statement if he so chooses, and to introduce his advisers.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Thank you, Chair, and what a sterling job you are doing, and good morning, members. I would like to make a brief opening statement, if I may. I would like to introduce the officers in the room with me this morning and then make some very brief opening remarks. Firstly, to my left is Emma Kokar. Immediately behind me is Steve Johninke, Director, Business Services at SAPOL. To Steve's left is Deputy Commissioner Linda Williams. Behind Emma and Steve is Sarah Clark, Director Road Safety, Policy and Research, Road and Marine Services. We also have Jude Formston, Executive Director, People and Corporate Services at DIT as well as Ian Parrott, Assistant Commissioner of SAPOL.

The state government is committed to improving road safety in South Australia. In the 2019 calendar year, tragically South Australia recorded 114 lives lost following the 80 lives lost recorded in 2018. This year, we are seeing a trend slightly lower than our five-year average benchmark, but it is certainly no time for complacency. One life lost on our roads is obviously too many. Improving road safety requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses the safety of the road environment, the vehicles in which people travel and the behaviour of everyone on the road.

The Department for Infrastructure and Transport (DIT) is leading the development of a new Road Safety Strategy for South Australia to 2031. The new strategy will set the direction for reducing lives lost and serious injuries in South Australia over the next decade. The strategy will guide decisions and investment, with a focus on the safe movement of people throughout the state. Community consultation to inform the strategy commenced in October 2020 with a community survey. Regional engagement sessions will occur in early 2021 in areas of the state most impacted by road trauma. A draft strategy will be released for feedback in the first half of 2021.

The state government is also currently progressing amendments to the Motorcycle Graduated Licensing Scheme, which I know the member for Elizabeth is passionate about, to protect young novice motorcycle riders. Motorcyclists have a higher risk of death or serious injury than all other road users, and it is imperative that we take action to protect them as well.

The annual cost of road trauma to the Australian economy is estimated to be some \$27 billion at least. In 2021, the Community Road Safety Fund will provide \$67 million to reduce lives lost and also prevent serious injuries on our road. The state government is also delivering a record infrastructure spend on our roads through jointly funded commonwealth and state government road safety-focused COVID-19 stimulus initiatives.

Works planned include shoulder sealing, audio tactile line marking, median wire road safety barriers, lighting improvements at rural junctions, roadside safety barriers, variable speed limits and signs to improve the safety around schools in rural and regional towns. The government has extended funding to CASR for its world-renowned road safety research, which is excellent. CASR is also leading a road trauma reduction modelling project to assist with strategic decision-making and target setting for the new South Australian Road Safety Strategy to 2031.

In addition, DIT also administers the Think! Road Safety partnership program. You may have seen some of those on the TV, sir. Partnering with community groups to focus on road safety, the program focuses on influencing and improving road safety behaviour through tailored peer-to-peer road safety campaign messages, and it supports related educational programs. Of course, we also have DIT's Aboriginal Road Safety and Driving Licensing Program, which continues to do great work. With that introduction, I welcome questions from members present.

The CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Member for Elizabeth, do you wish to make a statement, or would you like to go straight to questions?

Mr ODENWALDER: I will just make a very brief statement to echo the opposition's commitment to road safety. In our recent reshuffle, we in fact separated out the portfolio so that, in government, road safety would exist as a separate portfolio area, rather than as an adjunct to both SAPOL and DIT, so we take it very seriously. There is some concern that over the last calendar year, as the minister has pointed out, there continues to be an unnecessary number of deaths and road trauma on our roads despite the fact that there were considerably less vehicle traffic on the roads. I would be interested to hear later, if there is time, whether DIT have any statistics about the difference in actual road use and road movements over that February, March, April period.

I do just want to echo the minister's remarks: we are all, I hope, committed to road safety. We all recognise its importance. I want to acknowledge the work of SAPOL. I have seen over many years the work, the sometimes horrific work, that SAPOL do and I want to commend them for it. I am happy to ask some questions if there is time.

The CHAIR: Thank you, member for Elizabeth. Budget reference?

Mr ODENWALDER: Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 212. There are a few budget references that are pretty much interchangeable. I want to ask about the Road User Safety Advisory Committee. I should congratulate you, too, minister: you are a new minister and this is your first estimates, so welcome to this process.

Last year, or the year before in fact, as you are probably aware SAPOL and DPTI took over the work the Motor Accident Commission did in terms of advising the government on road safety promotions. They set up the Road User Safety Advisory Committee. I am still a little confused as to the role of that committee. Last year's estimates hearings did not really elucidate. How often has the Road User Safety Advisory Committee met in the last financial year?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes, I have somehow managed to avoid some of these estimates, but not this year. I am very happy to be here and thank you for the question. It is a very important topic. The question was asked how many times the Road User Safety Advisory Committee has met. I am advised that the Road User Safety Advisory Committee (RUSAC) has held five meetings since it was established. It held its first meeting on 19 September 2019. In the 2019-20 financial year, it met four times. I am also advised that in relation to funding arrangements, RUSAC provided feedback on the 2020-21 funding proposal that was prepared by DIT.

The feedback received from members was integrated into the proposal forwarded to the minister of the day. It might be helpful to talk a little bit about what RUSAC's terms of reference are. To be clear, the Road User Safety Advisory Committee (RUSAC) is a non-statutory advisory body and it provides advice to the government regarding strategic direction of road user safety initiatives

to support all kinds of recommendations for the prioritisation of road infrastructure. They consider some good stuff: safety projects, road user safety advertising campaigns and grant programs that support improved road user safety outcomes in the state.

I welcome the opposition's comments about reducing lives lost and serious injuries on our roads. It is very important. The government is obviously committed to reducing the number of deaths and serious injuries on the state's roads. To achieve the commitment, a range of strategies are implemented and it is important that these are based on results-focused management, evidence-based interventions—and we hear that term much more these days, but it is really important that they are based on evidence-based interventions—and safe system principles.

These strategies to be considered by the committee when formulating advice include some really key areas, such as investing in improved road infrastructure, targeted education programs—these education programs, in my humble opinion and from what I have seen, are getting better and better—communication and engagement campaigns, regulations and targeted enforcement, promotion of safer vehicles and also supporting those very important community safety-based programs as well.

Member for Elizabeth, you would have seen the sponsorship of key events and also initiatives that educate and raise the profile of road user safety issues. I am happy to continue to talk about that or you can ask another question.

Mr ODENWALDER: Do you have a role on this committee, whether official or ex officio and have you ever been present at any of these meetings?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Whilst I do not sit on the committee, they do provide advice to me and I meet with the chair from time to time.

Mr ODENWALDER: And the chair is still Jim Plouffe?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Jim Plouffe, yes. I would like to acknowledge the good work Mr Plouffe does in this area. I may have informally perhaps met him I want to say twice. I have only been in the portfolio some 3½ months—where has the time gone, Chair?—and I have met with him twice, but, no, I do not sit on the actual committee.

Mr ODENWALDER: Is he paid per meeting? Is he on a salary and, if so, where is that drawn from?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The question was about the chair. I am advised that any costs are managed from within existing Department for Infrastructure and Transport resources, with funding for existing support provided through a memorandum of administrative arrangements with the compulsory third-party insurance regulator. Remuneration for the chair per annum is \$18,574.

Mr ODENWALDER: From the DIT budget?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes, that is my advice.

Mr ODENWALDER: Can the minister advise how much was allocated for specific road safety promotion initiatives in the last financial year? I take it the billion or so dollars we referred to in the opening statements was largely road maintenance and that sort of thing. I am talking about promotions and education programs—the kinds of things the Motor Accident Commission used to do.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The member points out a very relevant query in that we do not have the MAC anymore, so that has all changed. If I can be as helpful as possible, what I will do—

Mr ODENWALDER: It would be refreshing.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Well, I will continue to be as helpful as possible. In terms of road safety partnerships and sponsorships, I think what we are looking at is the Budget Statement, pages 16, 48, 49, 100, and potentially Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 211. The Department for Infrastructure and Transport does administer the Think! Road Safety partnerships program, partnering with community groups, as I mentioned, to focus on road safety. I will come to the costs, but they also deliver targeted communication campaigns. I am told there is a total of 14 partnership

agreements with groups like the Adelaide Football Club and Port Adelaide Football Club—surely we give more to the Adelaide Football Club; I am not sure—and I am told that—

Mr ODENWALDER: Croatia Raiders Soccer Club, I am sure, is on there somewhere.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: —the budget allocation for 2020-21 for that is \$2.52 million.

Mr ODENWALDER: So \$2.52 million for the sports club type things?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes, \$2.52 million for that. I am told the department absorbed the functions of partnerships following the decommissioning of the Motor Accident Commission in July 2019. The department successfully delivered the innovative partnerships for the 2019-20 financial year and will be continuing existing partnerships following endorsement by RUSAC.

There was a funding strategy that was approved to deliver the 2020-21 financial year period and that is also supported by a program strategy outlining the strategic plan, communication objectives, communications marketing and sponsorship activities that are publicly funded. They are, of course, subject to stringent reporting mechanisms, as you would expect, and also government approval processes. To ensure the achievement of that program, all the partnering relationships are required to fulfil measurable objectives. I think it is important to have those performance KPIs, if you like.

I am also advised that from the SAPOL point of view the actual expenditure for the Media Road Safety Unit in the 2019-20 financial year was \$6.86 million and that represented \$0.39 million for—we are getting off track to SAPOL, so I will bring it to road safety campaigns. I will read the whole lot and start again. To be helpful, the actual expenditure for the Media Road Safety Unit in the 2019-20 financial year was \$6.86 million and that represents \$0.39 million for unsworn salaries and \$6.47 million for supplies and services, including—and this is what you would want—\$5.862 million for road safety campaigns.

Mr ODENWALDER: Was that \$5.682 million?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: No, \$5.862 million.

Mr ODENWALDER: And \$2.52 million for the Think! programs? So that is a total of something like \$8 million; is that right? Those two figures come to \$8 million and that is the total of road safety and promotion and education activity?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: That is my advice.

Mr ODENWALDER: So that was allocated in the budget last year. Was that all spent, or are you talking about the allocation for this year?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The allocation for this year is \$2.5 million.

Mr ODENWALDER: What was the total allocated for last year? Given the time, Chair, I wonder if I may speak over the advisers advising. Where I am getting to with this is that the Motor Accident Commission spent something like \$11.5 million in total on those types of things, including \$1 million for road safety research with CASR. The Treasurer in 2018 advised that this funding was assured up until June 2020, presumably up to this year's budget, and I am wondering whether the quantum will remain going forward. So far, we have something around \$8 million.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: What budget line are we referring to now?

Mr ODENWALDER: We are referring to road safety funding. There is a budget about road safety; you can pick one. Pick Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 146, DIT, where you are responsible for road safety, or pick Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 213, 'SAPOL collaborates and engages with partners and local communities on road safety issues.'

The CHAIR: Minister, I am going to—

Mr ODENWALDER: Sorry, can I just clarify that, now that the funding for those promotional activities has been split over two departments, it is impossible to point to one budget line. You have

to point to two, otherwise you cannot get a total. I do not think this is a particularly onerous question. One would have expected it, I would have thought.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Member for Elizabeth, I am advised that the total that was provided with MAC has been split between SAPOL and DIT. Certainly, from SAPOL's point of view, that allocation has been maintained. That is my advice.

Mr ODENWALDER: What is the allocation within SAPOL towards those promotional activities? I am trying to get to a total figure without salaries, without accommodation administration—just the actual promotional activities.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: In 2019-20, the amount for SAPOL was \$10.875 million.

Mr ODENWALDER: Sorry, which financial year was that?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: In 2019-20.

Mr ODENWALDER: The allocation was what?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: That was split for six aspects: road safety activities, heavy vehicle enforcement activities, traffic intel and planning activities, road safety development and data analytics capabilities, road safety media, and statewide road safety committee.

Mr ODENWALDER: Only SAPOL media sounds to me like anything approaching promotional activity. The others sound to me, as a layperson, like ordinary SAPOL activity, which they would be doing anyway through their normal traffic work.

Mr CREGAN: Point of order: what is the question? The member is running a constant commentary, but he—

The CHAIR: I am going to uphold the point of order. Rather than the minister and the shadow minister having a conversation, it would be better to come through the Chair. It would be better if—

Mr ODENWALDER: Sure; I understood I could talk directly to the minister—

The CHAIR: Hear me out. The member for Elizabeth has put a question to the minister and it is about the allocation of funds. The minister is seeking advice on that. I think he has just about got that advice.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes, I am advised that they are the activities that CTP has determined to fund in SAPOL. Whether people want to argue about the merits of those or where they sit, I would respectfully submit is probably commentary and argument and probably not related to a specific budget line—

Mr ODENWALDER: I do not doubt that any of those activities are worthy activities; I absolutely support them. What I am asking, though, essentially is: what has replaced the \$5 million-odd for road safety media, the \$5.4 million for sponsorships and partnerships and the \$1 million for road safety research that CASR did that were previously funded under the MAC arrangements, which the Treasurer assured until June 2020 but not beyond.

Mr CREGAN: Is your question to the Treasurer or the minister?

Mr ODENWALDER: Well, he is the Minister for Road Safety, I thought. That is what it says here.

The CHAIR: Just remind me, member for Elizabeth—

Mr ODENWALDER: Otherwise we would ask all the questions to the Treasurer.

The CHAIR: No, member for Elizabeth, listen to me, please. There are just five minutes to go, so you may or may not choose to pursue this line of questioning. We are due to finish road safety at 9.30.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Member for Elizabeth, I am advised that apparently all but one, in terms of partnership agreements between DIT and those groups, were rolled over from 2019-20 to 2020-21. I am happy to take any particulars on notice, if it is appropriate, about which groups they

are and how much they got and all the rest of it, but I am advised that all but one partnership agreement between DIT and the various groups have been rolled over.

Mr ODENWALDER: Perhaps you could take on notice the actual figures.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: We can take that on notice.

Mr ODENWALDER: If you could take on notice the allocations for promotional activities from 2019-20 and 2020-21, I would appreciate it.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I can take that on notice.

Mr ODENWALDER: We will move to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 212, which is road use regulation, which is SAPOL. As we have said, we already have an unacceptably high road toll. There has been a decrease in spending on road use regulation by SAPOL of some \$4 million. Can you explain further what is meant by the justification for this COVID-19-related expenditure in this budget line? COVID-19-related expenditure has impacted on the spending on road use regulation, by my reading. I am wondering how.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: In terms of the explanation of some of those significant movements, the decrease, as it is alluded to there, in 2020-21 budget expenses compared with 2019-20 actuals was primarily due to the re-evaluation of workers comp employee liabilities in 2019-20, movement in employee liabilities in costs associated with police leave entitlements in 2019-20, higher costs associated with the interim 2019 SA Police enterprise bargaining agreement 2019-20 and, as the member for Elizabeth has pointed out, COVID-19-related expenditure incurred in 2019-20.

I am advised that SAPOL have an allocation methodology that they use for road use regulations but, in terms of further details on that specific item, I would probably have to take that on notice.

Mr ODENWALDER: It reads to me that the funding, which is supposed to be focused on dangerous, high-risk, drug and drink-driving behaviours, has been diverted for COVID-19 measures. I wonder if you could clarify if that is indeed the case?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I do not think that is the case, but I could take that on notice. It is not a business as usual comparison, I am advised. The number is higher.

Mr ODENWALDER: Sorry?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: That is our actual expenditure.

Mr ODENWALDER: Sorry, what do you mean by that? Sorry, say that again?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am advised that funding certainly has not been diverted because of COVID, in that regard. That is my advice.

Mr ODENWALDER: How many times has PolAir been mobilised to respond to dangerous or high-risk driving in the last financial year, and can we work out what proportion of PolAir's work relates to dangerous driving? And I will put in there illegal use, and so on—traffic offences.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am going to have to take that one on notice, member for Elizabeth. If I had it in front of me I would helpfully provide the answer.

Mr ODENWALDER: As a proportion would be great. What is the total cost of PolAir per year while we are there? Do we know what the total cost is?

The CHAIR: We have reached the allotted time, member for Elizabeth.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: That is probably a better one for the SAPOL estimates briefing.

Mr ODENWALDER: No worries.

The CHAIR: Having reached the allotted time, I declare the examination of the proposed payments for the Department for Infrastructure and Transport and the Administered Items for the Department for Infrastructure and Transport complete.

**ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF TREASURY AND FINANCE,
\$2,439,548,000**

Minister:

Hon. V.A. Tarzia, Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr D. Lane, Chief Executive, South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission.

Mr J. Schirmer, Principal Financial Analyst, South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission.

Ms I. Calabrese, Manager, Financial Services, South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission.

Mr C. Beattie, Chief Officer, South Australian State Emergency Service.

Mr B. Eden, Assistant Chief Officer, South Australian Country Fire Service.

Mr M. Morgan, Chief Officer, South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service.

Mr G. Benham, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service.

The CHAIR: The portfolios under examination now are SAFECOM, SA Country Fire Service, SA Metropolitan Fire Service and the State Emergency Service. The minister appearing is the Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services. I declare the proposed portfolios open for examination. Minister, would you like to introduce your advisers, please?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Chair, the clock is ticking, so in the spirit of good governance I am happy to kick off, if the member for Lee is happy with that?

The CHAIR: Would you like to make an opening statement, minister?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I will make a brief opening statement, if I may, Chair. Firstly, I would like to introduce the very hardworking staff in the room—the officers who are in the room with me this morning—and then make some very brief opening remarks.

First to my left is Dom Lane, Chief Executive of SAFECOM. Immediately behind me is Joel Schirmer, Principal Financial Analyst at SAFECOM. To Joel's left is Iolanda Calabrese, Manager, Financial Services at SAFECOM. Behind Iolanda and Joel is Chris Beattie, Chief Officer, SES. Then we have Brenton Eden, Assistant Chief Officer, CFS; Mr Michael Morgan, Chief Officer, MFS; and Glenn Benham, Assistant Chief Fire Officer of the MFS.

Mr Chairman, as we consider today the 2020-21 budget papers as they relate to the emergency services sector, from the outset it is important that we acknowledge the volunteers and staff of our emergency services organisations who are always ready to respond to emergency incidents often putting themselves in harm's way as they help the community in times of need.

It is also important as we head into a new bushfire season that we reflect on the 2019-20 bushfire season that significantly impacted communities on Kangaroo Island, the Adelaide Hills, the South-East, Yorke Peninsula and other parts of the state. Of course, these fires burnt almost 280,000 hectares, destroying 196 homes, 892 other buildings, 660 vehicles were destroyed or damaged, almost 68,000 livestock perished, and tragically we lost three people as well.

The response effort by the emergency services sector was enormous, with CFS, MFS and SES personnel putting in weeks of extended effort to contain the fires, having already assisted Queensland and New South Wales with major fires. I also acknowledge the many others involved in the response effort, including the Australian Defence Force, the Department for Environment and Water, ForestrySA, SAPOL, local government, farm firefighting units and others from the community who provided support.

Following the fires, the government acted quickly, engaging former Australian Federal Police Commissioner, Mr Mick Keelty AO, to lead an independent review of how the state responded and what lessons could be applied for future bushfire seasons. The review's report was released in July 2020, and the government's initial response consisted of an allocation of \$20.3 million as part of a \$48.5 million package for SA's emergency services. A comprehensive response to the review was released in September 2020, providing a further \$49 million bringing that total of additional funding to \$97.5 million to create a safer and more bushfire resilient South Australia.

The budget papers we are examining today identify new funding for the emergency services sector to address the findings of the independent review, including:

- \$11.5 million for the replacement of MFS heavy urban pumps;
- \$7.2 million for the accelerated replacement of CFS single-cabin fire trucks with safer dual-cabin fire trucks;
- \$5 million for AVL systems for emergency services vehicles, to improve safety for personnel and improve incident management information;
- \$4.7 million for nine additional regional CFS staff, including a dedicated officer for Kangaroo Island;
- \$4 million to continue improvements and upgrades to CFS stations and incident management facilities;
- \$2.7 million to retrofit fire truck safety systems to additional vehicles;
- \$2.5 million to support the upgrade of the national Emergency Alert voice and text message alert capability;
- \$2.1 million for four additional CFS staff to support the operation of the State Bushfire Coordination Committee;
- \$1.5 million for three additional CFS staff, to support the introduction of the Australian Fire Danger Rating system; and
- \$600,000 to increase mental health and wellbeing support to the emergency services sector.

Major bushfires are on top of the other incidents that the sector responds to, including vehicle accidents, building fires, storm damage and other emergencies. I again want to thank our first responders for all that they do.

Of course, this sector has also had to manage the impact of COVID-19, and they have implemented modified arrangements to maintain their response capability as well. They have also been assisting Health and police. Again, I place on record my thanks to the volunteers and the staff of the emergency services sector. With that introduction, I welcome questions from members present.

The CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Member for Elizabeth did you want to make a statement?

Mr ODENWALDER: I have just a very brief opening statement. I also want to acknowledge the work of the agencies, the workers and volunteers, particularly over last summer.

At the beginning of the year, in February, I thought that this year would be entirely consumed or dominated by discussion about bushfires, climate change and those associated things but, of course, COVID hit. Of course, that work has been going on and, as the minister said, the Keelty review brought down its findings on the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements, which have been met at length. I tried to follow that as closely as I could, including submissions from the agencies here. That work does continue and it is important work, and I want to acknowledge all the work, both last summer and in preparation for this summer, that the agencies have done.

May I also say that we have referenced both the Keelty review and the royal commission, and I hope that we can in the course of our conversation take those as given and not continually have to refer to page numbers and things. I hope that is acceptable to the minister.

The CHAIR: Well, let's see how we go with that, member for Elizabeth. Could you reference a budget line now, please.

Mr ODENWALDER: I want to go to Budget Measures Statement, Budget Paper 5, page 47, which references the changes to the SAFECOM Board: the appointment or the proposed appointment of an independent chair. Minister, can you outline how you arrived at the decision to establish an independent chair of SAFECOM?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thank the member for Elizabeth for the question. Obviously, we were the first jurisdiction in all of Australia to commission an independent bushfire review, the Keelty review—a great review, and I encourage all members to read it. It made a number of recommendations. One of those was in regard to the SAFECOM structure, if you like.

We considered the independent bushfire review, and obviously the government accepted the recommendations of that review. I would like to say that this year, but if not this year then certainly early next year, we will be looking to introduce legislation to move towards creating an independent chair for SAFECOM.

Mr ODENWALDER: Is there any other legislation in the pipeline aimed at altering the way the SAFECOM Board is structured?

Mr CREGAN: Point of order, Chair: a discussion about a government's future policy does not relate to any budget line item. Clearly there are other forums for questions of that type, many other forums. This forum is to examine this budget.

The CHAIR: I uphold the point of order again. Member for Elizabeth, you are asking the minister about any future legislation the government might have. Obviously the minister can answer in whatever way he chooses, but it is not reasonable to ask that question in this forum.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Chair, with your indulgence and in the spirit of trying to be helpful and beneficial, it probably does not have a budget line item, but I am happy to be helpful to the member for Elizabeth. I think it is an important question so, with your indulgence, I am able to answer this one.

The CHAIR: That is entirely up to you, if you would like to give us information on it.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thank the member for Elizabeth for the question. Without breaching the rule of anticipation—I note the Clerk would be hot on your heels there, Chair—I believe that one of the other recommendations in the Keelty review was around the State Bushfire Coordination Committee reporting to parliament. I suggest that again, if not late this year then early next year, the government would also be in a position to introduce legislation to give effect to that so that the State Bushfire Coordination Committee would report to the parliament. I think that is a good thing.

The CHAIR: That is a good result, isn't it, member for Elizabeth? Minister, thank you for your openness.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: That is the only legislation I am aware of at this point.

Mr ODENWALDER: Will the new model mean that the CE of SAFECOM also gets to sit on the board but will not chair it? Is that the way it is structured? So there will be one more member? Mr Lane is nodding, if you want to save some time.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I believe that is the intention; however, obviously we will have to see what the final legislation looks like. That will be debated in this place at a future date—and I tell you what, I would even be happy to provide the member for Elizabeth with a briefing, just as I have tried to be very helpful and provide him with a briefing on GLS legislation, which I know he has also had.

Mr ODENWALDER: That is another conversation. Has the intention to create an independent chair been put to the SAFECOM Board, and was it unanimously endorsed?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: There was obviously an independent review commissioned by the Premier. That independent review reported to cabinet and the government has released its response. That is what I am advised.

Mr ODENWALDER: So it has not been put to the SAFECOM Board? That is all I asked, and whether the board endorsed it. If it does not have to, it does not have to.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The independent review has been reported to the SAFECOM Board.

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes, well, it is public. Minister, have you read the report prepared by Mr Lane in September of last year, entitled Analysis of South Australia's Fire and Emergency Services?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: What budget line, sorry?

Mr ODENWALDER: The same budget line, or we can have Budget Paper 3, Volume 2, page 72, SAFECOM governance. It states:

SAFECOM performs the following functions...develops and maintains a strategic and policy framework across the emergency services sector

I am asking the minister if he has read the publication, Analysis of South Australia's Fire and Emergency Services, prepared by the CE.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I think so. I think we are talking about a document that was commissioned by the previous minister. What I would say is that since that we have obviously implemented a number of things, one of them being our response to the Keelty review. There has also been a royal commission, so I would probably, respectfully, want to more focus on those things. There is a whole range of things that happened before I was a minister. That was commissioned by the previous minister. It may have been in my induction pack; it would have been in my induction pack. I am sure I read it some three and a bit months ago.

Mr ODENWALDER: I am not going to ask you to quote it, minister, I just wonder if you have read it.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: With everything else. I thank the team behind me who provided me with much, much reading in the incoming brief, so I am sure it was in there and I am sure I would have read it, yes.

Mr ODENWALDER: One of the recommendations was the establishment of a joint executive charter, where the chief executive and chief officers commit as a unified team when presenting at the SAFECOM Board to allow government priorities, improvements and changes to be implemented into operational policy. Has this executive charter been enacted or signed by the relevant parties?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am advised that there certainly was a charter that had been signed in collaboration with the previous minister, but since that time I am advised that the charter has been withdrawn, and all chief officers and the CE have certainly demonstrated what I would call a willingness to move past that; consequently, it has also been removed from the SAFECOM website. It was a charter signed in collaboration with the previous minister.

Mr ODENWALDER: Can you clarify what you mean by 'withdrawn'? This is a document signed by five parties that I am aware of. Can you explain what you mean by 'withdrawn'? What is the legal status of that charter first?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am advised the document was signed in the spirit of collaboration rather than having a legal status, if you like. The CFSVA certainly raised with the CE of SAFECOM their concerns of a conflict regarding governance and, in the spirit of collaboration, the CE of SAFECOM has removed the document from the website.

Mr ODENWALDER: When the document was enacted before it was withdrawn, did it in practice mean that the CE and the three chief officers presented as a unified block to the SAFECOM board—in other words, they would vote together?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: No, it does not mean that.

Mr ODENWALDER: So what does it mean? There is a document that has been signed by five people that, according to you, has no legal standing and does not compel anybody to do anything. Is it just an understanding?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: It was signed in the spirit of collaboration and it was commissioned by the former minister.

Mr ODENWALDER: It was commissioned by the former minister.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: He would have agreed to it. It was done during his time, not mine. I am advised that it has no legal status and it was signed in the spirit of collaboration. As I said, the CFSVA raised with the CE of SAFECOM their concerns regarding a potential conflict of governance and, in the spirit of collaboration, the CE of SAFECOM has removed it from the website.

Mr ODENWALDER: Surely normal governance would dictate that there is a board with—I cannot remember how many—perhaps nine or 10 members, all with a vote should that be the case. I understand most of these decisions are made unanimously but, should there be a vote, there are nine people who can exercise that vote. This document at least suggested that those people would work together in a collaborative way, as you say. Surely that is against the spirit of the way in which boards are generally constructed.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I would respectfully say we are probably moving into argument now.

The CHAIR: I am going to ask for a point of clarification from the minister. You said the document has been withdrawn.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes.

The CHAIR: Is that simply withdrawn from the website?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes.

The CHAIR: But it is still in place?

Mr ODENWALDER: The Chair is asking questions.

The CHAIR: I just need some clarification here so I can understand where the questioning is going.

Mr ODENWALDER: Indeed. I am with you.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am advised—if I can be helpful here, and I think I know what we are getting to—the charter in no way directed anyone to do anything regarding decisions as board members. That is my advice.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr ODENWALDER: So why did it need to be put in place?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: That could be hypothetical.

Mr ODENWALDER: No, it is not hypothetical; it is a question.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: If something needed to be done or did not need to be done is a matter of conjecture.

Mr ODENWALDER: Why was it put in place? That is not hypothetical.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: It probably does not relate to a budget line.

Mr ODENWALDER: If it does not do anything, why was it put in place?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Respectfully, we have said three, maybe four times that it was a document, it had no legal status and it was signed in the spirit of collaboration.

Mr ODENWALDER: So it was a pointless document that did not do anything and at some point it has been withdrawn. Have all the signatories to it agreed to its withdrawal, including the previous minister?

The CHAIR: Member for Elizabeth, the current minister is not in a position to speak for the previous minister.

Mr ODENWALDER: No, but he can tell me whether the previous minister has consented to withdraw that document. He does not have to speak on his behalf.

The CHAIR: I do not know whether the current minister is in that position or not and he can answer that as he sees fit.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I could take that on notice but, like you said, Chair, the former minister is not here right now.

The CHAIR: No, and you are not responsible for any decisions made.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am definitely not responsible for his decisions.

Mr ODENWALDER: We will move on then, but on the same budget line. Do you agree with Mr Lane's assertion in this review:

It is evident that [there] has been a lack of trust between the emergency services and with SAFECOM. Fire and Emergency Services also need to build the trust and confidence of Government...

That was in the analysis you might have looked at.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The way I would answer that, Chair, is to remind the member respectfully that the document has been withdrawn and that the focus of the government is certainly on implementing the recommendations of the Keely review, which we continue to do. Of course, we also have a recent royal commission that has handed down its findings. Rather than look back, I think we should look forward.

The government is undertaking a number of positive moves in this area. As I said, the document referred to was commissioned during the time of the former minister. I am the minister now. I think we have moved on from that. There are plenty of lines in the budget to talk about. I do not think I can really add anything further.

The CHAIR: Given that the member for Narungga is one of the members in this place whose electorate experienced a bushfire last summer, I will go to him for a question.

Mr ELLIS: To that specific end, I would like to refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, investing expenditure summary, automatic vehicle location system. That was something that popped up in the wash up of the Yorketown fire and the fires near Port Wakefield as being vitally needed to improve CFS services. I wonder if you might update this committee on its implementation and how it is tracking.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes, certainly. Thank you for the question on Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 71, automatic vehicle location technology. This technology is going to be an absolute game changer. A version of AVL already exists in the MFS. Automatic vehicle location (AVL) technology will certainly be a game changer for the CFS and greatly improve the safety of crews in dangerous situations. I pay tribute to the member for Narungga and the great people of Yorke Peninsula. I have been able to visit them twice already as the local member. I commend all the volunteers for the great work they do.

As the member would know, there was a review into the 2019-20 state bushfire season that we would implement AVL technology for our crews. It is not the first time the implementation has been recommended. The independent review noted—and it is indeed disappointing—that it had not been implemented after the Pinery bushfires in 2015, five years yesterday.

Finally, thanks to our government, AVL technology will be implemented so that we have real-time tracking of CFS crews, enabling more effective situations for deployments. Importantly, AVL will be an invaluable tool in monitoring and improving the safety of our CFS crews as well. It is beyond belief, in my opinion, that we can see Uber Eats delivered in real time but the CFS has been unable

to see exactly where a crew is positioned, whether they are safe, whether they could be better positioned elsewhere. It is incumbent upon us to do all we can in this regard.

In terms of our progress on the rollout of AVL technology, expressions of interest have been received and they are currently being assessed. Field trials will be conducted over the summer in the following regions—and I am pleased to say that Yorke Peninsula is one of those, the member for Narungga will be happy to know—Kangaroo Island, Coober Pedy, the West Coast and the South-East. Following the trial, we will also begin the necessary preparations for a full rollout late next year.

I really cannot stress enough how much of a difference this will make to the capabilities of the CFS. When you get out there and talk to some of the brigades, there is so much passion; they cannot wait for it to be rolled out. Of course, it is part of our \$97.5 million response to the independent review, which will ensure that our emergency services agencies have the tools and resources they need to protect lives and property.

Mr ODENWALDER: I would like to return to Budget Paper 3, Volume 2, page 72, on that similar line of questioning. Was the minister consulted before the charter was withdrawn or the analysis document was removed from the website?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Sorry, that was Budget Paper?

Mr ODENWALDER: It was Budget Paper 3, Volume 2, page 72. Were you consulted before the charter was withdrawn and before the analysis was taken off the website?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I have been advised that it was removed at the request of CEs and VAs in the spirit of collaboration. My office was advised after it occurred. Since becoming the minister, one of the obvious things to me is that a number of reviews have been done in relation to emergency services. I do not want in any way, shape or form to be political here, but we have been in government for two and a bit years and we are seeing some great things happen in this portfolio.

I think it is really important to remember our purpose and what we are here to do. We are here to protect lives, protect property, protect the environment and get on with the job of keeping people safe this bushfire season, for example. There is some great stuff happening in this portfolio—projects like AVL and projects like the new headquarters. There is no doubt that in the past there have been, if you like, some disagreements, perhaps even a deviation of opinions between certain forces.

Can I tell you that I have never seen them closer. They are all working well together. Whilst some people may disagree from time to time, overall our MFS, CFS and all our other emergency services are working well together and doing great things. As I said, we are rolling out AVL and we are getting on with the job of delivering on the Keely review and the new headquarters with all the services in the same building. It is a great thing.

In the past, there have been many reviews. In fact, there have been many ministers. Sir, you could go back and find out how many ministers were in this portfolio during the 16 years of Labor government. I think this is one of the things that we should look to change. If the member for Elizabeth in the long-term future, maybe decades down the track, becomes the Minister for Emergency Services, I hope he remembers that there was a long list of ministers in this space. I certainly do not think that was a good thing. If a minister can have continuity and work with the various organisations for a longer period of time, that would bode well. We can focus on the past or we can move forward and focus on the future. I think we should focus on the future.

The CHAIR: Member for Elizabeth, your career has just been extended decades down the track.

Mr ODENWALDER: It has. I think I will be 76 by the minister's reckoning. The question remains, though. To clarify, because that answer was a little obtuse, you were not consulted before the executive charter was withdrawn. You were told about it after; is that right?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: As I have alluded to, this was a document signed during the course of the previous minister's time. I am advised that at the request of the VAs the document was withdrawn. My office was advised afterwards.

Mr ODENWALDER: You had no role in that decision-making to withdraw the executive charter, other than simply to acknowledge it after it happened?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I was advised afterwards.

Mr ODENWALDER: I will move on to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 45, and I know you will want to talk about this. This is about the general purpose pumper funding for the MFS. To my mind, this forms the only new spending for the MFS in this budget. Is it in fact money that was already budgeted for fleet replacement in the forward estimates that was brought forward?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Budget Paper 5, page 45?

Mr ODENWALDER: Budget Paper 5, is it? My apologies.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: That is alright; I am trying to help. This is all new money: \$2 million this year and \$3 million next year. This is new money, I am advised.

Mr ODENWALDER: We have talked a bit about the Keelty review. The Keelty review observes that 'there is an urgent need to review the age and appropriateness' of bushfire fleets across the services, ensuring all vehicles are fitted with turnover protection, etc. How many appliances does the MFS currently have and how many will it have at 30 June 2021, the end of the financial year?

The CHAIR: Member for Elizabeth, it has not been my practice to take questions from the government side, but in a moment I am going to take one from the member for Kavel in the same spirit that I took one from the member for Narungga, in that their electorates were affected by bushfires last summer. I will do that after the minister's response.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: There were 115 at 30 June 2020.

Mr ODENWALDER: How many now—presumably 130?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: There were 115 and four are on order, and we are expecting delivery of them before the end of the year. COVID has also slowed that process, as the member would probably appreciate.

The CHAIR: Member for Elizabeth, did you want to pursue that line of questioning before I go to the member for Kavel?

Mr ODENWALDER: Indeed I would, yes. You can correct me if I am wrong, but I am advised that about 30 per cent are older than 15 years in service. Can you advise how many fire appliances are older than 20 years and how many are older than 30 years that are still operational in MFS and, if you can, what percentage of those are in regional areas? This will interest perhaps the member for Kavel and others.

The CHAIR: Is Kavel regional? I can ask—

Mr CREGAN: Yes.

Mr ODENWALDER: More regional than Elizabeth.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Member for Elizabeth, I have some figures here to be helpful. I might need to take some on notice, but what I can tell you is that under 10 years old there are 33 appliances, and that includes hook lifts; between the ages of 10 and 20, there are 53 appliances, and this includes hook lifts and ICV; and over 20 years there are 19 appliances, and this includes hook lifts, bulk water carriers and Brontos.

I have had the pleasure to inspect their kit and I thank the various brigades around the state who have allowed me to do so. It is safe to say that all are very happy with this \$97.5 million. It has been well received and very welcome. There is no doubt that, without being overly political, after 16 years of the former government, much more should have been done. We are getting on with the job. We understand there is much more to do and we will continue to upgrade the fleet. I think what you will see is that under our government the average age will reduce on the whole, hopefully not increase. It certainly will not increase as it did under the former government.

The CHAIR: Any further questions on that—

Mr ODENWALDER: Well, yes. If everyone is so pleased, why then is the United Firefighters Union writing to the Treasurer asking the Marshall government to take their concerns seriously and allocate much more funding? They have pointed to the MFS currently not having enough spare fire trucks to cover breakdowns and maintenance. If you look at the performance indicators, you can see that the intention is 80 per cent of the time to maintain a fleet reserve capability of two appliances. This is only being met 30 per cent of the time in the last financial year. It points to at least some firefighters not being particularly happy with the current state of the MFS resourcing or with the allocation in this budget.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Comments of the UFU, I have been asked to respond to, sir. I am happy to respond to comments of the UFU. I do not think there is a budget line on them, but I am happy to respond to them. I have been asked to talk to the comments raised by the UFU. Those comments were quite broad. There are many of them, so I am happy to respond to those.

Mr ODENWALDER: No, I pointed specifically to the number of spare fire trucks and the fact that the target is to maintain a fleet reserve capability of two appliances 80 per cent of the time, but last year that was only met 30 per cent of the time.

Mr CREGAN: Point of order, Mr Chairman: the member for Elizabeth just cannot have it both ways. He wants to have the most expansive form of questioning known to parliament, and you have been very indulgent and we have been very indulgent—

Mr ODENWALDER: I was quite specific about those numbers, member for Kavel.

Mr CREGAN: I am making my point of order. There has been quite some latitude extended to you, member for Elizabeth, but much of your questioning does offend standing order 97. The minister is now going to answer in a very expansive fashion and generously to you and you are still complaining, even in advance of his answer. It is extraordinary.

Mr ODENWALDER: With respect, Chair, you are not complaining. I do not know why he is saying this to you—

The CHAIR: With respect to the committee members, we are not going to have a conversation across the chamber about this. The member for Elizabeth has asked his question. The minister has agreed to answer it, and I remind members here that ministers can choose to answer questions in whichever way they wish. Following your answer, minister, we are going to go to the member for Kavel for his question.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I say at the outset that I am very happy to work with the union. I think there is a very good place for the UFU in advocating for their members and I welcome that. I have met with the UFU twice since being the new minister. I was of the view that those talks were certainly positive and I am still happy to meet with the UFU down the track. I will address many of the issues that have been raised—and I imagine other issues will be raised—in regard to this line of questioning. I am happy to put some facts on the record, in the interests of being helpful.

It is important to note that the MFS has certainly been successful in obtaining funding for a number of specific projects. In terms of new appliances, I am advised there are four new heavy urban general pumpers. These will be strategically stationed within the metropolitan area and will provide enhanced response capability. I am also told they will carry 2,500 litres of water and rescue equipment and employ turnover protection systems, which is very important, especially when those crews go out into our country areas, sir, as you, the member for Narungga, the member for Kavel, maybe even the member for Davenport and definitely the member for Giles would appreciate too. It is important.

We have to do much more in this area and we are getting on with the job. They were due to be completed, but, as I said, production has certainly been delayed. The world has changed. Try to order something online at the moment and you are waiting because COVID-19 has affected things. I am not here to play politics on this issue. We know they need more equipment and we are getting on with the job. We are trying to deliver that. We want our men and women to have the tools that they need to keep themselves safe and also South Australians safe, so I am not playing any games in regard to that front.

There are an additional 11 replacement appliances over four years, eight of which were ordered in October 2020. They will be a combination of heavy urban general pumpers and/or heavy urban rescue. These appliances will all be fitted with burnover protection systems, which is a good thing. The MFS is currently awaiting confirmation of the expected delivery time of that as well. You also have new helmets and breathing apparatus.

There are learnings from interstate. From every new fire and every large catastrophe, we learn something. In applying those learnings from interstate, the MFS postponed selections of new helmets until a decision on BA had been determined. That is important, as it had been identified by some of our colleagues interstate that the interface between the physical positioning of the BA with some helmet selections created issues; for example, it knocked against one and, on another, at the base of the neck. You cannot have that happening. BA selection has been finalised, I am advised, and the supplier, MSA, has been engaged for the provision of 420 sets of BA.

I have spoken about burnover protection systems on appliances. The MFS is committed to fitting burnover protection systems on a total of 64 appliances. To date, 33 appliances have had burnover protection systems fitted in advance of the coming fire season. A total of 31 appliances are still required to be fitted with burnover protection systems. One is currently in the workshop being fitted out and a further two have been scheduled.

Of course, we have also had this lockdown. I am sure that has not helped things, but we are working as hard as we can. I can also talk about wet weather gear. I am cognisant of the time. If the EB does come up, what I would say is that obviously negotiations for the new enterprise agreement are continuing and the member for Elizabeth would appreciate that that is with the Department of Treasury and Finance. I understand that discussions are ongoing. I have met with the UFU twice in my three or so months as a minister and I am happy to keep meeting them, even when we might respectfully disagree on things. My door will be open.

Mr CREGAN: I was going to take the minister to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 58, to ask the minister to provide some additional detail on the resources and equipment being provided to the MFS, but the minister very helpfully has just given useful additional detail to matters I had in my mind. I would like to ask the minister if there are additional matters that he might be able to provide to the committee in relation to resources to the CFS as well.

The CHAIR: Please ask your question, member for Kavel.

Mr CREGAN: Minister, thank you very much for the information you have provided in terms of the MFS. As you know, there is a new retained fire service in Mount Barker. I am very grateful for that commitment and I know my community is appreciative. I would appreciate an update on the transition to those services and, of course, any additional resources being provided to the CFS.

The CHAIR: Is that Mount Barker specifically, or is it more general?

Mr CREGAN: In relation to the retained service at Mount Barker and in relation to the CFS surrounding services. But, as the minister knows, there is also a CFS brigade in Mount Barker.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Additional resources for Mount Barker and also the CFS?

Mr CREGAN: Yes.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am advised that the MFS and the CFS continue to work together for the Mount Barker area and also the greater Mount Barker area. The member would appreciate that the MFS retained fire station at Mount Barker became operational on 1 July 2019. Funding has been provided for that initiative for 2019-20 of \$697,000; in 2020-21, \$2.461 million; and, for 2021-22, \$726,000. They will continue to work with the CFS. I am also informed that they work with two additional MFS appliances, and they will continue to work in a cooperative fashion with the CFS as well.

Mr ODENWALDER: I just want to return to those performance indicators, which are at Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 58. Given that there is an urgent need to review the age and appropriateness of the fleet—that is what Keelty advised—and given that, according to these budget papers, fleet reserve capability is only being met 30 per cent of the time rather than the targeted 80 per cent, would it not be reasonable for people to worry that going into the fire season the

MFS may not be as prepared as it should be or could be? Further to that, can the minister assure this committee that the MFS will be able to meet its operational level of preparedness every day this fire season?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The answer to your last question is yes, and the first question—

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes, it is reasonable for people to worry that the MFS may not be as prepared as it should be?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: And they will meet its operational—

Mr ODENWALDER: You can assure us that the MFS will be able to meet its operational level of preparedness every day this fire season? That is what you are assuring the committee?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: They have committed to surge-resilient appliances this year. I understand they are fully stowed with equipment, and that is certainly an advancement on last year. This is in addition to the factors I have alluded to in terms of new money, Keelty and \$97.5 million. There is a lot of new stuff in there. Whilst you can never completely eliminate risk out there, in many regards we are certainly doing much more than we have ever done before.

Mr ODENWALDER: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 61, MFS expenditure. Late last year, the previous minister announced the review into the MFS expenditure, and I apologise if I have missed this under the cloud of COVID, but was that review ever completed?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am advised that a draft has been completed, member for Elizabeth.

Mr ODENWALDER: A draft has been completed? Why is it taking so long?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: These things take time. It is a thorough review, I imagine.

Mr ODENWALDER: That is your answer: 'These things take time'?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I will see if I can have more to elaborate on.

Mr ODENWALDER: It is 13 months old.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am not trying to be facetious.

The CHAIR: The minister will seek advice.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I will have take it on notice in terms of specifics and perhaps a likely time frame, member for Elizabeth. I think that is what you are getting to: when will it be done?

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I will take that on notice.

Mr ODENWALDER: You cannot tell me what this review is going to recommend? Have you seen a copy of the draft report?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I will take it on notice, as I said, member for Elizabeth. Lots of documents were included in my incoming minister's brief. If there was a draft review and it was in there, I do not want to mislead you or the house, so I am happy to take that on notice. But it is a draft review.

Mr ODENWALDER: At the time, the former minister said, and I quote, that the new MFS chief at the time, Michael Morgan, 'had identified problems on his appointment' leading to the review and he was 'determined to address them'. Can you tell me what those problems were and do they still exist?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Which budget line?

Mr ODENWALDER: Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 61.

The CHAIR: Once again, the member for Elizabeth is asking questions relating to the previous minister.

Mr ODENWALDER: With respect, Chair, I am asking questions about MFS expenditure. There is a review into the MFS expenditure.

The CHAIR: Yes, I understand that, but your question was what were the concerns of the previous minister.

Mr ODENWALDER: No, my questions were what were the concerns of the MFS chief Michael Morgan, who is sitting behind the minister right now.

The CHAIR: That is not my recollection of your question. Anyway, the minister appears as though he is preparing to answer.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I certainly do not want to begin a precedent, but I am trying to be as helpful as possible—

The CHAIR: I understand that.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: —and the government only has an hour for this agency. I will see what I can do. Member for Elizabeth, to be as helpful as possible, referring to Agency Statement, Volume 2, page 61, I am advised the feedback was in regard to more allocation of funding for the line in 2019-20 that was \$104.743 million. That has been addressed in the 2020-21 budget for salaries, wages, annual and sick leave, where you see that amount has increased. The feedback was about that budget line, and that has been addressed and increased in the 2020-21 budget. That is my helpful advice, but I am not responsible for the former minister and what he said.

The CHAIR: As we have already determined, minister. A final question, member for Elizabeth.

Mr ODENWALDER: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 54, targets, referring to the Bushfire Royal Commission. Recommendation 5.1 was about making provision for a declaration of a state of emergency, essentially giving the federal government certain powers to declare a state of emergency. I am wondering if the minister supports this recommendation.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Obviously that report was handed down a matter of weeks ago. I understand that all states and territories are considering the report. They will be providing a response in due course and the government will certainly keep the public notified of their response to that and any other recommendation.

Mr ODENWALDER: So there is no time line to respond?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: It is still early days.

The CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Having reached the allotted time, I declare the examination of the proposed payments for SAFECOM, the CFS, the MFS, the SES and the Administered Items for the Department of Treasury and Finance to be complete.

Sitting suspended from 10:31 to 10:45.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA POLICE, \$897,376,000

ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIA POLICE, \$63,000

Membership:

Mr Picton substituted for Hon. A. Piccolo.

Minister:

Hon. V.A. Tarzia, Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr G. Stevens, Commissioner, South Australia Police.

Mr S. Johnke, Director, Business Service, South Australia Police.

Mr I. Hartmann, Manager, Financial Management Services Branch, South Australia Police.

Mr J. Teakle, Chief Inspector, Governance and Capability Service, South Australia Police.

The CHAIR: Welcome back to Estimates Committee A. The portfolio for this session is South Australia Police. The minister appearing is the Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services. The estimate payments is for South Australia Police and Administered Items for South Australia Police. I advise that the proposed payments for South Australia Police remain open for examination. I call on the minister to make an opening statement if he wishes and to introduce his advisers.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Good morning, members. I would like to kick off with a brief opening statement, if I may. First, I would like to introduce the officers and staff I have in the room with me this morning and then make some very brief opening remarks.

A man who requires no introduction, who is doing a sterling job at the moment, is Commissioner Grant Stevens, Commissioner of South Australia Police. Immediately behind me is Ian Hartmann, Manager, Financial Management Services Branch at SAPOL. To Ian's left is Steve Johnke, Director, Business Services at SAPOL. Behind Steve and Ian is Chief Inspector Jerome Teakle, Governance and Capability Service at SAPOL.

SAPOL's current workforce consists of approximately 6,000 police and civilian employees who provide a 24/7, 365-day policing service across metropolitan, rural and remote parts of the state, with staff operating at over 120 police stations. In the 10 years from 2010-11 to 2019-20, SAPOL has achieved a significant 6 per cent decrease in recorded crime. In 2019-20, the 4,713 FTE police commitment comprised 4,691 FTE active police, including community constables, seven specialist cybercrime staff, and 15 prosecuting solicitors.

Unsurprisingly, the majority of 2020 has been dedicated to SAPOL's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Police Operations Centre (POC) was first stood up, I am advised, on 16 March 2020, some 255 days ago, to coordinate SAPOL's response to the pandemic. The Commissioner of Police, in his capacity as the State Coordinator, declared a major emergency under the Emergency Management Act 2004 on 22 March 2020. Since that time, SAPOL has had an active role responding to COVID-19 through:

- business and public activity compliance, with over 52,000 businesses checked;
- quarantine and self-isolation compliance, with over 140,000 checks conducted;
- 24/7 border checkpoints static and roving patrols at 46 sites; and
- a central assessment unit established to process cross-border travel applications, with more than 565,000 people processed since April and more than 223,000 processed by SAPOL through Adelaide Airport, hotel quarantine or medi-hotels.

Every day, SAPOL deploys between 450 and 500, sometimes more, sworn officers along with up to 200 civilian or temporary contract staff, coupled with 42 members of the State Emergency Service. Another 100 to 120 personal a day undertake work in support of COVID-19 operations.

The 2020-21 state budget committed \$21.2 million over the next four years towards COVID-19 resources, which includes:

- the recruitment of 72 cadets and 54 temporary PSOs;
- funding for resources from the SES and CFS; and
- the establishment of a Police Operations Centre at Thebarton.

The budget also includes \$93.2 million in additional funding over the forward estimates to keep South Australia safe and strong, including \$34.9 million for the Mobile Workforce Transformation Program. This will be implemented over the next four years to upgrade systems and establish remote connectivity for all SAPOL staff and in SAPOL vehicles. Sworn and unsworn personnel will be supplied with personal-issue mobile phones, enabling access to SAPOL systems and information anywhere at any time.

There is \$8.5 million, as you have heard, sir, for multipurpose load-bearing vests. These high-tech vests are an advanced piece of personal protective equipment, providing police and protective security officers with extra safety and security during situations that involve armed offenders in possession of edged weapons and firearms. There is \$6.2 million to ensure SAPOL's fixed-wing aviation capacity until early 2023 and \$19.4 million for the installation and management of a fixed mobile phone detection safety camera system.

The CHAIR: Member for Elizabeth, as the lead, would you like to make a statement?

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes, thank you, sir, I will just make a few quick remarks. I want to echo the minister's remarks about particularly the performance of the police commissioner. I want to acknowledge that publicly. I think he has done an amazing job, as has his organisation. I think SAPOL have acquitted themselves remarkably over the last nine months in adapting to this pandemic. When you compare them with other states and some of the scenes we have seen in other states of apparently heavy-handed tactics by the police in enforcing restrictions and so on, we have not seen any of that here.

We have seen a collaborative approach. We have seen the police helping people to do the right thing when they are not doing the right thing, for the most part, and when they do not do the right thing obviously the police take the appropriate action. I think it is worth acknowledging the difference in the approach of SAPOL to that of other state police forces, and I think that reflects well on the leadership of SAPOL. With that, I would like to ask some questions, if I could, sir.

The CHAIR: Member for Elizabeth, and a budget reference to begin with, please.

Mr ODENWALDER: I will ask the member for Cheltenham to open the questioning.

Mr SZAKACS: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, commissioner. As the local member for the Woodville area, as the member for Cheltenham, can I take this opportunity to say thank you for the work that you and your officers and associated staff have been doing with respect to the situation with the Woodville Pizza Bar. It is causing great anxiety through our community, and I know that because it is my community and I live there as well. Of course, the Woodville High School situation has presented itself in the last 12 hours. To whatever extent you can today, could you please update the committee on the situation as it currently presents?

The CHAIR: Member for Cheltenham, I appreciate that you have asked a question in relation to your local community, and we have that on occasion already this morning.

Mr SZAKACS: Are you after a budget line?

The CHAIR: Given that you are not a member of the committee as such, this is on my indulgence, but I am happy to do that as well. However, if you can find a budget line please.

Mr SZAKACS: I would be obliged to. I refer to Budget Paper 5, Budget Measures Statement, page 105.

The CHAIR: The questions are directed to the minister at all times. It is then up to the minister as to what he does with that question.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The question was about providing an update on the developments in the last 12 hours?

The CHAIR: In relation to originally the pizza bar and, I take it, the Woodville High School more recently.

Mr SZAKACS: Thank you, Chair. For clarification, more acutely the Woodville High School situation as it may present.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: With all respect, firstly, it is certainly an operational matter, but I am advised that the police are certainly working with SA Health and they are not in a position to provide an update at this point in time. But, as soon as they are, they will provide an update.

The CHAIR: That update will be public and I am hoping the member for Cheltenham is—

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am not trying to hinder in any way, Chair.

The CHAIR: I understand. It is the situation we are in at the moment, I guess, and I hope the member for Cheltenham is provided with that update as well.

Mr ODENWALDER: On the same budget line, minister, and we will talk about the allocation of new resources for COVID-19.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Is that Budget Paper 5, page 105?

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes, Budget Paper 5, page 105. I think this will necessarily bleed into more general discussions about the COVID response, but we will see how we go with that. How much of the \$21.2 million outlined over the four years is for the payment of wages or training?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am advised approximately \$6.8 million for the extra cadets. I think that was your question.

Mr ODENWALDER: This is to accelerate recruitment. Presumably that means we will see a bubble of recruits in the next little while. Does that mean in future years attrition will bring that number eventually back down to 4,713 or thereabouts? When will that be?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I think the intention is to revert to the 4,713 through attrition.

Mr ODENWALDER: At what point would you expect us to reach equilibrium? In which financial year?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Obviously COVID is an ever-changing scenario, but it is subject to operational requirements. I know the member is after a definitive answer, but it is challenging to provide an exact date.

Mr ODENWALDER: What is the total number of sworn operational police officers—not cadets and not PSOs—you are expecting at 30 June next year? Presumably the recruitment bubble will hit after that.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: We are just clarifying. As at 30 June 2020, active sworn, including community constables, was 4,700 0.5 FTE, and that was 9.3 FTE above the adjusted sworn FTE cap of 4,691 0.2 FTE.

Mr ODENWALDER: That was June this year?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: That was 30 June 2020.

Mr ODENWALDER: So 2020 that is the expected.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes.

Mr ODENWALDER: I notice there is an additional reliance on PSOs, and I think there is legislation on the way to change the way PSOs are treated, bringing them into the Police Act and so on, which hopefully I will get to ask some questions about at a later stage. What additional functions, on top of what they already do, will be expected of PSOs in the immediate future? What is your vision as part of both this budget allocation and the legislation to be introduced?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: What additional functions?

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes, if any—functions or powers or authorities.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: First, let me say, member for Elizabeth, that when the legislation comes before the parliament I will definitely give you a briefing. Custody management is certainly of interest and also 000 call-taking perhaps, but they are also scanning other duties. I am informed that the police will be consulting with PASA as well in that regard.

Mr ODENWALDER: Will their wage structure remain the same, or will it change as it switches to the Police Act, presumably with higher authorities?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: At this point in time, there is certainly no intention to increase authorities, but they will continue to work through that over time.

Mr ODENWALDER: So no increase in wages? No change to wages? No change to the pay structures?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: No.

Mr ODENWALDER: Have any of the functions of either police or PSOs been outsourced to the private sector as a result of the COVID pandemic?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am advised that there has been a supplementary resourcing plan, if you like, as a strategy to manage the continuation of the COVID-19 response. Of course, this is an ever-moving situation. To accurately forecast the duration of SAPOL's extended commitments, the member for Elizabeth would appreciate, is certainly challenging.

I am advised that the supplementary resourcing plan is being implemented and includes the following measures: to temporarily replace 28 protective security officers (PSOs) from patrol and alarm response functions within selected government establishments with contracted private security, but I understand that they are still supervised by those PSOs, and also to recruit an additional 54 PSOs to support COVID-19 operations and maintain the protective security capability of SAPOL.

Mr ODENWALDER: These are things like school patrols and that sort of thing, I guess is what we are talking about.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes.

Mr ODENWALDER: What company is providing this service, or is it a group of companies? And, as a supplementary, who is paying for it? Is it coming out of the SAPOL budget?

The CHAIR: Part 2 to the question.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am advised that AG Security Group is the security company. I am also advised that SAPOL certainly are not absorbing the cost. That will be discussed with the Treasurer, along with many other continuing costs. As the member for Kaurna would appreciate, these things would be adding up.

The CHAIR: Minister, just so I am clear, they are absorbing the cost or they are not?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: No, they are not.

Mr ODENWALDER: What was the recruitment process for this security company? Was there a tender process or was it a decision of the State Coordinator?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: In terms of the tender and the process, I will take that on notice, but I am assured that there are existing arrangements between SAPOL and a range of private security firms already. In terms of further details about that tender and process, I am happy to take that on notice and provide it to the member at the appropriate time.

Mr ODENWALDER: I appreciate that. Presumably PSOs are tasked with these sorts of patrols because they do receive specific training, they are armed and they are trained. What level of training do we expect from the security guards who are supposed to fulfil the same role? And further to that, who supervises them and what is the nature of that supervision?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am advised that security companies are certainly well qualified and they do have contact with PSO supervisors. As well as that, there is a strict supervisory regime on top of it. There are certainly no gaps in service delivery that I have been advised of.

Mr ODENWALDER: Are they armed?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: No.

Mr ODENWALDER: They are not armed in any way? They are just people in cars and they have phones?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Qualified security officers, if they had to, would call police. PSOs may intervene potentially but they are not armed with guns, if that is what you are asking?

Mr ODENWALDER: Or with anything other than their bare hands and a mobile phone?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: They are qualified security guards—

Mr ODENWALDER: I am not a security guard, so I do not know what they carry.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: —and they obviously would be suitably skilled as security guards, but they would not necessarily carry weapons.

Mr ODENWALDER: No?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Not weapons.

Mr PICTON: Referring to the same budget line, what sites have these private security guard companies been used at that were previously operated by protective security officers under SAPOL?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I imagine what the member is alluding to is a list I would have to take on notice. Generally speaking, I imagine school patrols, though I do not have a list in front of me.

Mr PICTON: Can you take the full list on notice?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I can take on notice where they have been.

Mr ODENWALDER: Further to that, is it the whole of the school patrol taskings that has been entirely given over to the AG group now? So PSOs do not do any of that work anymore, except in a supervisory role?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Obviously, COVID has led to an increase in demand. First and foremost, it is important to acknowledge that and the great work that SAPOL are doing. I am advised that we have removed the bulk of PSOs operating at schools; however, sworn police are certainly able and ready to assist as required. That is my advice.

Mr PICTON: If one of these private security guards from the AG group encounters difficulty or sees something, what is their process? Do they report that to the AG Security Group, who then raises it with SAPOL, or do they raise it directly with SAPOL?

Mr CREGAN: How is that related to a budget line item in any way?

Mr PICTON: You can raise a point of order, if you like.

The CHAIR: The budget line that was referred to at the outset, member for Kavel, was on page 105 of the Budget Measures Statement, Budget Paper 5, relating to COVID resources.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am advised that in terms of process, firstly, they do have the powers of a citizen. For example, like any citizen, they could perform a citizen's arrest. They also have regular communication and they also have key contacts in terms of PSO supervisors. It would obviously depend on the nature of the alleged incident, but they are in contact and have the ability to get in contact with PSO supervisors and SAPOL, if needed.

Mr ODENWALDER: Forgive my layman's terms, but are they on the same radio channels and GRN channel as the PSOs and SAPOL? Can they hear general SAPOL communications? Can PSOs, in fact?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: With all respect, we are starting to deviate into matters that are certainly very operational. I have been trying to be very helpful to the member for Elizabeth, but I think we are starting to get into operational matters when we talk about what radio frequencies and what they can and cannot hear. This could perhaps also be applied across other operations, as well. I probably cannot add anything further on that specific line of questioning. They do have the ability to and are in contact with PSO supervisors, they are able to contact SAPOL and, as I said, they do have the powers of a normal citizen—for example, in citizen's arrests.

Mr PICTON: Does AG Security Group have to provide SAPOL with a list of all security officers employed under this contract? If so, how many security officers are employed by AG Security Group for these taskings of what PSOs previously were doing?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I do not have those exact details, but of course probity checks are certainly undertaken, if that is where the member is potentially going.

Mr PICTON: By 'probity checks', do you mean there is a security check of each of the security officers?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: What I would say is that of course there is a range of measures to determine suitability to be able to work for SAPOL and the state government.

Mr PICTON: Does SAPOL know who are the individual people carrying out these functions by AG Security Group?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I think I refer to my previous answer.

Mr PICTON: With respect, your previous answer did not say. I understand there are other security contracts that the state government has, and under those contracts there is a duty for that company to provide the government with a list of the people who are providing those services. I am just wondering, under this contract with AG Security Group, do they have to provide a list of all the people who are providing those services, or does the government not know who is providing those services at South Australian schools?

Members interjecting:

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: There are some interjections, Chair. I ask for your protection if this continues.

The CHAIR: I might be forced, minister, to invoke the—

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I have to take that on notice.

The CHAIR: Yes. With all due respect, I have allowed this line of questioning for a little while, but the budget line that is open specifically relates to police resourcing through COVID-19.

Mr PICTON: Thank you, Chair. How much money has been expended to AG Security Group for private security guards?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am advised that we do not have that information at the moment. I am happy to provide it to the member with the proviso that any information—and I am not sure that it would be but, as long as that information is not commercial-in-confidence, I am happy to provide what we can to the member.

Mr PICTON: Thank you. Have South Australian schools been made aware of this arrangement with AG Security Group?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The question was: were schools aware? My advice is that the CEO of the education department has been advised, as well as briefed, about this arrangement and temporary arrangements for COVID-19.

Mr ODENWALDER: Finally, I hope, what other sites are affected other than schools? Is it primary schools as well? What other patrol work have we handed over to AG Security Group in this process?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: We did make mention of schools—primary schools are schools and secondary schools are schools—but we will provide a list to the extent that we are able to the member.

Mr ODENWALDER: Are there any imminent or immediate plans to expand this to other sites, such as Government House, Parliament House or health precincts?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Not at this stage, no.

Mr PICTON: I turn to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, sub-program 1.2, page 205, emergency response, management and coordination.

Following the comments from the member for Elizabeth, before starting this line of questioning I want to pass on my thanks to all SAPOL officers—particularly the commissioner in his rather arduous job as the State Coordinator for the past eight months or however long it has been, and I know Assistant Commissioner Bamford has had a huge role as well—right down to protective security officers and all those people who have been deployed on the border, in this extraordinary role. I also want to pass on my condolences to the SAPOL family on the passing of Chief Superintendent Shanahan. I know that she was obviously involved in the COVID response as well and that it came as a huge blow to SAPOL in this difficult time.

Turning to the COVID response and SAPOL's response in terms of emergency response, I am wondering if the minister—or, through the minister, the commissioner—can outline the role of SA Police when it comes to hotel quarantine?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: SAPOL assesses the security of sites and also provides 24/7 supervision and oversight of the security provisions at medi-hotels. I have some notes that were right at the time I was given them, so I will refer to those, with the proviso that they may have been updated since then.

Currently, various medi-hotels have been established in the state, housing what were returned/repatriated persons who were required to quarantine. Obviously, those medi-hotels at the time were located in the Adelaide CBD, with one in Mount Gambier. I am advised that the facility in Mount Gambier will close as a medi-hotel on Friday 27 November. These hotels are staffed 24/7 by a contingent of SAPOL members, and for much of the time, of course, ADF members and private security staff for the purpose of supervising and also safeguarding the quarantine process.

The number of persons housed in the hotels at a certain point in time, as a proposition, obviously changes as persons commence and complete their mandatory 14 days of supervised quarantine. As at 23 November, our six medi-hotels combined to house 765 repatriated and returned travellers, and as at 23 November supervision across the six medi-hotels requires a daily commitment of 93 SAPOL members, including 73 staff deployed on roster and a further five supervisors and five command staff. Staffing medi-hotels also currently requires a daily commitment of 227 ADF members. It is anticipated that there will be a decrease in these numbers with the pending closure of the Mount Gambier medi-hotel on 27 November. I hope that is helpful.

Mr PICTON: Thank you, minister. Obviously you have outlined some specific roles that SAPOL plays in terms of the system for hotel quarantine. Who has ultimate responsibility for the program?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Ultimately SA Health and Wellbeing has that responsibility. No doubt you will be asking plenty of questions on that one, member for Kurna.

Mr PICTON: I would not want to predict what might happen. Up until 15 November, how many SAPOL officers had been working at hotel quarantine sites on a daily basis? Obviously, 15 November was the date when that Parafield cluster was identified.

The CHAIR: The question, member for Kurna, is: how many SAPOL officers?

Mr PICTON: Yes.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Member for Kurna, I appreciate the relevance of 15 November, but I am advised that there should not be much of a material change between the start of the 15th and the 23rd. That is my advice.

Mr PICTON: So how many staff?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: You still want that number?

Mr PICTON: Yes.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: As at 23 November, supervision across the six medi-hotels requires a daily commitment of 93 SAPOL members, including 73 staff deployed on roster and a further five supervisors and five command staff. That is my advice.

Mr PICTON: When you mentioned that part of the role of SAPOL was providing supervision and oversight of the security, can you flesh out what that means? Does that mean that SAPOL is

responsible for the security guards? Do they have control over that contract, or is it that they have got the day-to-day role in watching what they are doing and then they pass that on to Health?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: They are certainly not responsible for the overall contract, but it is certainly a day-to-day role in terms of supervising activities.

Mr PICTON: If there is an issue identified by a SAPOL officer, what is the action that happens then? There might be immediate action in terms of telling somebody not to do whatever they are doing, and is there a sort of follow-up action in reporting it somewhere and where does that go?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: To answer the member for Kaurna's question, if there is an issue, yes, there is activity. SA Health is notified, and SA Health would have a process, I imagine, from there.

Mr PICTON: Does SAPOL screen the individual workers who work for the private security company as guards in hotel quarantine, or is that a responsibility of SA Health?

The CHAIR: Member for Kaurna, do you mean COVID screening?

Mr PICTON: No, I mean in terms of security screening.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: It is our understanding that SA Health handle the contract; it is not SAPOL's responsibility, member for Kaurna.

Mr PICTON: Does SAPOL, or the commissioner in his role as the State Coordinator, get reports on breaches in hotel quarantine and, if so, what is the format they come in?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I think we have to be very careful here because of the Emergency Management Act. If there is a line of questioning concerning that act, there might be a time for it to be taken up in another place. However, in the spirit of good governance, I will attempt to answer what I can. Could I have the question again?

Mr PICTON: Does anybody in SAPOL get reports on breaches in hotel quarantine and, if so, what format do they come in?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The short answer, member for Kaurna, in the spirit of trying to answer the question is, yes, SAPOL would get reports for breaches. However, when we are talking about breaches, that word could be used quite broadly. For example, if someone touches their face when they should not, that could be reported as a breach.

Mr PICTON: Is that on a daily basis, a weekly basis or a monthly basis? How is that provided?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I do not have that information in front of me. Obviously, SAPOL are dealing with Health on a very regular basis, but I do not have that information. It could also be one you could pursue with Health perhaps.

Mr PICTON: How many of those SAPOL officers—and you mentioned over 90 on a daily basis have been working in hotel quarantine—have been subject to the active surveillance program of testing that was announced back on 17 August by SA Health?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I will take that on notice, member for Kaurna.

Mr PICTON: Do you know how many SAPOL officers who work in hotel quarantine have been tested over the past three months?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I do not have that information in front of me, member for Kaurna, I am sorry.

Mr PICTON: Has there been any testing of SAPOL officers who work in hotel quarantine?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes.

Mr PICTON: Have people requested to be tested, or is that only if somebody identifies that they have a symptom and they have gone and got tested?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I do not have that information. If you have a time frame in mind, or something like that, if you want that we could take it on notice; but I do not have those details.

Mr PICTON: I will ask you to take on notice how many SAPOL officers have had a proactive surveillance test between 17 August and 15 November?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: What do you mean by 'proactive'?

Mr PICTON: This is not where somebody has developed a symptom—

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I know you ask the questions, but I am just trying to be helpful. What do you mean by 'proactive'?

The CHAIR: Member for Kurna, are we talking about security or COVID?

Mr PICTON: We are talking about SAPOL officers who work in hotel quarantine.

The CHAIR: Yes, and the testing you are talking about is COVID?

Mr PICTON: A COVID test, yes. So between 17 August and 15 November, how many people have had active surveillance where they have been tested, not because of symptoms but because of a proactive attempt to check them, as is now the case in a direction that has been ordered by the State Coordinator?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I will take that on notice, but obviously there may be officers outside the hotels who may have also been tested based on their duties, activities, interactions—all of that as well. We will take that on notice.

The CHAIR: We will go to the member for Elizabeth.

Mr ODENWALDER: Do you know how many police officers and protective security officers are currently in self-quarantine as of today?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: In terms of the current cluster situation, I am advised that we have 108 employees currently in quarantine. In terms of employees who have returned to duty following quarantine, it is 85, and the number of employees returning negative tests is 166.

Mr ODENWALDER: So that 108 is across the board, not just sworn officers but employees of SAPOL. Do you know about sworn police officers?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: You want the breakdown by sworn officers?

Mr ODENWALDER: If you can—current quarantined police officers.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Current quarantined sworn officers, we do not have that information here, but we can take it on notice for you. Sorry, we thought we might have that answer for you, but we will have to take that one on notice.

Mr ODENWALDER: Could you take on notice a month-on-month, month-ending figure of quarantine? From February, from the outbreak.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: From February to when?

Mr ODENWALDER: If it is possible to tease that out.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: We will take that on notice. If we can do it, we will do it.

Mr PICTON: Did anybody in SAPOL have a role in relation to the Jane Halton National Review of Hotel Quarantine? If so, what was the role of anybody in SAPOL?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: We will have to take this on notice. We do not have the information in front of us.

Mr PICTON: Were any recommendations provided to SAPOL that came out of the National Review of Hotel Quarantine undertaken by Jane Halton?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Nothing direct, but SAPOL have the report and are, I suppose, taking that feedback on board.

Mr PICTON: What is the role of anybody in SAPOL or the process by which international flights are approved or not approved to land in Adelaide?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: We 'we' being SAPOL, are not a part of the approval process. I am advised that is a matter for SA Health.

Mr PICTON: Has SAPOL received any advice about international flights restarting as of Monday?

The CHAIR: Flights from where, member for Kaurana? I am having a little bit of trouble hearing you.

Mr PICTON: Sorry, I will speak up, Chair.

The CHAIR: Just a little bit closer to the microphone is fine. Thank you.

Mr PICTON: Has SAPOL received any advice regarding international flights restarting as of Monday?

Mr CREGAN: Point of order: it seems to me that the questions have now crossed over into matters that would be dealt with under the Emergency Management Act. That act is committed to the Premier, and accordingly those questions ought to be to the Premier, not this minister.

Mr PICTON: Point of order on the point of order: specifically, the budget is in relation to SAPOL's emergency response management and coordination arm, and clearly hundreds and hundreds of officers of SAPOL were involved in the COVID-19 response. I am asking whether SAPOL has had any involvement in that. It is entirely appropriate to ask this minister—

The CHAIR: Yes, I actually agree, member for Kaurana. I do not uphold the member for Kavel's point of order. However, given the response from the minister to your question previous to this one, I think the most recent question is probably a little bit tenuous. Anyway, let's see what the minister will say.

Mr PICTON: We will see what he says. He is getting a lot of advice.

The CHAIR: We will see, yes. Given that the advice to the committee was that SAPOL had no direct involvement in the approval of international flights, I am not sure where the next question came from.

Mr PICTON: But they might have some advice, even if they do not approve. I am advised of things that I do not approve.

Mr CREGAN: All the time, I am sure. Those matters would then be operational, Mr Chair.

The CHAIR: Yes, they are operational. I agree with that, member for Kavel. We are delving into operational matters. The minister alluded to operational matters earlier in one of his responses, but he is entitled as the minister to respond in whichever way he likes.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I think the member for Kavel is on the money, like most times; however, I will try to be helpful. SA Health, the control agency, are ultimately responsible for decisions like this, but of course SAPOL, as the coordinating agency, do try to assist to achieve the outcomes, but I am advised it is probably a question for SA Health.

Mr PICTON: So there is no further information that you are aware of?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: No.

Mr PICTON: In relation to the hotel quarantine sites, you outlined them and you mentioned Mount Gambier in particular and said that it was closing. What is the reason that the Mount Gambier site is closing? Is that because it is not going to be needed because the Victorian border is expected to open?

Mr CREGAN: Point of order: now we are clearly into Emergency Management Act matters.

The CHAIR: Yes, I am going to uphold the member for Kavel this time. We are really getting deep into operational matters. In relation to Sub-program 1.2: Emergency Response, Management

and Coordination, I understand that the line of questioning is around that, but we are really talking about budget lines and budget allocations, so take note, member for Kaurna.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I do not want to undermine the Chair but—

The CHAIR: But you are going to.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: —I am happy to provide useful information.

The CHAIR: My advice to you, minister, and to all ministers, is that you are able to answer however you see fit.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The question was: why is it closing? I understand that recently there was only one person there. I think it is the Southgate. I remember visiting it on my way to Mount Gambier—it is a great part of the world—when I went there and visited the local prison. It looked like quite a suitable hotel, but unfortunately only one person was there. I understand that it was initially there for people who travelled by road. For example, if you did not fly into the city, if you preferred to travel by road, that was there, being close to the border. I think that was the original intent of that, and there was only one person there.

Mr PICTON: You mentioned earlier, minister, that one of the roles of SAPOL in relation to hotel quarantine was assessing the security of sites. I wonder if you can further outline what the process is by which hotels are determined as to their suitability, and what is the process by which the overall capacity is determined for the system?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: As I said before, member for Kaurna, SA Health is ultimately responsible for the quarantine aspects of the hotels; SAPOL merely supports that. The ultimate responsibility is with SA Health.

Mr PICTON: I know the commissioner previously has made comments in relation to his concern about the number of sites and particularly SAPOL's capacity to provide staffing for each of those sites. What was the process by which additional hotels have been opened in the past few months and how were staff able to be found within SAPOL to open those additional hotels, presumably at a level of security that was sufficient for SAPOL to approve them?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Obviously, several aspects are taken into consideration, member for Kaurna: health, security, ability to police, and also the ability for a location to be effectively used as one of these hotels. It is done with feedback from SAPOL. SAPOL also has a business continuity group, and this group has been doing an amazing job. When you look at the number of heavy balls that have been in the air every day since March this year, I think that business continuity group is doing a fantastic job. It continues to balance those different levers and interests and consider those resourcing requirements as well.

Mr PICTON: Were the decisions announced yesterday in relation to hotel quarantine made on the basis of advice from SAPOL?

Mr CREGAN: Mr Chair, that is very much the Emergency Management Act.

Mr PICTON: I am not asking anything about the Emergency Management Act; I am asking about SAPOL.

The CHAIR: I know the member for Kavel keeps bringing up the Emergency Management Act but, in fact, this line of questioning relates to the emergency response of SAPOL so it is a fair and reasonable question. Member for Kaurna, I am going to ask you one more time to come in closer to your microphone. I have difficulty hearing you when you are sitting back.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thank the member for Kaurna for his question. In relation to decisions about hotel quarantine that the member asked about, I am advised that SAPOL were consulted about parts of the plan that directly impacted them but, in terms of being able to provide much further detail, obviously that was only announced yesterday so the member for Kaurna will have to bear with me in terms of ferocious questioning along those lines, but hopefully that provides you with some context.

Mr PICTON: Has SAPOL made an assessment on the use of Wakefield Hospital?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am advised it is only an option. I am not aware of any decision that has been made about exactly which site.

Mr PICTON: So there has not yet been any assessment of the Wakefield Hospital?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Not that I am aware of, no.

Mr PICTON: Has there been an assessment made of the staffing implications to SAPOL of the decision that this new site will use entirely SAPOL officers?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Those factors will be taken into consideration as part of the process, but a decision is yet to be taken.

Mr ODENWALDER: I will go back to Budget Paper 5, Budget Measures Statement, page 105, the COVID response, etc. There is mention of the new Police Operations Centre. Can you explain the purpose and the function of this new operations centre, and when is it expected to be completed?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Since 16 March, police operations have been run from the existing centre in Carrington Street, the same centre used for various other emergencies. Because of this, an alternative location is required, and that is at Thebarton. I understand that it is due to be handed over this week. Heaven forbid there is a large incident, say, with the hot weather next week and a catastrophic bushfire or something; I am advised that that would be able to be stood up this week.

Mr ODENWALDER: So it is not a specific COVID-operations centre; it is sort of an emergency centre generally, is it?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: It is an alternative POC that is able to be used for COVID as long as COVID requires it.

Mr ODENWALDER: What was the reference to bushfires, then, because I understand—

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I was just using it as an example.

Mr ODENWALDER: —there is a proper emergency centre on the way, is there not, eventually?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I might get the commissioner to clarify, member for Elizabeth.

Cmmr STEVENS: As the minister pointed out, since 16 March this year we have been running the Police Operations Centre for COVID-19 on a 16-hours a day, seven days a week basis, and in some cases 24 hours a day. We are using the very same centre that we use to manage all major policing operations, major events as well as the coordination of a bushfire response. There is no capacity for COVID-19 operations and one of those major events under another emergency to operate from the same facility, so an alternative site has been established at Thebarton Police Barracks.

Our intention this week or even today, if it was required, is to move the COVID-19 police operations to Thebarton, and they will utilise that site for as long as is required for COVID response. At the conclusion of COVID, we will have a legacy arrangement, where we would now have two police operations centres that are capable of being utilised simultaneously for dual events. A good example of that would be a major bushfire during the Tour Down Under; both events would require a police operations centre.

Mr ODENWALDER: So the intention is that this will be a permanent feature of emergency management going forward?

Cmmr STEVENS: Yes, the configuration will remain in place after COVID-19.

Mr ODENWALDER: We are getting a bit technical now, but will you have the same quantum of people working on emergency management as you do now? So the number of people who are on Carrington Street now will be split? Do you understand what I am saying?

Cmmr STEVENS: Yes.

Mr ODENWALDER: Aside from a major emergency, which requires more staffing, on an ongoing way will there be more staff allocated to emergency management on two sites, or will it be the same quantum of staff?

Cmmr STEVENS: We are talking about bricks and mortar here and IT equipment. The number of staff allocated will be contingent on the sort of emergency that we are dealing with at any given time. So, if we do have two separate incidents, we would allocate staff for each of those incidents. We now have a home for both of those incidents to be managed at the same time.

The CHAIR: Member for Elizabeth, I remind you that you need to direct questions to the minister. The minister then defers, if he wishes, to his advisers.

Membership:

Mr Szakacs substituted for Mr Picton.

Mr ODENWALDER: I will change tack away from COVID for a little while and go to Budget Paper 5, Budget Measures Statement, page 105, which talks about the extension of the fixed-wing aviation services. What is SAPOL's current fixed-wing capability?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am advised that South Australia Police use fixed-wing aircraft to undertake a variety of business-critical missions primarily within the state in a variety of different aspects and roles. These include things like major crime, search and rescue missions, along with the transport of prisoners and also the transport of deceased persons. Traditionally, they were conducted by SAPOL aircraft services under an Air Operator's Certificate approved by CASA, employing three full-time equivalent pilots and two fixed-wing aircraft. I am happy to elaborate more.

Mr ODENWALDER: That is unnecessary.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: That is all you want to know?

Mr ODENWALDER: I just wanted to know how many planes there were and how many people it would take to fly them.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: All you want to know is two planes. If you had asked that, I would have just said it.

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes, so this funding is merely an extension of the current arrangement then; is that right?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Sorry, say that again.

Mr ODENWALDER: This funding in the budget is just an extension of that contract going ahead to the next three years; is that right?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Essentially, yes.

Mr ODENWALDER: In 2018, the police air wing was the subject of a maladministration investigation by the ICAC. Was that report ever made public?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Given the look the member for Kavel is giving me, being the good lawyer that he is, I think we have to tread very carefully when we are talking about ICAC matters.

Mr ODENWALDER: Absolutely, yes.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: However, I do not believe it is a public report. Obviously, it was a long period of time. I could go back and check, but I do not believe it was made public, and I think we should tread very carefully when talking about such matters.

Mr ODENWALDER: Have you seen the report?

Mr CREGAN: Point of order, for rather obvious reasons, Mr Chair.

Mr ODENWALDER: This is about the contract arrangements for the fixed-wing aircraft.

The CHAIR: No.

Mr CREGAN: You asked whether the minister had seen the report.

The CHAIR: The last question was about an ICAC report.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I would want to get further advice before providing an answer. I think I will just refer to my previous comment. I am not trying to be tricky here, but we are dealing with that subject and therefore I refer to my previous answer.

Mr ODENWALDER: Did the report suggest or recommend that SAPOL retain the contract for its own fixed-wing capability or was—

Mr CREGAN: Point of order, sir: I maintain my objection.

The CHAIR: The response from the minister was that he does not believe the report was made public. I do not believe he said he had seen the report, so there is absolutely no point in asking that question. We will move on.

Mr ODENWALDER: During that ICAC investigation, two pilots, including the chief pilot, took leave. Have these two pilots now been reinstated?

Mr CREGAN: Point of order, Mr Chairman: standing order 97 as well. There are purported facts the member is trying to introduce. He knows that he requires leave, yet he is continuing to attempt to introduce those facts in addition to the matters that have been previously raised in relation to ICAC.

The CHAIR: I uphold that point of order as well, member for Kavel.

Mr ODENWALDER: Minister, have there been any reports prepared by SAPOL or any internal agency that have suggested or recommended the privatisation of the fixed-wing capability or a different arrangement to the current arrangements?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes, SAPOL did do a review. I am advised a strategic decision remains pending on the medium and long-term direction of SAPOL aircraft service's fixed-wing aircraft, while interim arrangements have been put in place with the outsourced operation of SAPOL's state-owned Pilatus PC-12 aircraft and a second hired aircraft.

The future of SAPOL's fixed-wing aircraft services may be impacted by any consolidation or restructure of aviation services resulting from the whole-of-government review. Yes, there was a review done on whether to retain an in-house or private provider. At the moment, SAPOL is using a private provider.

Mr ODENWALDER: Thank you for that, minister. During the ICAC investigation, did any pilots take leave—

Mr CREGAN: Point of order, Mr Chair: I maintain my earlier objections.

Mr ODENWALDER: Hang on—

The CHAIR: There is a point of order. The member for Elizabeth has put to the committee that there was an ICAC investigation.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: It was confirmed by the minister.

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes, it is a matter of public record. The minister has—

The CHAIR: I take it that that is common knowledge.

Mr ODENWALDER: The minister has acknowledged it.

Mr CREGAN: No, he has not, and it is a fact—

The CHAIR: Member for Kavel, just wait, please. We do not believe the report has been made public. I understand the minister has not read the report; is that correct, minister?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Not to my knowledge. I do not believe so.

The CHAIR: Then I am not sure where this line of questioning is going, if there is any possible response, member for Elizabeth.

Mr ODENWALDER: Okay, I will ask a different question then.

Mr CREGAN: It is not a fact and you need leave to introduce fact.

The CHAIR: The member for Kavel is called to order.

Mr ODENWALDER: At any time in the past three years, have any pilots taken extended leave and why?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: To clarify, I have been asked about leave. What sort of leave are we talking about?

The CHAIR: The question from the member for Elizabeth, from my recollection, was: has any person taken extended leave?

Mr ODENWALDER: Any leave, other than their annual leave, sick leave, compassionate leave or long service leave. Have I missed any?

The CHAIR: Any leave other than regular leave.

Mr ODENWALDER: Perhaps I could ask: was any pilot asked to take leave?

The CHAIR: So you have rephrased the question?

Mr ODENWALDER: Both questions hang in the ether.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: In the last three years?

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am advised that no-one has been asked to take leave.

Mr ODENWALDER: Then the first question still stands: has anyone taken leave, other than those types of leave that I mentioned?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am not trying to be difficult.

The CHAIR: When you are talking about anyone, you are talking about—

Mr ODENWALDER: Any pilot attached to the fixed-wing aviation capability.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I will have to take that on notice.

Mr ODENWALDER: I will move on.

The CHAIR: There were two planes.

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes, we have established that there are two planes and three FTEs. I will go on to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 201, key agency outputs, which identifies opportunities for legislative reform and educating the community. It is about SAPOL's role in legislative reform. The reason I raise this is that I have been asking for a briefing on it since August. Can you explain the circumstances that led to the ban on the import of gel blasters in February of this year?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The ban on the import?

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes, if indeed there was a ban; if not, I would like you to clarify.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am advised that, once SAPOL had concerns, imports were suspended, especially after a ballistics report classed these items as firearms.

Mr ODENWALDER: Can you clarify when the imports were suspended?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes, I can.

Mr ODENWALDER: Will you?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes, I can. I do not have that detail right now. I will take it on notice.

Mr ODENWALDER: But you are saying that it was following the ballistics report; is that right?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: As this was an operational decision, I might pass over to the commissioner.

Cmmr STEVENS: Thank you, minister. The officer in charge of the Firearms Branch had concerns about the nature of gel blasters in terms of how they relate to the Firearms Act, and whilst that was being clarified orders for gel blasters being imported were suspended. There was subsequently a ballistics review, which was also peer reviewed, which ultimately determined that gel blasters were classified as firearms under the act.

Mr ODENWALDER: But imports were suspended by SAPOL before the ballistics report. Can you give us an idea of when?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: We do not have that detail right here.

Mr ODENWALDER: Was it before June?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I believe so, yes.

Mr ODENWALDER: Was the ban on imports a decision of SAPOL, and under what authority does SAPOL have the power to do that?

The CHAIR: Member for Elizabeth, are we talking about imports into South Australia specifically?

Mr ODENWALDER: Indeed, imports into South Australia. Yes, each state has its own regulation.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The commissioner is obviously the registrar. His delegate made the decision in his capacity as the officer in charge of the Firearms Branch.

Mr ODENWALDER: The Registrar of Firearms has the authority to ban the import of any item? Well, it was not a firearm before June.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Imports were suspended, not banned.

Mr ODENWALDER: Suspended. So does SAPOL then have the power to suspend the import of any item—sorry, the Registrar of Firearms, I should say?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: As it relates to the Firearms Act, yes.

Mr ODENWALDER: But up until some point—up until October, in fact—it was not a firearm.

Mr CREGAN: Mr Chair, I am just not sure whether we are examining the budget or the member is seeking legal advice in relation to matters he could separately be advised on.

Mr ODENWALDER: Point of order on that: I am examining SAPOL's role in legislative reform. This is legislative reform. They have brought a regulation to the minister, and I am asking how that regulation was arrived at.

Mr CREGAN: That had been made under existing legislation, and you are not asking about a budget line, either.

Mr ODENWALDER: Well, regulations are legislative reform.

Mr CREGAN: That may be, but that is a matter for question time, in my view. I maintain my objection, Mr Chair.

Mr ODENWALDER: Well, you are not the Chair. You should try to be the Chair of the Economic and Finance Committee—

The CHAIR: Order!

Mr CREGAN: The objection is put to the Chair, as you well know.

The CHAIR: Order! The member for Kavel is called to order. I am going to refer the committee to the little known and not often used standing order 141: the house does not permit

quarrels. In fact, I had to use it yesterday. Standing order 141 states that the house interferes to prevent quarrels between members that arises out of proceedings. The easiest way to avoid quarrels and having me call for order in the house is to direct questions and points of order through the Chair. Everybody knows that.

The member for Elizabeth, at the outset of this line of questioning, referred to a budget line. It was about legislative reform. Given the topical nature of gel blasters in the past few months and the minister's willingness to answer, I am happy for the member for Elizabeth to continue at this stage. Where were we up to?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I think I will just refer to my previous answers.

The CHAIR: Which may mean, member for Elizabeth, that that line of questioning is coming and end; I do not know.

Mr ODENWALDER: I hope not.

The CHAIR: Well, let's see.

Mr ODENWALDER: The suspension of the processing of B709A forms, which allowed the import of gel blasters before this date, was a decision of the Registrar of Firearms as delegate; is that right? Where is that legislated? Where does that authority come from?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: If we are going to start getting into legislation lines, I will take that on notice.

Mr ODENWALDER: But the suspension itself was made on the basis that it may or may not be a firearm; is that right?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I refer to my previous answer.

Mr ODENWALDER: Are you going to do this all day?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: You can if you want. There is also a standing order on repetition, sir.

Mr ODENWALDER: I would ask the Chair to direct the minister to answer question or at least try.

The CHAIR: No. You can ask me, but we determined earlier that, as is always the case, the minister can answer the question in whatever way they see fit. It is not uncommon for ministers to refer the question to his or her previous answer. That is not uncommon.

Mr ODENWALDER: Okay.

The CHAIR: If I can just go back a little bit, my recollection of advice the minister received just a few minutes ago is that a gel blaster was determined to be a firearm; am I correct in that?

Mr ODENWALDER: No, not at this point.

The CHAIR: Well, I stand to be corrected, but perhaps we could clarify that right now.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Importation was suspended pending determination about how a gel blaster would fit in with the Firearms Act. They were then classified as a firearm. I might take this opportunity to talk a little about gel blasters and perhaps provide a useful update because, obviously, I can see where the member for Elizabeth is going on this.

I can advise that a number of permits to acquire gel blaster firearms have been received and a number have been granted. A number of businesses have also since submitted applications to establish gel blaster businesses where gel blasters can be used, and I think this is a positive thing. I am advised that one venue at Windsor Gardens has been approved and others are pending, so that is a good thing.

There has been movement here, and these businesses are getting on with the job of doing what they need to do to conduct their business, and I think that is a good thing. I appreciate the concern; the member is quite right to raise the matter, and I am trying to be as thorough and respectful as I can in my answers.

Mr ODENWALDER: As a supplementary to that, how many firearms licences have been applied for, how many have been granted and how many gel blasters have been registered since the regulation was made?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am advised that, as at 28 October, 181 people have applied for a firearms licence in order to possess gel blasters. Of those, two have been approved to progress to undertake their firearm safety training, with remaining applications currently pending. A further 28 applications to vary existing firearms licences have been received, 25 permits to acquire gel blaster firearms have been received, seven have been granted and three have been refused. Three businesses—which is great—have submitted applications to establish gel blaster businesses where gel blasters can be used, and one in the north-east has been approved. Two are pending.

Before commencing operation, I understand that the nominees are also required by the Firearms Act to hold a firearms licence. Once those nominees are licensed, then the venue will be able to operate. It is a positive move, I think. I hope that helps the member for Elizabeth.

Mr ODENWALDER: It does. The advice that B709A permits were suspended pending assessment of whether they were firearms, was that information relayed to the Firearms Branch generally, who presumably give advice to the business sector or anyone else who is applying for a firearms licence?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am advised this was managed by the Firearms Branch.

Mr ODENWALDER: I have received information that business owners, or at least one business owner, was advised in June by the Firearms Branch (and I will not name the person) that B709A forms are not being processed at the moment due to the current ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Which is it: did SAPOL discontinue the processing of B709As because of safety concerns because it may be a firearm or because of COVID? This is in June.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Although I believe you are introducing fact into your question, in the interests of being productive here, if you want to furnish any letter or complaint or correspondence I am more than happy to have it looked at for you. However, I have to take that on notice. I just do not have the details of what you are looking at.

Mr ODENWALDER: As a supplementary to that, can you tell me whether the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrably affected the processing of B709A forms?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I believe SA Police are doing an exceptional job, sir.

Mr ODENWALDER: I do too.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: You would not want to be in any other part of the world than South Australia at the moment. I am not saying that the member for Elizabeth is trying to do this, but there are some out there who sometimes seek to use and cherry-pick examples of facts and figures to try to undermine policing in this state. I do not appreciate it and I will not have it. I am not imputing that to the member for Elizabeth—

Mr ODENWALDER: I hope note.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: —but obviously you have been provided with information about someone who is unhappy. If you want to provide that to me, I am more than happy to have it looked at for you.

Mr ODENWALDER: I will forward it to you, sir. Chair, the reason I am asking these questions is that there are significant portions of the community who do not feel they were adequately consulted by the government before this regulation was made. It remains to be seen whether this is an example of some misinformation, whether intentional or not—

Mr CREGAN: Point of order: this is opinion and argument, contrary to the standing order. What is the question?

The CHAIR: I uphold the point of order. Member for Elizabeth, the minister has invited you to forward the information you have to him for a response, as many members in this place would

have done in relation to this issue, I am sure. I have had discussions and correspondence myself with the minister in relation to gel blasters.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: What I will say to the member for Elizabeth is that a number of businesses have submitted applications to establish gel blaster businesses. One venue has been approved and two are pending. People are getting on with the job. They are getting these things registered.

Obviously there is a business there, and good luck to them is what I say. If the checks and balances are there and they abide by the law, then good luck to them. I hope they prosper. Obviously some are still complaining, and I am more than happy to look at those complaints, feed them through and provide a response at the appropriate time.

Mr ODENWALDER: Whose decision was it to introduce the regulation in its current form?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: That process was managed by the SAPOL Firearms Branch.

Mr ODENWALDER: So the Firearms Branch declare an article a firearm and they suggest a regulation to the government. Is it not then at the minister's discretion whether to accept that or whether to seek other solutions? Does the minister have to accept the advice of SAPOL or the Registrar of Firearms in making the regulations?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: What I will do, to be comprehensive, is provide a comprehensive summary of this item. I will take that on notice and provide a comprehensive summary to the member.

Mr ODENWALDER: I would like a specific answer to whose decision it was to regulate. The minister has publicly said this is an operational matter of SAPOL; that is on the record. He said this is an operational matter of SAPOL.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Which it is.

Mr ODENWALDER: Well, it is an operational matter, as we discussed, of the Firearms Branch to declare an article a firearm. It is a matter for their agency to provide you with advice. What you do with that advice is up to you. Did you seek any other solutions?

Mr CREGAN: He has taken it on notice.

Mr ODENWALDER: I want to make sure I get an answer to the right question.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I refer to my previous statement.

Mr ODENWALDER: Did you consider any of the solutions found interstate?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The comment has been made about what is available interstate, so it might allow me the opportunity to talk about those various—

Mr ODENWALDER: I am asking if you considered any.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: You are asking about interstate, so let's have a look at what they do interstate, the regulatory status in each jurisdiction. I thank the member for Elizabeth for the question. In New South Wales, gel blasters have been determined to be an air gun and therefore a category A firearm. In addition, gel blasters that substantially duplicate in appearance a military-style firearm are classified as a prohibited firearm. In the Australian Capital Territory, gel blasters do not need to be registered, as they are considered either a prohibited firearm under the act by way of mechanism or appearance based or they are deemed a toy. Gel blasters are not permitted in the ACT.

In Tasmania, gel blasters have been classified as an imitation firearm pursuant to the Firearms Act and are also a prohibited firearm. In Western Australia, gel blasters are prohibited, pursuant to section 4 of the Firearms Act. In Victoria, gel blasters are classified as firearms for the purpose of the Firearms Act. In the Northern Territory, they are prohibited pursuant to the Weapons Act—in the Northern Territory, sir. In Queensland, there are no restrictions and, from a commonwealth point of view, gel blasters are currently controlled on importation as imitation firearms. So was thought or regard given to other jurisdictions? Yes.

Mr MURRAY: My question to the minister is in regard to the Mobile Workforce Transformation Program. I am very interested in the benefits that will accrue to the force. Without being too specific, I am intrigued as to the vendors and developers that will (a) provide those facilities and (b) enhance them. For conformity with the way in which these questions need to be asked, I am referring to Budget Paper 5, page 106, a total of \$34.9 million.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I thank the member for the question. We are talking about the Mobile Workforce Transformation Program. I will make some introductory comments and then I might also seek some advice. At the outset, I think it is important that we can utilise technology to the best of our ability, to make sure that we can protect both the South Australian public and of course those who protect us, and use technology to their advantage to make sure that they can be as productive and also as efficient as possible.

Once upon a time, if you had an expiation notice you would have to write it up with a pen and pad. The member for Elizabeth will remember those days. These days, we have moved to smarter, more efficient methods, and I think that is certainly a good thing. SAPOL's vision is to provide a visible, responsive police service for all South Australians. That is underpinned by a key strategy to be accessible, innovative and efficient in the use of resources, and also responsive in the delivery of frontline services regardless of circumstances.

Utilising technology is something we should do across all portfolio areas. If we can use more modern tools, why would we not do it to fight crime and also to be more efficient and productive? Contemporary technologies enable SAPOL to utilise innovative approaches to how, when and where work is performed. The key goal of the Mobile Workforce Transformation Program is to streamline operations to maximise time available for frontline policing services to the South Australian community. This program will leverage mobile technologies and applications to communicate and access computer systems any time, anywhere, whether in the field, in vehicle or in the office.

South Australia is a big state and it is important that officers are able to work anywhere. To achieve this, the \$34.9 million program will provide personal issue mobile phones to all SAPOL personnel, sworn and unsworn, enabling them to wirelessly connect with a mobile network hub or utilise a 4G or 5G connection to access SAPOL applications and computer systems.

In addition, the program will install portable network hubs in all workstations—which is fantastic—meeting rooms, service facilities and in operational vehicles. Using a mobile phone through the network hubs will enable desktop and laptop PCs to be retired. The program will also upgrade the standard platform for end-user computing to provide staff with up-to-date productivity and collaboration tools, including videoconferencing, and redevelop SAPOL's existing policing applications to further deliver operational efficiencies using a mobile-by-design approach.

This will enable all applications to be used on any contemporary computing device regardless of operating system and screen size. The Mobile Workforce Transformation Program will provide a wide range of direct and indirect benefits to SAPOL and the justice system. In this day and age of COVID, we have had to utilise things like AVL in the police and corrections space when appropriate to do so, when visits were not able to occur. It is helping in the justice system, South Australian agencies and also the community.

Based on the experience of other jurisdictions and work undertaken as part of the business case development, a number of benefits have been identified, including time savings of 30 minutes per officer per shift, which is a massive efficiency dividend. These time savings correspond to the equivalent of deploying an additional 30 operational police officers per shift, I am told.

There will also be benefits relating to the safety, health and wellbeing of SAPOL staff as well as an expected uplift in the levels of staff engagement. The new technology will also improve SAPOL's emergency and business continuity response. Staff will have full access to systems wherever they are located and will be able to be mobilised quickly to undertake different high-priority tasks as well.

The CHAIR: Thank you, minister—a very fulsome answer.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I have something to add relating to PSOs and school patrols. I am advised that all AG security working under the arrangements have been probity checked at the level required of a SAPOL cadet, and this is above normal contractor probity check requirements.

Mr ODENWALDER: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 207, crime and illegal drugs, sub-program 2.1. On how many occasions since January 2019 have SAPOL sniffer dogs been invited onto school grounds by school principals to look for drugs under the new protocols?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The answer is once. By way of background, in 2018, with a focus, I suppose, on education and harm minimisation, the government's policy platform addressing substance abuse in schools committed the Department for Education and also SAPOL to develop agreed protocols to enable schools to more easily access the use of what is known as passive alert drug detection dogs or PADD dogs. A protocol was developed between the Department for Education and SAPOL. It outlines the process for managing drug detection operations in the Department for Education, Catholic Education South Australia and also the Association of Independent Schools of South Australia.

Proactive PADD dog operations can now be undertaken in senior schools with the approval of a delegate from each agency. I am advised that, in the event of a drug detection operation in a school, it is a prearranged activity between the principal of the school, the Department for Education and SAPOL. Its purpose is to prevent drug use and provide education to students about the associated harms and consequences of drug use.

The PADD operations to search a defined area are arranged when there is no specific suspicion that a controlled drug, controlled precursor or controlled plant is currently present. Obviously, the search involves the deliberate movement of all students away from the search area to an essential point, where education material is provided. While it is occurring, SAPOL PADD dog handlers attending conduct a search of classrooms, bags, lockers, staffrooms and open areas of the school grounds, and interaction between students and the dog team is avoided.

To date, SAPOL has received only one request from the Department for Education for a proactive search of a school. The first and only operation was undertaken at a school on 19 November. Whilst indications of the presence of drug odour were provided, there were no detections of any illicit substances on that occasion. I believe SAPOL and the Department for Education are currently in the process of looking at another operation later this year.

Mr ODENWALDER: To clarify, there was one invitation from the Department for Education. There were no further invitations that were rejected for some reason? There was one invitation sought and one invitation met?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: What I will do is clarify, member for Elizabeth: there were two requests and one operation was conducted. A second potential one was cancelled by the Department for Education. So one was carried out and one was cancelled.

Mr ODENWALDER: So none have been cancelled by SAPOL?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: No.

Mr ODENWALDER: Will you concede, then, that the sniffer dog policy is a failure if there has been one search yielding no results? It allows for random searches—

The CHAIR: The member for Elizabeth is asking the minister for an opinion.

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes. He is the minister; if he wants to give me his opinion, he can.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I would reject that vehemently, that it was a failure.

Mr ODENWALDER: Supplementary: in what sense is it a success?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: This is a rhetorical question. This is calling for an opinion.

Mr ODENWALDER: Well, no, it is not. You said it is not a failure, so in what sense is it not a failure?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Obviously, there was certainly a focus on education and harm minimisation and it is certainly a deterrent. Who knows? If there are drugs in schools, we may see this rolled out. I think it is important to have that capability. I think it is a deterrent. It is important to focus on education and harm minimisation. This is a policy that has been enacted and it is there. It is able to be used. Just because it has not been used all that often does not necessarily mean that it was not a good policy.

Mr ODENWALDER: Is it a deterrent in the sense that school students are regularly reminded that this is the case, that SAPOL and education now have this protocol in place? Is that how it acts as a deterrent?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I think what the member is trying to do now is talk about the merits of the policy.

Mr ODENWALDER: I am just asking a question. You said it was a deterrent.

The CHAIR: Member for Elizabeth!

Mr ODENWALDER: You said it was a deterrent.

The CHAIR: Order! The member for Elizabeth has asked his question. The minister is answering.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: He has made it clear that he does not like this policy as much as the government does.

Mr ODENWALDER: I just want to know if it is working or not, and it is clearly not.

The CHAIR: You have asked that question, member for Elizabeth.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: You are entitled to ask your question, but I cannot add any more.

The CHAIR: There is a point of order.

Mr MURRAY: Well, it is a point of order and it is a practical issue as well. As you are doubtless aware, this matter was extensively canvassed in the education estimate hearing, so if you have any specific questions regarding the operation of the policy, which is why we are here, I suggest you refer to those.

Mr ODENWALDER: Thanks for your advice.

Mr MURRAY: Happy to provide it.

The CHAIR: Thank you, member for Davenport. There are two things I will say about that: although I did not let the member for Davenport finish, he is called to order for a bogus point of order. Also, member for Elizabeth, I remind you—and you have been very good today—it is disorderly to interject while the minister is answering. Minister, with five or six minutes to go.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I am advised that the Department for Education and SAPOL are currently in the process of looking at a second operation for later this year, so I would not say it is a failure at all.

Mr ODENWALDER: I read the following omnibus questions into *Hansard*:

1. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:
 - What is the actual FTE count at 30 June 2020 and the projected actual FTE count for each year of the forward estimates?
 - What is the total employment cost for each year of the forward estimates?
 - What is the notional FTE job reduction target that has been agreed with Treasury for each year of the forward estimates?
 - Does the agency or department expect to meet the target in each year of the forward estimates?

- How many TVSPs are estimated to be required to meet FTE reductions over the forward estimates?
2. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:
- How much is budgeted to be spent on goods and services for 2020-21, and for each of the years of the forward estimates period?
 - The top ten providers of goods and services by value to each agency reporting to the minister for 2019-20; and
 - A description of the goods and/or services provided by each of these top ten providers, and the cost to the agency for these goods and/or services.
 - The value of the goods and services that was supplied to the agency by South Australian suppliers.
3. Between 1 July 2019 and 30 June 2020, will the minister list the job title and total employment cost of each position with a total estimated cost of \$100,000 or more which has either (1) been abolished and (2) has been created?
4. Will the minister provide a detailed breakdown of expenditure on consultants and contractors above \$10,000 between 1 July 2019 and 30 June 2020 for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, listing:
- the name of the consultant, contractor or service supplier;
 - cost;
 - work undertaken;
 - reason for engaging the contractor; and
 - method of appointment.
5. For each department and agency for which the minister has responsibility:
- How many FTEs were employed to provide communication and promotion activities in 2019-20 and what was their employment expense?
 - How many FTEs are budgeted to provide communication and promotion activities in 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 and what is their estimated employment expense?
 - The total cost of government-paid advertising, including campaigns, across all mediums in 2019-20 and budgeted cost for 2020-21.
6. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, please provide a full itemised breakdown of attraction and retention allowances as well as non-salary benefits paid to public servants and contracts between 1 July 2019 and 30 June 2020.
7. What is the title and total employment cost of each individual staff member in the minister's office as at 30 June 2020, including all departmental employees seconded to ministerial offices?
8. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, could you detail:
- (a) How much was spent on targeted voluntary separation packages in 2019-20?
 - (b) What department funded these TVSPs? (except for DTF estimates)
 - (c) What number of TVSPs were funded?
 - (d) What is the budget for targeted voluntary separation packages for financial years included in the forward estimates (by year), and how are these packages funded?

- (e) What is the breakdown per agency/branch of targeted voluntary separation packages for financial years included in the forward estimates (by year) by FTEs?

9. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many executive terminations have occurred since 1 July 2019 and what is the value of executive termination payments made?

10. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what new executive appointments have been made since 1 July 2019, and what is the annual salary, and total employment cost for each position?

11. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many employees have been declared excess, how long has each employee been declared excess, and what is the salary of each excess employee?

12. In the 2019-20 financial year, for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, what underspending on operating programs (1) was and (2) was not approved by cabinet for carryover expenditure in 2020-21?

13. In the 2019-20 financial year, for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, what underspending on investing or capital projects or programs (1) was and (2) was not approved by cabinet for carryover expenditure in 2020-21? How much was sought and how much was approved?

14. For each grant program or fund the minister is responsible for please provide the following information for 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 financial years:

- (a) Name of the program or fund;
- (b) The purpose of the program or fund;
- (c) Balance of the grant program or fund;
- (d) Budgeted (or actual) expenditure from the program or fund;
- (e) Budgeted (or actual) payments into the program or fund;
- (f) Carryovers into or from the program or fund; and
- (g) Details, including the value and beneficiary, of any commitments already made to be funded from the program or fund.

15. For the period of 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020, provide a breakdown of all grants paid by the department/agency that report to the minister, including when the payment was made to the recipient, and when the grant agreement was signed by both parties.

16. For each year of the forward estimates, please provide the name and budgeted expenditure across the 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 financial years for each individual investing expenditure project administered by or on behalf of all departments and agencies reporting to the minister.

17. For each year of the forward estimates, please provide the name and budget for each individual program administered by or on behalf of all departments and agencies reporting to the minister.

18. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what is the total cost of machinery of government changes since 1 July 2019 and please provide a breakdown of those costs?

19. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what new sections of your department or agency have been established since 1 July 2019 and what is their purpose?

20. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:

- What savings targets have been set for each year of the forward estimates?

- What measures are you implementing to meet your savings target?
- What is the estimated FTE impact of these measures?

The CHAIR: There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the proposed payments for the portfolio of South Australia Police and the Administered Items for South Australia Police complete. Thank you, minister, member for Elizabeth, advisers and commissioner.

Sitting suspended from 12:45 to 13:45.

DEPARTMENT FOR CORRECTIONAL SERVICES, \$462,601,000

Membership:

Dr Close substituted for Mr Szakacs.

Minister:

Hon. V.A. Tarzia, Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr D. Brown, Chief Executive, Department for Correctional Services.

Mr C. Sexton, Executive Director, People and Business Services, Department for Correctional Services.

Ms M. Deer, Manager, Executive Services, Department for Correctional Services.

The CHAIR: Welcome back, everybody, to Estimates Committee A. The proposed payments for examination today come under the Department for Correctional Services portfolio. The minister appearing is the Minister for Police, Emergency Services and Correctional Services. I declare the proposed payments open for examination. I call on the minister to make a statement if he wishes and to introduce his advisers.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Thank you, Chair. Consistent with today, I do wish to make a few introductory comments and also introduce those who are with me here today. To my left is Mr David Brown, Chief Executive of the Department for Correctional Services. Immediately behind me is Megan Deer, Manager, Executive Services, DCS, and to Megan's left is Chris Sexton, Executive Director, People and Business Services at DCS.

I wish to start by commending the hard work and professionalism of all staff of the department during the COVID-19 health emergency, including most recently following the positive test returned by a staff member at the Yatala Labour Prison. The custodial setting presents several operational complexities in relation to an infectious disease. DCS has worked rapidly to introduce a measured response to protect prisoners, staff and the community.

At the start of the pandemic in March this year, an incident management team was established to develop an escalated response plan to the pandemic. Since then, the department has progressed a significant amount of work across a range of areas and activities aimed at preventing, preparing and responding to an outbreak.

This included the innovation of several operational practices, such as the use of virtual prisoner visits, which were new to South Australian prisons, and the implementation of the Communicable Diseases Network Australia guidelines. Comprehensive engagement with other agencies, including SAPOL and SA Health, has been key to the calculated response as has the testing of prisoners, both surveillance and responsive.

The department's mission statement in response to COVID-19 is 'hold and be ready'—that is, DCS will hold its strong position and maintain its state of preparedness and be ready to escalate and respond to any changes in the health system. With this mission in place, DCS was very quickly able to reactivate the incident management team immediately following the notification of the staff member's positive result on Sunday 15 November.

This has meant working closely with SA Health's Communicable Disease Control Branch on comprehensive contact tracing and taking a highly cautious precautionary approach to operations across the department. I am pleased to report that, to date, our prisoner population remains COVID-19 free.

In addition, the support provided by the department to not only the directly affected staff member but all staff has been exemplary, recognising that COVID-19 has been an extremely challenging time for all staff, prisoners, offenders and their families. The response to this emergency is a credit to all personnel across the department and I extend my sincere thanks for their efforts during this difficult time. Should the risk again escalate, I am confident that DCS will act immediately and effectively.

Given this is my first appearance before this committee as the minister, I wish to also use this opportunity to report on some other achievements of DCS during the financial year. We have worked to progress the Marshall Liberal government's capital investment of \$200 million as part of the Better Prisons program. This program will deliver 310 high security prisoner beds, the biggest investment in metro prison beds in over a decade.

Expanding capacity across existing prison sites means more jobs—more jobs for local businesses and more jobs for contractors and subcontractors. Close to 400 construction jobs alone have been created as a result of the projects at Yatala Labour Prison and Adelaide Women's Prison. Just a few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of opening the buildings completed as part of the early works program at Yatala Labour Prison. This saw the completion of the James Hugo Complex. That complex includes the new Northern Metropolitan Business Centre and Learning Academy. Both buildings will provide critical support services and expanded training capabilities for the department.

The complex is named after a much-loved and dear gentleman, a member of the Corrections team, Mr James Hugo, who members may know, who has been with the department for over 50 years. The staff wellbeing centre within the complex was named after the late Mr Dennis 'Taffy' Watkins, a dedicated Correctional Services officer at Yatala for over 30 years.

The main works program at the site has now commenced, with a targeted delivery date of July 2022. Other capital works progressed in the previous financial year include the commissioning of 40 secure beds and 40 residential beds at the Adelaide Women's Prison in addition to other services at that site. The Adelaide Women's Prison will also benefit from a new reception and visitor centre, which commences construction in January next year.

Better Prisons, the government's major reform to improve the quality, safety and efficiency of the state's prisons, has continued in 2019-20. DCS has implemented a benchmarked budget and post model at all sites. The commitment to public safety and reducing reoffending in this state remains central to the department's activities. To this end, work has continued in 2019-20 to progress the important bipartisan 10by20 strategy. This strategy is working to reduce costs and increase safety for the community.

Unfortunately, as we know, repeat offenders are responsible for a large proportion of crime, but, by focusing on reducing reoffending and improving rehabilitation and reintegration outcomes, our community will be safer, with fewer victims and less crime. Rehabilitation continues to be a focus, especially with our range of prisoner rehabilitation programs. The government is committed to ensuring that these continue and are expanded where needed.

One example of this is as a result of the government's commitment to more targeted rehabilitation programs for domestic violence perpetrators. This commitment was met as at 31 December 2019, with the department increasing the number of domestic and family violence intervention programs delivered. Further, with regard to rehabilitation, the budget measures allocated to DCS across the forward estimates for 2020-21 include the pilot of a high-intensity treatment

program (HIT program) that will deliver specialised high-intensity case management and treatment throughout the course of supervision under an extended supervision order.

Finally, in addition, funds were allocated for the development of a business case for a new rehabilitation prison, as identified by Infrastructure SA in its 20-year plan. The development of this case will allow key options to be considered and assessed to address future expected requirements. During my time as minister, I look forward to reporting further in this place regarding these new initiatives and on the continued efforts of the department to effectively manage offenders across the state.

The CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Does the shadow minister wish to make a statement?

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes. I just want to acknowledge the work of the staff of all our prisons and across the corrections system. I think this a challenging time, and we have so far avoided some of the horrors we have seen in other jurisdictions. Obviously, the COVID virus can spread very quickly in an enclosed space. I touch wood and I hope that what the minister is saying in terms of the protocols put in place and the contingency plans is true. May they long continue. I know that the staff themselves are working very hard and I do sincerely hope that the systems are in place to let this continue to be the case.

I will start with Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 118, custodial services, which is about the agency response to coronavirus.

The CHAIR: Can I just have that again, please?

Mr ODENWALDER: Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 118, Program 2: Custodial Services. Minister, when did your chief executive become aware that a close family member of a Yatala—we have already established this—employee tested positive to COVID? When did your CE become aware of that fact? We know from an email sent by the CE to all staff that at approximately 7am on Sunday 15 November, a staff—

Mr CREGAN: Point of order, Mr Chair: is the member seeking to introduce fact? In which case, he needs to seek leave.

Mr ODENWALDER: Sure. I seek leave to introduce fact.

The CHAIR: I think we will just leave the question as it is, member for Elizabeth, and allow the minister, who has sought advice, to now answer.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: By way of background, we have spoken about the initial COVID response and the incident management team that was set up in March, and we have spoken about that transition as well and what is being done. We have also touched on the prospective measures that have been developed to ensure that DCS is able to promptly reactivate strong controls and continue to prioritise safety over the long term.

Getting to the specifics, I think 15 November was the key date in point. I could stand corrected. At approximately 7am on Sunday 15 November, I understand that a staff member at Yatala Labour Prison reported to DCS that a close family member had tested positive to COVID-19 as part of the Parafield cluster. My understanding is that this positive result for the family member was confirmed by Health at around 9.30am. I am informed that DCS was advised by Dr Chris Lease, Executive Director, Health Protection and Licensing Services, SA Health, to be ready to respond, pending COVID-19 results.

I believe that the staff member was isolated and tested as a priority and that a command and control structure was activated. I believe that I was informed later that day, although I do not have the exact time. What I will say is that I have no doubt that DCS handled this in an exceptional manner. Make no mistake about it: it is a small miracle that this was not allowed to be much worse. In fact, yesterday I sent a thankyou letter—Mr Brown, correct me if I am wrong—to staff in the department to commend them, congratulate them and thank them for what they have done. I think I was told later that day when I was first informed, but I do not recall the exact time.

Mr ODENWALDER: What is this employee's role, post or position at Yatala?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: You can understand that, in order to protect the privacy, confidentiality and identity of the man in question, what I am prepared to say is that he is certainly a frontline staff member, but my advice is that I would be very cautious about saying too much more about that because of confidentiality and respecting his privacy and his family's privacy as well at this stage.

Mr ODENWALDER: When did he last work at Yatala Labour Prison? When was his last shift?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Because that is quite operational, what I might do is hand over to Mr Brown for that exact detail.

Mr BROWN: The staff member's last shift was on Saturday 14 November.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: If I could elaborate, as at close of business on 25 November 2020, just for context, all COVID-19 tests conducted for both prisoners and offenders have returned negative results; however, obviously DCS as an agency treats this as a high-risk situation. More than 130 staff identified as close contacts of the positive staff member remain in quarantine, but it is anticipated that some of these staff, if they have not already, will receive clearance to return to work imminently.

Mr ODENWALDER: Supplementary to that before I go on: how are we backfilling those staff? Did you say that 130 staff were still quarantined? Is that what you said? That is a lot of staff, is it not?

Mr BROWN: It certainly is a lot of staff. It has a substantial impact on the operation of the prison. As we have put in place our contingency plan, the entire prison is operated in a modified operational program with prisoners remaining behind their cell door except for controlled movement. An incident management centre was established on Sunday afternoon at the prison by the general manager and her leadership team. Every day, planning and coordination of operations occur between those two incident management centres.

But, without a doubt, more than 130 staff were identified as potential close contacts through contact tracing undertaken by both DCS incident management resources and the CDCB (which is a tongue twister for me and I always get it wrong). The Communicable Disease Control Branch and DCS contact tracers have isolated those 130 plus staff.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Just to add to that, member for Elizabeth, to give you some context, some key activities that were managed as part of the DCS response included that, whilst the Yatala Labour Prison (YLP) was being placed into lockdown, prisoners were able to access showers and there was controlled prisoner movement and essential support services. DCS also limited prisoner movement across the system.

There was implementation of the corrections specific contact tracing capabilities across affected sites. There was also a pop-up testing clinic set up at Yatala that tested around 140 staff and over 200 prisoners. There was an amended prisoner admissions process, instructing that newly admitted prisoners must be isolated for a period of 14 days. There was also the suspension of face-to-face visits, for obvious reasons, at all prisons for a while there, with virtual visits being offered.

Community Corrections offenders were being supervised remotely via telephone or video reporting. Central office staff, other than essential staff, worked from home, and there was comprehensive staff support and also a dedicated telephone line and assistance from the DCS Employer Assistance Program. The response has been quite comprehensive and professional.

Mr ODENWALDER: I have no doubt of that, minister, I just want to get some sort of time line. Actually, I do have a question about—

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: They got straight onto it, member for Elizabeth.

Mr ODENWALDER: —the pop-up testing. This took place the following day, Monday?

Mr BROWN: No, the testing at the site has occurred throughout this period of the emergency. In fact, there is a pop-up testing clinic on site again today testing some of the prisoner

population for a second time. Without going to my incident log, the first pop-up testing clinic occurred at the site, I believe, on the Tuesday after 15 November.

Mr ODENWALDER: We will get to prisoners, I guess, but has every staff member who has been tested been required to quarantine until they receive those test results?

Mr BROWN: Throughout this emergency, dating right back to before March this year and certainly during this most recent incident, we have worked very closely with public health and the Communicable Disease Control Branch, and we have effectively provided advice to our staff on full testing arrangements.

The first is the standard applied to everyone across the community; that is, if you are experiencing symptoms and you go to a COVID-19 testing clinic in the community, you have that test and, as is recommended by public health, you go home and isolate until such time as you get those test results.

The second category is those people who have been identified as a close contact, and those staff members are advised by the Communicable Disease Control Branch when they need to come in to be tested, whether that be to a testing clinic in the community or a pop-up testing clinic at the prison, and that is varied on different days depending on the demand for resources on public health and SA Pathology. Those people, of course, are committed to a 14-day quarantine period, and once they complete that test they return to their quarantine location. The vast majority of our staff are quarantining at home. Some have quarantined in a medi-hotel.

The third group is what the Communicable Disease Control Branch has called 'workplace testing'. That testing is for staff who are not identified as a close contact, but we have had proactive testing on the site and staff have had the opportunity, if they so wished, to participate in a test. Those staff members have been cleared to immediately return to their workplace because their testing was part of a workplace surveillance program rather than one of those other two categories I have described.

A flow chart was prepared for our staff and released on our daily communication. That flow chart was signed off by the doctor in public health who is leading the outbreak team, doing the contact tracing and providing daily advice to me in a daily meeting that I have with that doctor and his team.

Mr ODENWALDER: Just for clarity, that third category of person, the casual workplace—sorry, not casual, the workplace—

Mr BROWN: Surveillance—

Mr ODENWALDER: —surveillance testing—those people are not required to isolate?

Mr BROWN: That is correct.

Mr ODENWALDER: Is that unique to Corrections, or are there other public sector agencies—

Mr BROWN: I would have to refer that question to public health. All we are doing is acting on the advice of public health. I was really pleased to receive support from public health at this very busy time of testing in the South Australian community. They made surveillance workplace testing available for any staff member at Yatala who wanted to be tested at this critical time, and we welcome that and appreciate that support.

Mr ODENWALDER: Continuing on that line, what time on Sunday the 15th were the staff at Yatala notified that one of the other staff had tested positive? Sorry—initially, when were they notified that someone had been isolated and tested on suspicion of being infected, and then what time were they notified of the positive result?

Mr BROWN: Minister, if it is okay I will simply go through some knowledge for the member.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Sure.

Mr ODENWALDER: That would be good.

Mr BROWN: As the minister has previously stated, at approximately 7am on Sunday 15 November, a staff member at Yatala reported to DCS that a close family member had tested positive to COVID-19. This positive result for the family member was confirmed for the agency by Health at approximately 9.30am. We were advised by both Dr Chris Lease, who is our key contact in the public health branch as part of the COVID-19 emergency response, and I also received a phone call from Dr Evan Everest at approximately the same time advising of the same.

The advice from public health was that the staff member and his immediate family members—or extended family members, in fact—were isolated and arrangements were being put in place for testing to occur. At that stage, we were not clear on when that testing would actually occur and when the results would be available. It was not until 4.59pm that SA Health confirmed that the officer had tested positive to COVID-19.

Mr ODENWALDER: At 4.59pm?

Mr BROWN: That is correct. That is when the results were communicated to us as an agency.

Mr ODENWALDER: I am a bit confused then, and I am not trying to be tricky. I am genuinely confused about the information given to us by the minister, which reflects the email I was about to read before the member for Kavel raised a point of order, that the positive result—that is the positive result for the family member?

Mr BROWN: For the family member.

Mr ODENWALDER: I beg your pardon.

Mr BROWN: At the initial stage, all we were aware of was that our staff member was a close contact of a positive case and was being quarantined and that, as a priority, SA Health were organising for that staff member to be tested.

Mr ODENWALDER: Until 4.59pm you were unaware of the positive result. You knew there was testing taking place, you knew there was a suspicion, but you had no indication if it was positive or negative until 4.59pm?

Mr BROWN: That is correct.

Mr ODENWALDER: Can you explain the new visitor restriction process that is referred to in the same budget line—or, minister, can you?

Mr BROWN: Since this emergency has occurred?

Mr ODENWALDER: No, just in general first of all. There is apparently a new visitor restriction process for visitors to prisons as outlined in that budget line.

The CHAIR: The first dot point, page 118?

Mr ODENWALDER: The first dot point in the agency response to coronavirus.

Mr BROWN: When this emergency first commenced in March this year—March/April, I cannot remember the exact dates, but I am happy to take that on notice if required—we moved our prisons to virtual visits only and suspended contact visits across the system. After a period of time, once that initial wave and the curve were flattened in the South Australian community, as part of our New Way Forward strategy we slowly reintroduced some contact visits with the exception of Mount Gambier, where the suspension on contact visits remained for a period of time whilst we monitored the border situation, Mount Gambier being a close border community.

We subsequently arrived at a position—again, I can provide the dates, if required, on notice—where we started to gradually reintroduce our contact visits, but we have always maintained a capacity to deliver virtual visits as well. It was not until this most recent emergency commenced, and especially when the decision was taken to put the circuit-breaker in, that we suspended contact visits across the state again and reverted to virtual visits.

Mr ODENWALDER: This is the lockdown on the 18th that you are talking about, the statewide lockdown?

Mr BROWN: Yes.

The CHAIR: Member for Elizabeth, could you ask the questions through me, please, and particularly to the minister. Could I hear the question again?

Mr ODENWALDER: I was just clarifying the date with the CE about when visits ceased, and he clarified that was on the 18th, the date of the statewide lockdown.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: As a result of changes made during the COVID-19 response, DCS is obviously offering virtual visits. That is proving to be most successful for both prisoners and visitors. Approximately 80,500 virtual visits have been conducted since March this year, so I think it is safe to say that DCS has certainly encouraged visitors to continue to access these virtual visits as their first choice to help minimise that risk during the health emergency we find ourselves in.

It has been highly successful, and sometimes provides many advantages, including reduced travel and also allowing prisoners to interact with their family in their normal home environment. In one of the prisons I saw early on you can see into the AVL rooms, and they can actually look into their family member's home. They can have a look at, for example, the pet they may not have seen for years. It has really been quite successful.

Mr ODENWALDER: Did face-to-face family visits occur at Yatala on Sunday the 15th?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes.

Mr ODENWALDER: When was the last of these visits, at what time? When did the last visitors leave?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I will have to take that on notice.

Mr ODENWALDER: Presumably it was before 4.59; would that be the case?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes.

Mr ODENWALDER: Were visitors made aware that an employee had been isolated?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: No. Just remember that there have been more than 800 tests at the site as well, and they have all been negative. You are well entitled to ask the question, but I just reiterate that. We were advised at the time—as in DCS was advised—to take no action and to hold and be ready to respond pending COVID-19 results. So all the infrastructure was put in place, they were told to hold and be ready and then they acted.

Mr ODENWALDER: Can you provide that advice to the committee? Can we see it? Can you put it on the public record?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I think I raised that in my introductory remarks.

Mr ODENWALDER: Who was that advice from again, and what time did you receive it?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Dr Chris Lease.

Mr ODENWALDER: And what time did you receive that advice?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I said earlier on that the positive result for the family member was confirmed by Health around 9.30, and DCS was advised by Dr Chris Lease, Executive Director, Health Protection and Licensing Services, to take no action and to hold and be ready to respond pending COVID-19 results.

Mr ODENWALDER: At 9.30?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: No, the positive result for the family member was confirmed around 9.30, then DCS was advised by Dr Lease.

Mr ODENWALDER: At what time?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: About the same time.

Mr ODENWALDER: Then DCS received no Health advice to take any action between that point and 4.59? There was no instruction or direction from Health to take any other action?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: No further advice, no.

Mr ODENWALDER: Were all the visitors who visited Yatala on Sunday the 15th the subject of contact tracing? Have any of them been required to test?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: That is probably, respectfully, a matter for SA Health.

Mr ODENWALDER: So DCS collect that data on the day, give it to Health and then they decide?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Any request that is made of DCS they will obviously comply with, but that request, if any, would come from Health. It is probably a question better directed to Health. But if they were asked to provide assistance or compile a list, then DCS would have; that is my advice.

Mr ODENWALDER: Mr Brown told us that prisoners have been locked down since the 18th, since presumably around lunchtime on the 18th, the same as the rest of us. Are they still locked down in the same sense?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I will hand to Mr Brown for this one.

Mr BROWN: Once we were advised by public health that the staff member had received a positive result, the prison was already in lockdown because it had gone into night shift mode. The prison remained in lockdown, and remains in lockdown until today, as part of our operational planning response to this COVID-19 emergency. The routine in the prison, such as accessing showers, accessing phones, performing essential services like food services, laundry services, etc., have all been coordinated through our partnership with public health. Any of our planning and response has been on that basis.

All prisoners have been kept in specified cohorts. There has been no movement of prisoners between Yatala Labour Prison and other prisons since we activated our contingency plans. We continue to be on that footing with increased access out of cells as those processes have been agreed by ourselves and public health.

Mr ODENWALDER: I will move on then to Budget Paper 5, Budget Measures Statement, page 27, which refers to the community services consolidation. I assume this is what we call Repay SA. Are we talking about the same thing, the Community Services Program?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: That is the name of the program. Yes, it is known as that.

Mr ODENWALDER: There is a saving of \$600,000 per annum across the forward estimates through amalgamating community service groups, getting rid of seven FTEs. What is the total annual cost of the provision of community services? I assume it is in the budget somewhere, but do you have it in front of you there?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The total cost?

Mr ODENWALDER: Yes, and the total number of FTEs.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I will have to take the total cost on notice.

Mr ODENWALDER: Have you received any correspondence from any DCS staff expressing concern about the realignment of the service?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Yes.

Mr ODENWALDER: Can you elaborate on what that correspondence might have told you?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I think it is important to talk about the background to all this. I am happy to provide whatever comment I am able to, then I might pass on to Mr Brown to elaborate. For the member's benefit, the DCS Community Services Program allows adult offenders to repay their debt to society through supervised community work projects. The focus is to provide offenders with the opportunity not only to be accountable for their crimes but also to acquire new skills. I think it is important that where we can, if these people are able to leave they leave as better people with better skills. For many adult offenders, a community service order is actually their first experience of making a positive contribution to their community.

DCS operates a community services program from a range of sites, including five metropolitan community centres: Noarlunga, Port Adelaide, Adelaide, North-East and Elizabeth. Regional and outreach programs also operate across the state. For the member for Elizabeth's context, I am advised there has been a decrease in the number of offenders receiving community service orders over recent years, primarily since the establishment of the Fines Enforcement and Recovery Unit, as there was a shift in focus to recovering debt in the first instance, rather than paying off debt through community service options.

Given this decline, there was a review. That review was recently undertaken by DCS in order to determine better ways to deliver community service by applying a more productive model, if you like, going forward. This review would ensure that the very valuable program is viable and can be sustained into the future. The review undertaken included a dedicated consultation process with key staff and a few strategies were endorsed, and I am happy to talk you through those:

- to reduce dedicated community service operations at Victor Harbor, Edwardstown and Gawler, operating these instead from Noarlunga and Elizabeth;
- to reduce the number of work crews from larger locations, for example, sending more offenders on, say, one productive work crew, rather than on two smaller work crews per day; and
- to reduce a special needs program operating from three locations to one central program at Port Adelaide.

It goes without saying, member for Elizabeth, that many people are happy about this, but of course whenever you have these sorts of reviews there may be some who have a difference of opinion. What is sure is that these new strategies will ensure that there is a viable service going forward and, of course, good value for money for the people of South Australia.

We have also put in place a sensible management structure, noting the very small number of offenders who are currently reporting at some sites. I believe there was a difference of opinion in relation to the Victor Harbor site, but I am happy to talk about that site because I imagine the next questions will be what site and what did they say. I am happy to talk about that and I might hand over to Mr Brown after that.

I am advised, for example, that the Victor Harbor office currently has only five offenders registered for community service at the time of the briefing. These offenders continue their Community Services Program, including on work projects in the Victor Harbor area; however, they are managed by staff who work out of the Noarlunga office. This change came into effect in late October 2020, and important work projects for the Victor Harbor community, including the SteamRanger heritage repairs, will continue to operate in the region through local area agency agreements that will be put in place. I might pass on to Mr Brown to elaborate.

Mr BROWN: Minister, I think you have nearly covered it all. The local agency agreements enable a small number of offenders to also undertake work locally under the direct supervision of the agency. That has been a longstanding opportunity with faith-based organisations and NGO groups, for example, and there is such a program in place in Victor Harbor.

Just to reiterate the point you made, minister, our objective was to ensure that, when we put Repay SA vans out on the road with a community service supervisor, there are a sufficient number of participants in the program to get a work group travelling together, and not to have situations where we are putting a supervisor out on the road with one or two program participants, and trying to get more than five participants on a program.

It was a change welcomed by the leadership team of Community Corrections to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of that operation and to improve the services that we are delivering to the community. A lot of these services are aligned to priorities of local government, priorities of the transport department and Housing SA, to name a few of our key partners in this Repay SA program.

Mr ODENWALDER: So whether it is Victor Harbor or Edwardstown, you are saying that the programs are delivered from the hub but they are delivered in the locality. So the Victor Harbor programs are still delivered in Victor Harbor? Is that what you mean?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Correct.

Mr ODENWALDER: But the people are based in Noarlunga, Elizabeth, or wherever?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Correct. I think the context is that there is an individual, whose name I do not want to put in the *Hansard*, who has contacted various members of parliament—as some people do from time to time, and there is nothing wrong with that, either—regarding a reduction of a dedicated Community Services Program at Victor Harbor. I am informed that this gentleman is a casual community service supervisor located at Victor Harbor and currently has a 12-month casual contract. I am also informed that there are no concerns about his not having worked as a result of the changes.

The CHAIR: I am going to go to the member for Narungga now, who has a question.

Mr ELLIS: For a bit of a change of pace, I have a question that relates to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 119. Right at the top, minister, you will see an entry about the business case for a rehabilitation prison. I wonder whether you might enlighten this committee about the progress of that business case, its implementation and the content of it.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Thank you, member for Narungga, I am happy to talk about the rehabilitation prison. Wow, what a great cause. Obviously, we need to be doing everything we can as a state to try to rehabilitate people wherever possible, to make sure that when they come out of prison they come out as better people and with better skills. This is a long-term vision. I believe we are committing, as a government, to a first of its kind initiative to develop a business case for a new rehabilitation prison.

The business case will allow key options to be assessed to address future expected requirements of the corrections system. It will also examine the opportunity to partner with specialist rehabilitation supports and services to target high-risk and high-needs cohorts. We currently have the lowest rate of recidivism in Australia. It is a great story. I think I have to pay tribute to the bipartisan efforts in corrections over a short period of time. It is better than 'rack 'em, pack 'em and stack 'em'. We are doing great work in this regard. We have the lowest rate of recidivism. The most recent reported rate of return for corrective services in SA was 44.9 per cent for the 2018-19 financial year.

Reducing reoffending remains a key priority for our government. We believe a rehabilitation prison will continue to improve rehabilitation outcomes in the state and also build upon the great work currently being delivered by DCS with respect to rehabilitation programs. I thank the member for the question. It is a great project. It is a business case at this stage, but we will keep working on it for the long-term. It is a great project, if we can establish it down the track.

Mr ODENWALDER: I have a supplementary to that. I am not clear why it is a specific rehabilitation prison. Aren't all of our prisons rehabilitation prisons? Is that not the point of our bipartisan approach?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Of course we should try to rehabilitate people wherever we can, but this is a specific business case about the case for a new rehabilitation prison. We have some fantastic examples of rehabilitation programs across the board. In my only 3½ months of being the minister, I have taken the opportunity to go and have a look, and I thank the staff of DCS for hosting us through. If you have not had a look, I encourage you all to go to Cadell Training Centre to look at some of the magnificent work that our prisons—

Mr ODENWALDER: I have tried.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I might even invite the member for Elizabeth to the next one.

Mr ODENWALDER: I have been seeking an invitation to these places for a while now.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: We will see what we can do. There is some great work there. To talk about some highlights in rehabilitation programs in 2019-20, we have progressed a review into potential future uses of the Mulga Unit at Port Augusta. We have developed an options paper for a new program that targets enhanced rehabilitation outcomes for Aboriginal offenders under community supervision.

We have increased the delivery of criminogenic programs, addressing both violent and sexual offending. We have commenced delivery of the fourth violence prevention program for Aboriginal men. There is a whole range of things that we are doing. But I digress. There is some great work happening at Cadell. I also went to Mount Gambier and saw some of their programs. We are doing a lot, but this is about a specialised rehabilitation prison. Mr Brown, do you have anything to elaborate on?

Mr BROWN: Thank you, minister. I would agree that as an agency we are very committed to rehabilitation outcomes in each of our prisons, especially those prisons geared to support things like the delivery of programs, education, vocational training and prison industries. What the business case on a rehabilitation prison will seek to demonstrate is that, by taking those efforts to the next level and looking at establishing correctional treatment units within a rehabilitation prison that have a specific focus, we can deliver even better outcomes for moderate to high-risk offenders engaged in rehabilitation.

The most well-known example of that in the broader community is the role residential treatment plays for drug and alcohol rehabilitation services. Whilst we deliver programs in a prison that might address violent offending, sexual offending and certainly drug and alcohol offending, we do not co-locate those prisoners engaged in those programs in purpose-built facilities. What the rehabilitation prison business case will hopefully demonstrate is that by achieving that and providing an environment that supports that, you can achieve even better outcomes from a rehabilitation perspective.

Mr ODENWALDER: So it will be identifying those offenders who have a specific need for a specific type of rehabilitation and grouping them together in this prison, in separate sections of the prison; is that the idea?

Mr BROWN: Yes, I think that is what the business case will outline.

Mr ODENWALDER: When do you expect work to start? There is the business case development, but there is no money budgeted for the next three years. When would you expect work to start?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: It is just for business case and feasibility at this point in time, so it is something we will continue to work on I am sure.

Mr ODENWALDER: Would you envision it being a state-managed or a privately managed facility?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I dare say that will probably be one of the considerations, as well as many others, that might be unveiled in the business case. I do not want to pre-empt what that case would say, but I am sure those sorts of arrangements will be considered and weighed up.

Mr ODENWALDER: Apart from the paragraphs I read in the Infrastructure SA report, has any work been done in a preliminary way on this prison? Can you identify where it will be located, in a rough sense, or that sort of thing?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: Not that I am aware, not at this point in time. Where would you like it? The member for Kavel is looking at me. He might want it in the Hills; I am not sure. No, we have not looked that far.

Mr ODENWALDER: Kavel, it is a bit close to Elizabeth.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I have been to the Elizabeth community facility. I thank the staff there as well as the staff across all our facilities for the great work they do.

Mr ODENWALDER: Indeed. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 113, investing expenditure summary, mobile phone jamming. Can you outline what the \$160,000 already spent has been spent on?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: The \$160,000 did you say?

Mr ODENWALDER: From my understanding, \$160,000 has already been spent on this project.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: By way of background, the use of mobile phones in prisons is illegal and it is illegal for good reason. Mobile phones allow offenders access to the outside world, if you like, via voice, text, encrypted messaging services and the like, and social media platforms. That can compromise community safety, with victims and prosecution witnesses also vulnerable to intimidation from offenders.

Despite security measures—and we are doing some great work in this regard with things like dog detection and other detection devices—used to prevent mobile phone devices entering the prisons, mobile phones and related mobile phone items are still found from time to time in the custodial environment. The member for Elizabeth and members may be aware that at the 2018 state election we committed to fund a pilot program to address this issue. Implementation of a blocking solution is obviously complex, and the main challenge is to ensure that the system does not interfere with legitimate use of devices too.

We have also been able to look at technology that has been deployed around the world to block mobile phone usage—for example, in the UK, New Zealand and some states in the US. In Australia, there is technology in New South Wales at two prisons, Lithgow and Goulburn. It is important to note that Corrections Victoria actually rejected mobile phone jamming proposals due to some complexities with the interruption of other technologies at the site. It continually needs a nuanced approach.

Getting to the member for Elizabeth's question about progressing the election commitment, DCS received a budget allocation of \$950,000 in the 2019-20 budget. They engaged BDO Advisory (SA) Pty Ltd to undertake a request for information with potential providers of tech solutions to block the use of the phones. I understand that there were 10 suppliers who responded to the RFI and a business case was developed for a pilot based on the high-security areas of Port Augusta Prison.

The business case found that a certain amount of money was required to appropriately fund a pilot, and \$160,000 of the original \$950,000 you are talking about has been spent on the project to date, with all funds utilised relating to the engagement of BDO and the development of a business case. I believe that DCS has applied to carry over the residual amount of \$794,100 into the 2020-21 financial year.

Mr ODENWALDER: Would you characterise the New South Wales adoption of this technology at only two sites as successful? Has there been an assessment made about whether it is working?

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: My information is that this is an area that is constantly changing. Technology is constantly changing. I think it is safe to say that technology has been deployed to block mobile phone usage, as I said, in the UK, New Zealand and US. In Australia, technology is in place in New South Wales at two prisons. I understand that Corrections Victoria actually rejected mobile phone jamming proposals due to complexities with the interruption of other technologies. I might pass to Mr Brown, as he might have some further comment there in regard to that.

Mr BROWN: On feedback from the team engaged in that project and my contact with the commissioner for corrections in New South Wales, the blocking of the mobile phone signal in the Lithgow facility was successful to a degree. For security reasons, I would prefer not to go into where some of those limitations might be, but it really depends on where you position your jamming technology, which balances the risk of interrupting and interfering with legitimate mobile phone usage but achieving your objective of blocking the signal.

As I think it is very early on in the program for Goulburn, I do not yet have a view on how successful the program has been there. Lithgow was the first site in Australia that introduced mobile phone jamming. It was, in fact, a pilot project that was undertaken on behalf of all Australian corrections jurisdictions and sponsored through the administrators' council meeting.

What we do know, though, from our own research and also feedback from colleagues across Australia and internationally, is that you do need a depth of response in your strategy, using different technologies to both disrupt and interrupt attempts to use illegal mobile phones in prisons and also

to detect and remove phones at points of entry to the facility. Our advice to the minister is that you need dynamic alternatives to deliver successful blocking of that activity.

Ms BEDFORD: I am sorry I am late in today. On Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 118, Program 2: Custodial Services, I cannot see a spot, but it might be here, about the computerised booking of visits. Is it in here and I have missed it? My question is: how soon might we see that? I do not know how many members of the committee know, but to book a prison visit takes a couple of hours on the phone between six and eight between Monday and Thursday.

If you are lucky, you get there, and if you are not you do not. It is very hard to support prisoners, and for families to support prisoners, arrange their weeks around getting to whichever prison they need to get to, if we cannot sort out this system a little better.

The Hon. V.A. TARZIA: I acknowledge the member for Florey and how passionate she is about this area. We will do everything we can to try to satisfy her queries. I understand that in late September, I think, we did provide a briefing with the member for Florey and also representatives of DCS. I pay tribute to her efforts in trying to improve this area.

I believe that, as a result of changes made during COVID, DCS now offers virtual visits, which are proving to be most successful for both prisoners and visitors. As I said, over 18,000 virtual visits have been conducted. Mr Brown, did you have anything to add?

Mr BROWN: Thank you, minister. I can advise that the booking of visits is part of stage 5 of the rollout of our kiosk system. The kiosk system project is an internal initiative of the Department for Correctional Services, funded through our annual budget allocation. The first stage for domestic visit bookings will be part of stage 5 and it will consist of a pilot program that is going to be now undertaken at Port Lincoln Prison, the Adelaide Pre-release Centre and Mobilong. Our projected go-live date for the pilot was the end of this 2020 calendar year.

I have not had a recent update as to whether the recent COVID-19 emergency may have caused a slight delay to that initiative, But it is our goal and our objective to have KEX take that next step in transforming the use of technology in the prison environment, giving prisoners more ability to be self-sufficient and empowering them to take greater responsibility for their own affairs. Part of that process will be to enable prisoners themselves to book their own visits using the kiosk system as part of stage 5. I look forward to assessing and evaluating the outcome of that trial.

Ms BEDFORD: I will be helping you. I just want to ask you a bit more about virtual visits, which are terrific. I am not saying they are not a good thing, but you still have to phone in between six and eight, Monday to Thursday. I do not know about you, but I cannot keep continually phoning. Is there more than one person answering these calls? Can we not have two people answering the calls?

Mr BROWN: I can advise that, like nearly every other corrections jurisdiction in Australia, we are still reliant on telephone calls from visitors to book visits. The arrangements differ from prison to prison, depending on the size of the site and the size of the visits program. I certainly acknowledge the frustration caused by delay in trying to book visits by family members and—

Ms BEDFORD: And going grey.

Mr BROWN: —hence why we have invested in the kiosk system and the virtual visits booking system that we will be piloting at Port Lincoln, the Adelaide Pre-release Centre and Mobilong this year.

Ms BEDFORD: It is just very, very, very, very difficult. How many people do you have at Mobilong?

Mr BROWN: I would have to take that on notice.

Ms BEDFORD: Three hundred and something? Anyway, presumably, more than half of them have family or friends who want to see them. It is torturous. Luckily, I do work while I am waiting, but I do not know how people with children trying to manage a family life cope. I am hoping we could do better before the end of next year.

The CHAIR: Thank you, member for Florey; I will take that as a statement rather than a question. It is time. There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the proposed payments for the Department for Correctional Services to be complete.

Sitting suspended from 14:45 to 15:00.

DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONS, \$201,545,000
ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONS,
\$4,672,000

Membership:

Mr Pederick substituted for Mr Murray.

Minister:

Hon. D.K.B. Basham, Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development.

Departmental Advisers:

Ms M. Edge, Chief Executive, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

Prof. M. Doroudi, Deputy Chief Executive, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

Mr D. Humphrys, Chief Financial Officer, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

The CHAIR: Welcome back, everybody, to Estimates Committee A. Given that we have a new minister—welcome, Minister for Primary Industries—I need to make some opening remarks. The estimates committees are a relatively informal procedure and, as such, there is no need to stand to ask or answer questions. I understand that the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition have agreed an approximate time for the consideration of the proposed payments, which will facilitate a change in departmental advisers. Can the minister and lead speaker for the opposition confirm that the timetable for today's proceedings, previously distributed, is accurate?

Mr HUGHES: Yes.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes.

The CHAIR: Changes to committee membership will be notified as they occur. Members should ensure 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 Clerk Assistant via the answers to questions mailbox no later than Friday 5 February 2021.

I propose to allow both the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition to make opening statements of up to about 10 minutes each should 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 not on the committee may ask a question at the discretion of the Chair. 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 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, it is purely statistical and limited to one page in length. All questions should be directed to the minister, not the minister's advisers. The minister may refer questions to advisers for a response.

The committee's examinations will be broadcast in the same manner sittings of the house are broadcast, through the IPTV system within Parliament House, via the webstream link to the internet and the Parliament of South Australia video-on-demand broadcast system.

I will now proceed to open the following lines for examination, the portfolio being the Department of Primary Industries and Regions. The minister appearing is the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development. The estimate of payments is for the Department of Primary Industries and Regions and Administered Items for the Department of Primary Industries and Regions. I declare the proposed payments open for examination and I call on the minister to make a statement if he wishes and to introduce his advisers.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Thank you, Chair. It is my pleasure to provide information about programs and work conducted by the Department of Primary Industries and Regions in relation to the 2020-21 state budget. I would like to introduce members of the department who are accompanying me today. To my right, is the deputy chief executive, Mehdi Doroudi, and behind me is the chief executive officer, Michelle Edge, and the chief financial officer, Darren Humphrys.

Before answering your questions today, I would like to provide a brief opening statement. As we are all aware, it has been a tough period for not only our primary producers but also the regional communities they heavily rely on. Bushfires, drought and COVID-19 restrictions have provided many challenges. In the face of these challenges they have stood firm and continued to produce some of the world's best food, wine and fibre. I would like to commend the department for its outstanding work in responding to these events, providing critical support to primary producers and communities and then working with them through recovery.

In response to drought, we provided a \$21 million support package, including rebates, grants, financial and farming advice, and an expansion of the Farm and Business (FaB) Support Program, and enhanced wild dog management. We have supported more than 350 bushfire-affected primary producers across South Australia via our Primary Producers Bushfire Recovery Rebate following last summer's devastating fires.

COVID-19 has brought about issues, such as border restrictions, worker shortages and falling tourism in our regions. While it is important to respond to the challenges our producers and community faces, industry also grasped opportunities working side by side with the Marshall Liberal government. As part of the Growth State initiative, we launched the Food, Wine and Agribusiness Plan aiming to grow revenue to \$23 billion by 2030.

We worked with the parliament to give our farmers on mainland South Australia the choice to cultivate genetically-modified food crops if they wished, and the biggest reform in the history of the Marine Scalefish Fishery is underway. We released an AgTech Strategic Plan—an investment in a new approach to value add to our research farms by showcasing technology. The \$25 million dog fence rebuild is now in stage 2, supporting local jobs and businesses.

Finally, the Regional Growth Fund continues to be delivered with a once-off \$25 million Regional Growth Fund—Strategic Business Round targeting COVID-19 shovel-ready projects. This is just a snapshot of what the Marshall Liberal government has achieved over the past year. I thank industry, our regions and all those in the department for their dedication and commitment to delivering on key priorities over the past year. I look forward to questions relating to the budget papers. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Member for Giles, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr HUGHES: No, I do not wish to.

The CHAIR: Does the deputy leader wish to make an opening statement?

Dr CLOSE: No. I think I am the lead speaker, but it really does not matter. It is fine.

Members interjecting:

Dr CLOSE: We are not quarrelling even slightly. Given that neither of us wants to make an opening statement, it does not matter.

Members interjecting:

The CHAIR: Order! Imagine having to call order already. Never mind. Questions.

Dr CLOSE: Thank you, and thank you for your opening statement, minister. If we go to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, on page 67 there is reference to the Regional Growth Fund and funding 10 initiatives in the competitive pool and four in the strategic pool as part of the highlights. Of course, on page 68 there is the table that relates to grants and subsidies, which includes the Regional Growth Fund. I have some questions that relate to that. For 2019-20, the allocation for the Regional Growth Fund was \$15 million. Can you confirm that that is the case?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes, that is correct.

Dr CLOSE: My understanding from not only various bits of research in the papers but also outside is that, of that \$15 million in 2019-20, approximately \$6.5 million was spent across those two funds; is that correct?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I may refer to my adviser to give the detail.

Mr HUMPHRYS: The actual expenditure for the Regional Growth Fund and Regional Development Fund was \$9.5 million in grant payments.

Dr CLOSE: You said \$9.5 million?

Mr HUMPHRYS: Yes.

Dr CLOSE: In 2019-20?

Mr HUMPHRYS: Correct.

Dr CLOSE: Minister, there is the 2019-20 actual, so the line on page 68 that refers to grants and subsidies is only referring to the Regional Growth Fund then? There are no other grants and subsidies comprising that?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: We would need to check that and come back to you.

Dr CLOSE: At a later date? You are taking that on notice?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: We will try to get an answer before the end of the session.

Dr CLOSE: Even better—thank you very much. That line goes from an actual in 2019-20 of \$9.5 million up to a budget of \$51 million. What is the explanation for that big leap?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Putting a bit of context around it, prior to the election the government made a commitment to invest \$150 million over 10 years into the Regional Growth Fund to support economic development opportunities in regional South Australia. The government delivered on this commitment in its first budget. In this budget, the government has delivered a further \$10 million on top of that, taking the 10-year commitment to \$160 million.

The Regional Growth Fund has two components: a competitive pool, which is available through a single competitive round; and a strategic pool of funding for regional economic growth projects, which allows regions certainty. They can approach government at any time with worthy projects for assessment against program criteria. Round 3 was opened earlier in the previous year to provide economic stimulus in the wake of the devastation of bushfire, drought and impacts from the coronavirus.

As COVID impacts are ongoing, the government also announced a once-off \$15 million Strategic Business Round, which was open to individuals and businesses. This is one way the government is backing business to create jobs and opportunities and help the government with the recovery of COVID-19. To date, 16 projects have been announced from these two rounds, with 13 projects being funded from the once-off stimulus round of the Regional Growth Fund and three projects being funded from round 3.

Dr CLOSE: Looking at the table on page 68 and grants and subsidies, we have just talked about the \$9.5 million that is the 2019-20 actual, and we will see if we can confirm if all that was Regional Growth Fund, and if we track back along that line 2018-19 is an actual of \$11.5 million. I

presume that that would have been budgeted at least \$15 million, which is the Regional Growth Fund amount, and therefore there was a shortfall. For the next year, there is a budget of \$30 million, which implies that it is more than just the Regional Growth Fund, but an actual of \$9.5 million. For the \$51 million that is now being budgeted for 2020-21, what portion of that is in fact underspend from previous years that have been rolled in?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The carryover figure was \$10.7 million from those two different components.

Dr CLOSE: Is it the intention of the government and the department to fully expend it each year? What was the reason for not spending as much as \$15 million in 2018-19 and 2019-20?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I will ask Mr Humphrys to respond.

Mr HUMPHRYS: The guidelines of the fund established that the payments to the proponents are made on a reimbursement basis once they have reached milestones. The \$15 million is being allocated to projects, and then it is subsequent to them being completed or reaching the milestones that largely causes the delay. Those moneys are not reimbursed until there is proof of the project reaching the milestone it needs to.

Dr CLOSE: So the carryover is, in fact, an allocated carryover. Although you carry it over into the \$51 million, in fact you are not giving \$10 million of that away—and I know we are talking largely and not necessarily in precise figures—because largely what has been carried over has already been allocated to the company, but they are not yet able to claim it.

Mr HUMPHRYS: Yes.

Dr CLOSE: Excellent, thank you.

Mr HUMPHRYS: I can clarify it for you, if you like. In 2018-19, there was \$11.35 million allocated, and in 2019-20 there was \$18.65 million allocated. That takes you to the total of \$30 million over the two years.

Dr CLOSE: I understand; that is why the budget goes up for 2019-20—because it is carrying allocated but not yet expended funds.

Mr HUMPHRYS: Correct.

Dr CLOSE: I turn now to the less numerical side of this. Who assesses the applications for the Regional Growth Fund? How many people, what entities, what groupings?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The competitive round of the Regional Growth Fund is assessed by a panel with an independent chair. For the 2019-20 competitive round the panel was chaired by Mr Jeff McDonald, a longstanding regional community member in the Riverland who has a background in rural finance. In assessing the projects, all panel members were required to declare and manage any conflicts of interest and treat all information received through the assessment process with confidentiality. For the strategic round, recommendations were made to the Economic and Infrastructure Cabinet Committee.

Dr CLOSE: So the role of the minister is not a decision-maker or is a decision-maker?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The role of the minister is to receive those recommendations and take them to cabinet.

Dr CLOSE: Then cabinet presumably is the decision-maker on the recommendation of the minister.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes.

Dr CLOSE: I appreciate you do not talk about what happens inside cabinet. Is there an appeal process? If a business feels it ought to have been successful and was not, is there a process for them to seek—

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: No, there is no appeal process.

Dr CLOSE: What process is used by the department or the minister to ensure that no-one on the panel has any conflict of interest with any particular request made in any particular application?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I have been informed it is very much that they must declare all conflicts in their participation in their role. It is dealt with in that normal arrangement.

Dr CLOSE: I understand that the Berri Hotel won a \$1.5 million grant in the Strategic Business Round 2020 of the Regional Growth Fund to build an extra 20 rooms and put in some landscaping. Can the minister give feedback on which of the criteria for the round that application met and was therefore supported?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I will take that one on notice.

Dr CLOSE: Is it possible to table a list of unsuccessful Regional Growth Fund applicants?

The CHAIR: Deputy leader, could you just repeat that for my benefit.

Dr CLOSE: I have asked if it is possible to table or to take on notice tabling the unsuccessful applicants for this Regional Growth Fund.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: That being a cabinet decision, I am not able to, sorry.

Dr CLOSE: One of the outcomes that is being sought with the Regional Growth Fund is of course employment in the regions, and there is an expectation. I think the Premier tweeted that 'we are creating more than a thousand SA jobs by funding key projects across regional South Australia'. Is there any analysis of where those jobs are likely to be and expectations per project of how many jobs are being created?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Every applicant makes an estimation of what full-time jobs are part of their project. That comes in and certainly that is how that number is arrived at. To give any detail to that, we would need to go back and pull all that data back out.

Dr CLOSE: Is there any analysis the minister can provide, I would assume on notice, that would clarify why a thousand jobs was able to be linked to this amount of money? Is there some formula that is used to derive that?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: That was based on the applications themselves and the projections that those particular applications made and delivered that thousand jobs.

Dr CLOSE: So those thousand jobs are attached—

Mr PEDERICK: Point of order: is there a budget line?

Dr CLOSE: Yes, we are talking about the Regional Growth Fund, which is on—

Mr PEDERICK: Do you have a direct line, please?

Dr CLOSE: —page 67. If you look at highlights, it talks about the Regional Growth Fund that provides broad economic benefit in our regions. I am analysing one element of that, which is jobs growth. Is the thousand estimate attached to the projects that have been applied for already, and considered and presumably approved, rather than a projection of the life of the Regional Growth Fund?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: That number was based on the approval of those particular projects.

Dr CLOSE: Is there an expectation within the department that you will check in on whether the claimed jobs that would be attached to those applicants are in fact delivered?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes, that will be part of the process going forward. It will be part of the delivery of the project that they must identify where the job creations, etc., are.

Dr CLOSE: I want to turn to another topic, but first I am reminded of something I should have asked at the beginning. For clarity, we have a separate session on ForestrySA; is it a reasonable expectation that I ask all questions associated with forestry in that hour?

The CHAIR: I assume the minister will have his forestry adviser at that session; that would be reasonable.

Dr CLOSE: Is that acceptable to the minister?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes, I am happy with that approach.

Dr CLOSE: I just do not want to get there and then be told, 'No, that's not ForestrySA. It's just forestry.' If that is a reasonable working understanding, that is terrific, thank you. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 61. I am turning to GM, just to get your mind turning in that direction while I give the specifics. Sub-program 1.1: Agricultural Services, highlights, refers to the amendments to the Genetically Modified Crops Management Act, which we were all part of passing earlier this year.

This has now been enacted and there has been a process of some councils under the section in the act seeking permission to retain a genetically free status within the council boundary. Did the minister, his staff or any of his advisers or anyone in PIRSA provide any direction to the GM Crop Advisory Committee in relation to its recommendations?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Thank you for the question. To secure the passage of the legislation to lift the GM crop moratorium on mainland South Australia, the government, as you stated, agreed with the Labor Party amendments providing local councils a one-off time-limited ability to apply to be a non-GM crop cultivation area. Council applications were required to be made following community consultation and were to provide evidence that being designated non-GM offers value to the council area from a marketing and trade position which could not be achieved by segregation protocols.

Eleven of the 68 councils in South Australia made applications to the minister. As the legislation required, these applications were referred to the independent GM Crop Advisory Committee for advice. The current committee were appointed by the former Labor government and the committee was chaired by former Labor MP the Hon. Anne Levy. The GM Crop Advisory Committee advised me that none of the applications presented sufficient evidence for the committee to recommend designation as areas where growing GM crops is prohibited.

It was the view of the committee that individual business non-GM markets can be maintained, as occurs in other mainland states where GM crops are permitted. As per the act, the minister was required to take into account the advisory committee's advice before decisions were made. The government has accepted the recommendations of the committee. The power to make the final decision on council applications was debated during the passage of the legislation. The decision of the parliament was that the final decision would be made by the minister.

While community concerns voiced through local council consultation are acknowledged, it is important to note that the scope of the act only allows the minister to make a decision based on evidence related to trade and market impacts. Concerns regarding health and environmental impacts are covered under commonwealth legislation.

Both the City of Onkaparinga and the Adelaide Hills councils wrote to the minister formally requesting that the minister reconsider their applications; however, no further evidence was provided. The legislative ability for the minister to declare a council area as a non-GM area expired on 15 November and farmers across mainland South Australia will now have a choice to grow GM crops in time for the 2020-21 grain season. I have been informed that there were no directions given to the committee by PIRSA staff or my office.

Dr CLOSE: I think I understood from what you just said, which I had not previously heard, that two of the councils wrote and asked for a reconsideration after the decision was made. Was there any discussion either between the department and those councils or between your office and the councils about what they might do to change your mind in making that decision? You have said that there was no evidence. Was any evidence asked for or sought, or was any indication of what would work provided, or were they unsolicited letters following the decision that was made?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: They were unsolicited letters.

Dr CLOSE: So the only information that went out to all the councils that applied was a no rather than, 'No, but only because you didn't do this or this and, if you did that, then we would be willing to reconsider.' That was not part of the interaction?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: My understanding is that the original communication to the councils was very clear. In fact, it was clear from the response from three of the councils that stated they recognised they had no trade or market ability to demonstrate that there was a trade or market benefit within their regions. They recognised that, so it was very clear what was being asked of them. To me, it was already out there for them to understand and meet the requirements.

Dr CLOSE: What modelling, if any, did the state government undertake to examine the potential job losses in the McLaren Vale region as a result of the decision?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: All the work to analyse or assess those applications by the 11 councils was done by the committee. That was done over three meetings they held in the lead-up to making the recommendations to me. They considered 10 applications, and a late application arrived after they had the three meetings, and they considered it out of session. We have sent to the councils the advice and letters that were supplied to me outlining their unanimous decision not to approve.

The CHAIR: The member for Hammond is indicating he has a question, and I know he certainly has an interest in this area.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 61, Sub-program 1.1: Agricultural services. Along this line of questioning, minister, could you please explain the positive impact of lifting the moratorium on genetically modified crops and how it will support grain growing regions right throughout South Australia, including Hammond, Giles and Narungga?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: As an election commitment, the Marshall Liberal government undertook a high-level, independent expert review of the South Australian moratorium on genetically modified food crops. The review was undertaken by Emeritus Professor Kim Anderson AC, with 216 public submissions received. The reviewer consulted with experts in the field and the GM Crop Advisory Committee.

The review sought evidence from farmers, food producers, supply chain enterprises and the community to quantify whether a GM moratorium provided economic benefit or cost to the state. With the exception of an existing export market for GM free Kangaroo Island grain, the review failed to unearth evidence that South Australian businesses are receiving a benefit from the state's GM free status that could not be secured by truthfully marketing produce as GM free.

The report found no evidence that South Australian grain receives preferential access to GM free markets. It also found that South Australian grain farmers are not receiving a premium for GM free canola compared with farmers in our neighbouring states. It also found the moratorium had cost South Australian grain farmers at least \$33 million since 2004 and will cost growers at least another \$5 million if it is extended to 2025, harming the state's ability to attract investment in agricultural research and development. The moratorium was found to have discharged public and private investment in agricultural research and development.

Taking into account the evidence before us, the government introduced the Genetically Modified Crops Management (Designated Area) Amendment Bill 2020, which passed the South Australian parliament. To secure passage of the legislation to lift the GM crop moratorium on mainland South Australia, the government agreed to the Labor Party amendment to provide local councils with a once-off time-limited ability to apply to be a non-GM crop cultivation area.

Council applications were to be made following community consultation and were to provide evidence that maintaining a non-GM status offers value to the council area from a marketing and trade position, which could not be achieved by segregation protocols. Eleven of the 68 councils in South Australia made application to be designated non-GM cultivated areas. As required by legislation, these applications were referred to the independent GM Crop Advisory Committee for advice. The committee members decided that none of the applications presented sufficient evidence for the committee to recommend areas to be designated as non-GM cultivation areas.

It was the view of the committee that non-GM markets can be maintained, as occurs in other mainland states where GM food crops are permitted. The minister must, before granting an exemption, consult with the advisory committee and take into account any advice provided by the advisory committee. The government accepted the recommendations of the committee. The lifting of the moratorium is great news for our farmers, and regional communities have long called for the ability to have choice in crop varieties and be on a level playing field with the rest of mainland Australia.

Dr CLOSE: Continuing with the same budget line reference, did the committee, in reaching its decision to make a recommendation not to support the applications, undertake any modelling of job impacts themselves or only take what was presented by the councils and form a judgement about that?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: It is my understanding that the advisory committee assessed the evidence that was presented to it by the councils in that application process.

Dr CLOSE: After receiving the recommendation from the committee and before making a decision, did you as minister meet with any of the councils that had applied, and I might as well give you the list so that you can answer all at once: Treasury Wines, the McLaren Vale Grape Wine Tourism Association or any other company or organisation involved in asking for the moratorium to continue in their area?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: No, I did not meet with any.

Dr CLOSE: There is a view in some of the areas, in particular in McLaren Vale, that some businesses will be negatively affected by this decision, despite the recommendation that has been made. Has the minister received any requests for compensation or any complaints from those businesses directly asking for consideration about the impact they believe will be felt?

The CHAIR: Deputy leader, I am having a little bit of difficulty hearing. What are they asking for?

Dr CLOSE: Whether the minister has received any letters of complaint, any requests for compensation, in the light of the decision that has been made. I am sorry, I will try to speak up.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: My understanding is that I am unaware of any correspondence along those lines. I certainly have received, as I stated before, two letters from two of the councils in particular. I do not think I have received any others, but if I have I will let you know. Just going back to the previous question on the Regional Growth Fund, cabinet only approved the strategic business round. Only the other round is solely decided by the minister.

Dr CLOSE: So the strategic is by cabinet and the competitive is by the minister?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The Regional Growth Fund is by the minister and the other is by cabinet.

Dr CLOSE: Is there a pathway for any councils to have this decision overturned? Is there anything that the councils could present to you that might cause a reconsideration of the decision?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The date of 15 November was set in the act. Once that date has passed, there is no ability for that to be reassessed under the current act.

Dr CLOSE: If I can turn to the question of fruity fly—the reference is Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 79—how many expiations have been issued to drivers at Yamba as a result of the government's zero tolerance policy?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Thank you for the question. The zero tolerance approach commenced on 21 December 2018 for random road blocks and on 4 January 2019 at Yamba quarantine station. This approach was implemented in response to the declaration of a Queensland fruit fly outbreak in Loxton in early December 2018.

The policy removed the option of relinquishing fruit and vegetables at the Yamba quarantine station. All persons carrying fruit and vegetables on inspection faced a fine. On 6 July 2019, new infrastructure was completed and signed off by SafeWork. The state government funded the

upgrade, including additional pull-off areas for investigation when fruit fly host materials are detected, new entry and exit routes, extra office accommodation, and recruitment and training of new staff.

Since January 2019, there have been 19 incidents of fruit fly larvae being found in host material entering South Australia at Yamba station. In total, there have been 10,314 expiation notices that have been issued since the inception of zero tolerance at both seasonal random roadblock operations and the Yamba quarantine station. To date, of those people issued expiation notices, 10 have been summonsed to court and pleaded guilty after electing to have their matter heard in court. The fines and costs associated with guilty pleas range from \$600 to \$2,000 per defendant. In some cases, convictions were also recorded.

Dr CLOSE: How many appeals have been lodged against those expiation notices?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: As I said, there were 10 who have chosen to go to court. We also have probably about 20 per cent who request a review and a review is done.

Dr CLOSE: Is the minister able to report on how many have been successful, either at review or in court?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: In court, none; all were found guilty by the court. We will have to take on notice how many have actually been withdrawn following review. We do not have that data with us.

Dr CLOSE: Thank you. Is South Australia the only fruit fly free state in Australia?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: South Australia is the only mainland state; Tasmania is also.

Dr CLOSE: I understand. How much is the state government proposing to invest in 2020-21 to ensure that we remain fruit fly free?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The extra response is \$10.1 million in the current budget.

Dr CLOSE: And what is that directed to?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: That is for the eradication program.

Dr CLOSE: So that is all about eradication rather than stopping people at the border and fining them and all that process? It is about, if there is fruit fly here, actually eradicating it?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: That money is. There is also \$4 million allocated towards investigation and building of a facility at Ceduna if we find a suitable location. Apparently it is \$10.35 million, not \$10.1 million, sorry.

Dr CLOSE: No problem.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: We have certainly been looking at investing some money at Ceduna. Currently, the Department of Primary Industries and Regions operates the Ceduna quarantine station. That station has been in operation in its current location since 1971. The township of Ceduna has grown around that station and now has significant movements within the township, which makes it problematic as a checkpoint. The government is working through solutions regarding a possible relocation of the Ceduna station further west of the town to enable implementation of zero tolerance there.

The Department for Infrastructure and Transport has undertaken initial survey work to inform project costings and to assist the selection of an appropriate site. As I said, PIRSA has committed \$4 million in the current financial year from its existing minor capital works to fund the building works subject to further costs, to be delivered in conjunction with the Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

Dr CLOSE: To return to the \$10.35 million being spent in eradication, is that over the forward estimates or just in one year?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: That is for 2020-21.

Dr CLOSE: What is the nature of that expenditure? How much of that is people? How do you get to \$10 million in eradicating fruit fly?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: That is to fund the eradication program over the current outbreaks in the metropolitan area. It represents about 200 staff who have been involved in that project, as well as the operations required to do that.

Dr CLOSE: How many complaints have been made about the lack of signage in relation to the zero tolerance policy over the last year?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Of the 20 per cent of people who may make applications, numerous people may complain about signage but, as we have seen particularly with the 10 who have gone to court, there has been no determination that signage is a problem in this regard.

Dr CLOSE: How many complaints have been made about what might be alleged to be the aggressive nature of PIRSA officers when dealing with drivers and passengers?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I guess there are always some complaints about how people are handled, and again I do not think there is any particular issue that we need to be concerned about, as there are complaints when people get fined. They are going to find a reason to do so.

We must note that we are in the midst of the largest fruit fly eradication program the state has ever had to undertake. The eradication of Mediterranean fruit fly from South Australia is of extreme importance not only to fruit and vegetable farmers in the Adelaide Hills and the surrounding parts of the state but also to those who have backyard fruit and veggie patches. Last summer, through to our current winter, we had multiple outbreaks triggered, resulting in over 40 outbreak centres across eight outbreak zones.

The first outbreak of Mediterranean fruit fly was declared in Blair Athol and surrounding suburbs on 16 December, as we had confirmation of fruit fly larvae being found in backyard apricots. Following this outbreak, further outbreaks were declared in the Croydon Park area, Angle Park area, Semaphore Park, Pooraka area, Campbelltown and Klemzig area. The Klemzig outbreak was the last to be declared on 5 August, and over 240 suburbs are now in quarantine across the metropolitan area.

The eradication response is going to plan. In five of the eight outbreak areas, we have not had a detection of fruit fly for four months. Only a very low number of detections are being made in the remaining three outbreak areas. As I stated before, the cost of the current government response is expected to be in excess of \$10 million this financial year. By far, the largest component is the 200 field staff as they work to eradicate the pest.

I want to thank the people of South Australia for their participation in the response. Residents across the quarantine areas have been assisting in the eradication response. Residents have been picking ripe fruit from trees and off the ground. They have been disposing of the rotten fruit in their green bin, rather than having it in their private compost heaps, and also allowing access for department staff into their backyards to spray organic pesticide.

Residents have also complied with fruit and vegetable movement controls, as part of the quarantine measures. Over 137,000 litres of organic bait has been applied across the eight outbreak areas to control adult Mediterranean flies. Department staff have been out in the quarantine areas assisting residents picking up fallen fruit or stripping fruit from trees at affected sites and undertaking technical checking for the presence of larvae. Over 21,000 kilograms of fruit has been collected as part of those efforts.

A key part of the eradication response has been the release of sterile Mediterranean flies, with over 60 million sterile flies released as part of the response. If we have no further detections, the various outbreaks are due for eradication between late December 2020 and mid-January 2021 if no further flies or larvae are detected. The latest date at this point in time is Blair Athol on 14 January.

Dr CLOSE: Would the minister consider taking on notice the number of complaints that have been received? I appreciate that you cannot be more specific than 'some' here.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: There have been very few complaints about staff, I am informed, and the complaints have never been upheld, as there are body cameras and also cameras within the interview rooms that do not show evidence to the contrary.

The CHAIR: I might go to the member for Narungga who has a question.

Mr ELLIS: I would like to take the minister to something I am particularly passionate about and can be found in Budget Paper 3, page 110, under key initiatives to be delivered in 2020-21. Minister, I wonder whether you might inform this committee about the opportunities that exist within the agtech sector and the investment that the government is making in order to facilitate those opportunities and give them an opportunity to prosper.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The Marshall Liberal government sees great adoption of agtech on farm as a real game changer for the primary industry sector, increasing productivity and profitability. That is why we have formed an AgTech Advisory Group with a key goal to develop a strategic plan for South Australia. I would like to acknowledge the outstanding work undertaken by Dr Leanna Read, the independent chair, and the rest of the group.

Last month, I had the pleasure of officially launching the AgTech Strategic Plan at Lot Fourteen, with a full house under COVID restrictions and with a large audience tuned in online. We also announced new regional agtech demonstration farms and startup hubs as part of a \$2.4 million investment to begin work on targets in the plan. These initiatives include opening additional agtech demonstration farms at government research sites in Nuriootpa, Turretfield and Minnipa, and on private properties, agtech startup hubs at Struan in the South-East and on Eyre Peninsula, and appointing agtech extension officers.

Increasing the uptake of technology on farm could return up to \$2.6 billion per annum to the South Australian economy. It was particularly pleasing that, through the process of putting this plan together, the AgTech Advisory Group, South Australia's farmers and the agtech community are working closer than ever before. Our farmers and primary producers are some of the most innovative in the world, yet we lag behind in our uptake of agtech. More than 50 per cent of South Australian primary producers are currently not investing in further agtech, and this is a statistic we are setting out to change.

The South Australian AgTech Strategic Plan identifies three key challenges to the adoption of agtech on farm in South Australia, with seven priorities and key actions. The plan also supports the Food, Wine and Agribusiness Growth Sector Plan, which aims to stimulate an ambitious growth agenda to contribute revenue of \$23 billion by 2030 to the South Australian economy. A way to increase primary producer production and profitability is to optimise the performance of farming systems. This is best achieved through the adoption of best farming approaches and the application of innovative agriculture technologies—agtech.

The agtech demonstration sites at Struan and Kybybolite research farms in the South-East are part of the best practice demonstration farm, a collaboration with Elders. The farm is applying the latest livestock farming approaches, with targeted agtech product support to provide a best practice farming demonstration to support industry transformation. A demonstration site with agtech products focused on irrigated horticulture is established at the Loxton Research Centre in the Riverland.

The regional centre is also home to ThincLab Loxton, a startup hub that is operating in partnership with the University of Adelaide. Agtech demonstration sites for low rainfall, mixed farming and viticulture are located at the Minnipa Agricultural Centre on Eyre Peninsula and the Nuriootpa Research Centre in the Barossa Valley, respectively. These sites will soon seek agtech product demonstrations through an open expression of interest.

One of the most significant sources of innovation will be from the application of technology, including software and hardware, to the agricultural value chain. We also hosted the inaugural AdvanceAg, with more than 330 people in attendance. That event is happening again, and we expect it to be bigger and better next year. The government is committed to growing the adoption of agtech in South Australia.

Dr CLOSE: To finish up on a couple of questions on fruit fly, is there any proposal to update or alter the signage that is currently at the border about the fruit fly zero tolerance policy?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Thank you for the question. I have been informed that the signage was all updated to the current level prior to July 2019. I have travelled up there in my first

week of being minister, to look at the signage, and I am very comfortable with the signage that is there.

Dr CLOSE: Minister, what does it take to lose the status of being a fruit fly free state?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I will ask my adviser to answer that.

Prof. DOROUDI: Thank you for your question. Through the Chair and minister, for a number of years we have had the issue of fruit fly in South Australia. If we go back more than nearly two decades, we have been able to eradicate every single outbreak that we have had, regardless of whether it has been a Qfly or a Mediterranean fly. What it is going to take is, really, as long as we are prepared to battle and fight with the outbreak and bring the fruit fly free status back, you can continue to claim the freedom.

There are certain rules and protocols that need to be followed according to both commonwealth and state legislation and standards. As long as we go on that basis and complete a successful eradication program, we have no issue. As an example, it has taken about a year for us to deal with the current Medfly outbreaks in the metropolitan area.

Dr CLOSE: I turn to the updating of the Pastoral Lands Bill. That reference is page 61, the final dot point in a target for 2020-21, which is to draft and consult on a new Pastoral Lands Bill to replace the Pastoral Land Management Conservation Act. Minister, will you make all the submissions public, including departmental submissions to the draft act and in the consultation phase?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The draft South Australian Pastoral Lands Bill has concluded a six-week public consultation. The South Australian pastoral ranges cover 47 per cent of the state and include 323 individual pastoral leases. It is a critical economic contributor to the state's red meat and wool sector, as well as being of vital importance to Aboriginal culture and to regional employment and tourism.

The new draft legislation delivers on the state government's commitment to reform and modernise the current legislative framework that underpins our state's pastoral industry. It proposes a contemporary and flexible legislative framework that will support the continued economic growth of the state's pastoral industry, while ensuring the sustainable conservation of the rangelands for future generations. Pastoralism remains the primary focus, and the use of the rangelands under the proposed legislation with core principles to support economic growth and development in the pastoral industry.

Feedback from stakeholders shows clear demand and support for greater flexibility under the draft legislation to allow alternative land use. The proposed bill will also allow pastoral businesses to diversify and better manage income risk. The government commenced a review of the Pastoral Act in August 2019. Public consultation was undertaken in 2019, and the initial discussion paper received more than 250 submissions, indicating overwhelming support to review the current act. There are a number of key changes and improvements to the proposed Pastoral Lands Bill, including:

- extending lease lengths to 42 years up to 100-year leases to allow for long-term investment decisions;
- objects of the act will allow for leases to be used for other purposes that will create benefit to the wider pastoral industry;
- alternative land uses can be approved where appropriate, with operational details to be set by policy;
- more frequent assessments required every 10 years using the latest technology;
- assessing the capability of land for its ability to support natural ecology and diversity of the land without intervention, an underpinning principle of the act;
- public access routes to remain but more geographically defined;
- strong compliance tools and penalties for those who misuse land, including lessees being held to account for impacts on neighbouring non-pastoral land;
- sublessees also to be held accountable to the same level as lessees for noncompliance;

- improvements in interactions between government agencies and related legislation, with the minister for the Pastoral Lands Act required to be notified before any rights can be granted under another act over a pastoral lease;
- the creation of a public register that will provide a one-stop shop for relevant information regarding pastoral leases whilst still maintaining confidentiality; and
- greater flexibility for the Pastoral Lands Fund.

In relation to your question about whether submissions will be made public, that will need to rely on the submitters themselves giving permission to do so.

The CHAIR: Deputy leader, I understand we were discussing the Pastoral Lands Act. Could you show me where that is? I am sure it is in here somewhere.

Dr CLOSE: Yes, page 61. If you look at the bottom, it is one of the targets for this financial year, to draft and consult on the new bill.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Dr CLOSE: In the latest round of submissions, which I believe would be in response to the draft bill, how many submissions have you received? Is there a box to check, or is there some way to know that the organisations submitting are happy for that to be made public?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: There were 67 responses to the YourSAy survey, and 45 direct submissions were also received. As there was not a box to tick, we are actually going back to them to ask them the question: are they prepared to have theirs published?

Dr CLOSE: I understand that the Native Veg Council, the Arid Lands Landscape Board, the Chamber of Mines and Energy, the Department for Environment and Water, the Department for Energy and Mining, and also conservancies like the Nature Foundation of South Australia and Bush Heritage, have significant concerns with the draft bill. Are you aware of the nature of those concerns and have you formed any view about how you might respond to them?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The process is that submissions have been received and the ability for submissions to be received has now closed. Those submissions are now going through the process of being assessed and compiled. We are going through the process to bring that information to me.

Dr CLOSE: I note that the bill is called the Pastoral Lands Bill and it is replacing the Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act. Does that change in name imply a reduction of interest in those lands for conservation purposes or conservation value?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The simple answer is no. This act will actually manage the pastoralism and also continue to make sure that conservation and, in particular, as I mentioned, more frequent assessments are being made and that the pastoral land is actually being looked after.

Dr CLOSE: I think, as you are given the summary of a lot of those submissions, that will be a common concern you will see and, with luck, will address satisfactorily. I understand that in their submission to the draft bill Livestock SA was concerned about the removal of stock maximums. Where has the idea that removing a stock maximum is a good idea come from, if not from Livestock SA?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I will need to take that on notice.

Dr CLOSE: Since you have become minister, which stakeholders have you met with to discuss this draft bill?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: At this point in time, as the public consultation was open, I have not met any, but I do have some appointments in my diary within the next week or so.

Dr CLOSE: Are they with conservation groups as well as farmers' groups?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes.

Dr CLOSE: How many times, if at all, have you or your office or your department met with representatives of Hancock Agriculture to discuss the bill and the reform generally?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I have not met with Hancock specifically. I have met with David Larkin, who is the chair of the Pastoral Board, in his capacity as chairman of the Pastoral Board, on one teleconference earlier this week.

Dr CLOSE: Has your department met with Hancock Agriculture to discuss the reform of the Pastoral Lands Act?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed again that they have met with David Larkin in his capacity as chairman of the Pastoral Board.

Dr CLOSE: Can you guarantee that no pastoral properties that are currently managed for conservation will be forced to choose either to run livestock or to lose their lease under the new pastoral regime?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: My understanding is there will be a transition process that will allow lessees who currently have a lease in place to work out how that transition can occur.

Dr CLOSE: Transition to what?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Out of pastoralism.

Dr CLOSE: So if they have a lease under the act, but they manage for conservation, they would be required to transition to a different kind of lease. What is the proposition?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: My understanding is that that is the plan and that they will be transitioned to another lease structure over a five-year period.

Dr CLOSE: Still on this topic, if you turn to the top of page 62 there is a table that relates to the FTEs and expenses, under Sub-program 1.1: Agricultural Services, and there is an increase in the FTEs. I believe some of the increase from 2018-19 through to today—I am not sure when it occurred—was the transition of the pastoral unit from the environment department into PIRSA. Can I confirm that I have the right place in the budget for that? How has the work undertaken by that unit changed by virtue of being out of the Department for Environment and Water and into the Department of Primary Industries?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed there has been no change in the way it operates. It is still following the act as it previously was.

Dr CLOSE: Has there much change in personnel? Are the individuals largely still the same people?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: We are advised there are no significant changes in personnel.

Dr CLOSE: Has the minister been made familiar with options of carbon farming being part of the way the rangelands might be managed in the future and has that been countenanced in this draft legislation?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes, it certainly has been, and one of the reasons for moving from the 42-year lease to the 100-year lease is to allow agreements to be made in a long-term environment.

Dr CLOSE: I now turn to the question of the abalone industry, which seems like a big jump from the rangelands, but it is a small one in the budget.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Desert to sea.

Dr CLOSE: Further down on page 62—

Mr HUGHES: It is all meat.

Dr CLOSE: Well, some people look at it that way. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 62, Sub-program 1.2: Fisheries and Aquaculture. The description and objective is to 'manage the living marine and freshwater resources of South Australia'. Has the minister—and in this case I

mean the minister rather than the department—met with representatives yet from the Abalone Industry Association of South Australia?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes, both the department and I have met with representatives multiple times, for both.

Dr CLOSE: Thank you. You have done that quickly having not been minister for very long. Is the minister aware how much the abalone industry injects into South Australia's economy? Do you have a working estimate for that from your department?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: We do not have the detail with us, but we believe it to be around \$45 million from wild catch abalone.

Dr CLOSE: If you could take that on notice, that would be useful; we would appreciate it. It may be the same answer for this question: how many people are employed both directly and indirectly in the abalone industry?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: We will take that on notice.

Dr CLOSE: I understand that the abalone industry has suffered a lack of demand from a range of buyers such as restaurants and overseas exports, I presume as a result of the pandemic, and therefore the association is seeking a waiver of at least one quarter of the fixed licence fee. Has the minister had an opportunity to turn his mind to whether this is a reasonable request?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes, we certainly have considered this space. This is very much in response to the global coronavirus pandemic, which has resulted in disruptions to markets in a range of seafood products from South Australia. This disruption affects both export and domestic markets. Sectors initially impacted by the market disruption include South Australian rock lobster fisheries, but they have also affected, as you have stated, abalone, prawn, blue crab, sardines, Goolwa pipis, vongole, oysters and bluefin tuna.

Registered fish processors who buy fish from commercial fishers and onsell these products are also impacted by limited market opportunities. The state government implemented a range of mitigation actions to alleviate the financial loss to commercial and charter boat fishers, agricultural lease and licence holders and fish processors. These actions included amending regulations to allow uncaught quota from the 2019-20 fishing season to be caught in the following one or two fishing seasons for rock lobster, blue crab, Goolwa pipis and vongole fisheries.

Similar regulation changes are being developed for abalone, sardines and the Gulf St Vincent Prawn Fishery. It has deferred collection of the 2020-21 commercial fishing and agricultural fees for six months, including outstanding licence fees yet to be paid from 2019-20, and it has waived fees for the charter boat sector for the first six months of 2021. The value of deferred fees in 2020-21 for the commercial fishing sector is approximately \$6.19 million and \$420,000 for the aquaculture sector.

The value of fee waivers for the charter boat sector is \$180,000. As at the end of October 2020, \$7.174 million in fishery licences and processing fees remain unpaid for the 2020-21 financial year. A further 450 remain unpaid from the 2019-20 financial year. As of October 2020, \$1.3 million in aquaculture lease and licence fees remain unpaid for the 2020-21 financial year and a further 230 remain unpaid from the 2019-20 financial year.

The government has also extended the length of the fishing season in the commercial northern rock lobster fishery to allow an early start in the fishing season and in the commercial southern rock lobster fishery to allow the sectors additional time to harvest annual catches as a mitigating measure to the potential volatile global markets. Also, an additional sardine quota has been set to provide feed for ranched southern bluefin tuna in 2020 as the initial 2020 quota may not be sufficient to feed the tuna due to the COVID-19 impacts and feed not being able to be sourced from overseas.

The government is now actively progressing additional measures to mitigate impacts of COVID-19 on the commercial fishing industry through the normal government processes by seeking amendments to allow the carryover of uncaught quota entitlements in the abalone, sardine and Gulf St Vincent prawn fisheries with respect to night fishing. PIRSA is also regularly providing information

to industry representatives on a range of other measures being implemented by government to assist fishers overcome the impacts of COVID-19.

Mr HUGHES: As a point of clarification, when you refer to deferring fees, do you ultimately intend to recover those deferred fees?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: That is still under consideration and very much will depend on the different sectors themselves. Some of them are more heavily financially impacted than others.

Mr HUGHES: Are we the only state not to waive fees for the commercial fishing sector, given the impacts of COVID-19?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am not aware of the details of the other states. Just going back to the value of the abalone, it is \$57 million, so slightly higher than the \$45 million.

Dr CLOSE: I now turn to the question of the Apiary Taskforce. The reference is Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 64, Sub-program 1.4: Biosecurity. In the highlights for 2019-20, the formation of the minister's Apiary Taskforce is the final dot point. Can the minister detail to the committee the value of beehive products, including honey, in estimated terms in the South Australian economy?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am advised that the value of honey is about \$11 million. The horticultural pollination value is about \$1.7 billion.

Dr CLOSE: To be clear, you are including the estimated value of crops pollinated by honey bees when you get into that higher figure, the billion?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes, that is the horticulture pollination needs of—

Dr CLOSE: With the \$11 million referring to honey, there would be some other beehive products that have some value, but we may not be able to estimate that today.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed that we would not have that detail.

Dr CLOSE: With the billion, I did not quite hear all the horticultural—

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: It was \$1.7 billion.

Dr CLOSE: Thank you. Who is on the minister's Apiary Taskforce and what was the process for forming it? What process was undertaken?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The Apiary Taskforce was established on 26 August 2019, and it has been led by the Department of Primary Industries and Regions with representatives from the South Australian Apiarist Association, Apiary Alliance SA, SA Water, the Department for Environment and Water and ForestrySA, and I have a representative on there, the member for Elder, Carolyn Power.

Since its inception, the Apiary Taskforce has focused on identifying key challenges to accessing public land for beekeeping and how the task force can help facilitate access efficiently and consistently with public land managers. The Apiary Taskforce has established a pilot program, which is focused on delivering early opportunities to establish beekeeping sites on publicly managed lands ahead of a broader outcome being sought by the Apiary Taskforce. In April 2020, the pilot project successfully delivered three beekeeping sites in the Kuitpo Forest Reserve, managed by ForestrySA.

This is the first time beekeeping has been allowed in the Kuitpo Forest Reserve. The application process was used to allow eligible beekeepers to register to partake in a ballot, as the number of applicants exceeded the available number of sites. A ballot was conducted in May 2020 to randomly select three beekeepers. Three experienced beekeepers were successful: Mr Aaron Woolston from Meningie, Mr Les Crane from Strathalbyn and Mr Simon Peacock from Mypolonga. The ballot was observed by an independent panel to ensure a fair, unbiased and transparent process was used to select the three successful beekeepers.

Focus is now on the second stage of the pilot project, which aims to deliver five further beekeeping sites in the Mount Bold Reservoir Reserve, managed by SA Water, to bring the total number of sites to eight. I announced the opportunity at the Mount Bold Reservoir on 4 November,

with applications to participate in a ballot opening on the same day. Applications will be accepted until 4 December, with a ballot being drawn in mid-December to allocate the sites. I look forward to announcing the outcomes from that ballot later this year.

The CHAIR: I am going to go to the member for Kavel, who has a question.

Mr CREGAN: Thank you, Chair. Can I take us to a slightly different topic momentarily. I take the committee to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 67, regional development, which is a matter of considerable and ongoing interest for my community. How is the government working with communities to prioritise mobile blackspot solutions?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: This government established the \$10 million South Australian Mobile Phone Black Spot fund to deliver new and upgraded mobile base stations across regional and remote South Australia. On 4 April 2019, the commonwealth government opened round 5 of its Mobile Black Spot Program, with \$80 million available. In response, the government announced a contribution of \$3 million from the state's \$10 million Mobile Black Spot fund. The state government works with communities and telecommunication companies to put the best applications forward for the commonwealth to co-invest.

On 21 April 2020, the commonwealth government announced that 17 new mobile stations in South Australia would be funded through round 5 of its Mobile Phone Black Spot Program. This outcome represents a total investment of \$7.9 million in mobile phone infrastructure in regional and remote South Australia, including \$3.8 million from the commonwealth government and a state government investment of \$948,980 from the state's \$10 million fund.

The sites that were to be funded were Fowlers Bay, Koonibba, Legges Lane, Nundroo Roadhouse, the Yongala township, Farina, Kuitpo, Mudamuckla, Peebinga, Avenue Range, Leigh Creek Copley, Lyndhurst, Paruna, Keilira, Leigh Creek town, Mintabie and Wellington.

The CHAIR: Excellent pronunciation, if I do say so myself, minister, and captured by Hansard.

Dr CLOSE: I may come back to a couple of questions about blackspots, but I will continue with the apiary task force for now. What is the chief objective of the task force? What is it tasked to achieve?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The principal objective of this project was to make more sites from public land in particular available to the apiary industry going forward.

Dr CLOSE: So it is not to address any systemic problems with bees in South Australia that might be caused by pesticide or any other issues? It is really to facilitate using public land for some apiary sites?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes, that is right.

Dr CLOSE: I appreciate that the minister in his earlier answer explained who is on the task force, but what mechanism was used to determine who that would be? Is there an invitation for people and organisations to apply? Were there criteria that were established?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I have been informed that the former minister convened this committee and he asked the organisations I listed to send a representative from those committees.

Dr CLOSE: So it was his judgement: 'These are the relevant organisations; I'll ask for a representative from them.' Essentially, it was a ministerial judgement matter.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: There were terms of reference developed in consultation between PIRSA and DEW in relation to the set-up of this.

Dr CLOSE: Does PIRSA provide any funding to any beekeeping organisations at present? If so, what is the nature of that funding?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The bee industry has a primary industry funding scheme (PIF scheme), which allows them to collect funds and spend within their sector. Also, there has been 7,200 gone towards this project to put the bees into public land.

Dr CLOSE: When you say 'the beekeeping industry', does that mean anyone who is involved in apiary is able to apply for the PIFS?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I will ask my adviser.

Prof. DOROUDI: All the primary industry funding schemes (PIFS) work based on an agreement between the minister and the association or the peak body for the industry. The peak body will run through the processes internally that they have. They will identify the area of investment. They will put their proposals in. Proposals will go through ministerial approval on an annual basis. That is how the system and process works.

In relation to apiary, I may have the exact figure for that. When it comes to the South Australian Apiarists' Association, which is the peak body, more than 100 commercial beekeepers are members of that.

Dr CLOSE: One hundred?

Prof. DOROUDI: More than 100, yes. The funding will be spent based on requests that come through them. For 2020-21, overall the expenditure was about \$64,500, and \$40,000 of that was to support a beekeeper officer within Biosecurity, part of PIRSA. The contribution came from industry for that and, as the minister said, \$7,500 to support ForestrySA, the pilot project that we worked through the Apiary Taskforce.

Dr CLOSE: In acquitting the funds that the South Australian Apiarists' Association receives, is there any public documentation saying this is how much was received and this was how that was acquitted, so that we know that there was value for money?

Prof. DOROUDI: Regulatory, we are obligated to provide those reports and all the PIFS reports will be, I understand, tabled in the parliament as well. That detail is public.

Dr CLOSE: Is the minister aware that the South Australian Apiarists' Association has a closed membership that does not include significant sections of the beekeeping industry of South Australia?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: To the best of my knowledge, any beekeeper is free and able to join the industry association.

Dr CLOSE: I understand that some time ago there was a proposition that there be a peak body for beekeepers that also invited membership from cropping farmers who are dependent on bees. I think there was a suggestion that that might occur that was considered by the department. Has there been any progress made?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: We are not aware.

Dr CLOSE: Of such a proposition? Okay. I understand that a letter was sent to PIRSA some 12 months ago asking what section of the act and regulations authorised information to be requested from beekeepers about the location of their hives. There has been an acknowledgment of the receipt of that letter, but it has not been responded to in substance. Is the minister or his department able to give an update on where that is up to?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am advised that we are not aware of any outstanding, but we will go and investigate.

Dr CLOSE: I will now turn to fishing, specifically recreational fishing, and the budget line for that is page 62, fisheries and aquaculture. Can the minister provide information to the committee about where consultation is up to on the proposed recreation fishing licence?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for her question. This is a process that is certainly under consideration only at this stage by the Minister's Recreational Fishing Advisory Council (MRFAC). They are running that process.

The Marshall Liberal government has delivered on a commitment to establish a new body for recreational fishers, being the Minister's Recreational Fishing Advisory Council to provide feedback on the needs and interests of the recreational fishing community direct to me as minister. Since its establishment in 2019, MRFAC has delivered for recreational fishers. For the first time ever,

recreational fishers have transparency about decision-making, with the publishing of communiqués from the MRFAC.

The MRFAC has sought the views of recreational fishers to provide advice to government on recreational fishing in reservoirs, razorfish management arrangements, the marine park review proposal and a survey on recreational priorities. Initially, the MRFAC intended to travel around the state and hold workshops to assist in the drafting a recreational fishing strategy. However, due to COVID, it conducted the survey of priority issues for fishers. This survey was the most successful recreational fishing survey in the state's history with over 4,000 responses.

The MRFAC sought and has gained a government review of spearfishing closures for metropolitan Adelaide and razorfish management across the state. The MRFAC has provided advice and consultation on the refresh of the South Australian Recreational Fishing Guide app, and has partnered with the Department of Primary Industries and Regions to deliver on the state government's commitment to stock Murray cod fingerlings into the River Murray in the 2020-21 year. In addition, the MRFAC is continuing to progress key issues for the recreational fishing community by:

- developing a strategic plan for recreational fishing in South Australia;
- driving the delivery of a new recreational fishing survey undertaken by the South Australian Research and Development Institute; and
- representing recreational fishing interests from a number of representative bodies related to recreational fishing, including:
 - the Seafood Advisory Forum;
 - the Snapper Management Advisory Committee;
 - the 2020-21 Recreational Fishing Survey Steering Committee; and
 - the Blue Infrastructure Working Group.

Six new members and an independent chair have been appointed to the Minister's Recreational Fishing Advisory Council. They join the continuing members. It is great to have representation from Sharon Starick, the independent chair. We then have a tackle shop owner from Port Lincoln, a spearfisher from Mount Compass, a rock lobster fisher from Robe, a tuna champion and game fisher from Munno Para Downs, a game fisher from Murray Bridge, an inland fisher from Renmark, a land-based kayak fisher from South Brighton, the chair of RecFish SA and a fishing rod repair shop owner from Hampstead Gardens.

The MRFAC held its most recent meeting in late October and will continue to progress the key issues around recreational fishing until we see direct elections to continue the membership on the MRFAC in late 2021.

Dr CLOSE: Minister, when you talked about the survey, was the recreation fishing licence one of the items that was being surveyed?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am advised yes.

Dr CLOSE: You had something like 4,000 responses, so can you break down for me how many of those responded to the question about a recreational fishing licence and which position they took on it?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: We do not have that detail, but fishing licences are certainly not currently under the consideration of the government. MRFAC are currently reviewing survey responses, including that fishing licence question.

Dr CLOSE: They are currently reviewing it?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The responses to the survey, yes.

Dr CLOSE: Will the responses be made public in due course?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: MRFAC have their own website that sits within the PIRSA structure that puts that information up on their website.

Dr CLOSE: And they will be putting it on their website once they have contemplated or considered it?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes.

Dr CLOSE: Do I understand that the minister has now ruled out a recreational fishing licence; is that what you just said?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes, the government is certainly not considering it.

Dr CLOSE: Is not considering it, ruling it out? Would you go that far?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I would not like to pre-empt any position of the MRFAC and their representation to me. I want them to have the ability to put any case forward, but they would have to put a very strong case for me to consider.

Dr CLOSE: So you are not yourself currently contemplating it? MRFAC can recommend whatever it wishes and, should it recommend it, then you would at least consider the recommendation, but you are not saying that you would necessarily support it.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I would always consider all recommendations put before me, but it does not mean I would agree with them.

Dr CLOSE: How did the recreational fishing licence come to be one of the items on the survey? Was that purely initiated by MRFAC, or did that come from a request by the government to determine people's views?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed it was the committee that decided to put that question.

Dr CLOSE: So without any request from the previous minister, I presume?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: That is my understanding.

Dr CLOSE: If we turn to Murray cod restocking, Sub-program 1.5: South Australian River Murray Sustainability, does that program include the Murray cod restocking program?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The simple answer is yes. In late 2019, the government committed \$200,000 over two years to stock Murray cod fingerlings as part of a support package to create additional recreational fishing opportunities in South Australia. The department and the Minister's Recreational Fishing Advisory Council identified locations with suitable habitat, and 90,000 fingerlings were released into the Lower River Murray in February 2020.

The Murray cod is an extremely important species to the Murray River community; restocking will support the recovery of the species, and the ultimate goal is to create a sustainable Murray cod fishery. In the long term, these restocking initiatives will contribute to the revitalisation of recreational fishing opportunities in the region so that future generations and visitors can enjoy catching these unique fish for many years to come.

Murray cod fingerlings can take three to five years to grow to a fishable size, depending on the quality and habitat in the water. Funding of \$100,000 is available to stock Murray cod fingerlings in 2020-21, and the Minister's Recreational Fishing Advisory Council will again inform the numbers of the fish that can be released at the sites.

Dr CLOSE: So there has been some release this year?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: In February, yes.

Dr CLOSE: And then there will be another—presumably February is the right time—

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: February is my understanding.

Dr CLOSE: —for the species. So there will be another lot. That then discharges the \$200,000 that I understand the former minister committed to in January of this year.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: That is correct.

Dr CLOSE: You probably answered this in the previous question but, with the recreational fishing survey, was there feedback requested at that time on people's views about having Murray cod restocked?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I will need to check that.

Dr CLOSE: From January to July next year there will be a Murray cod catch and release season open. Has that been declared? Is that being planned?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: That is an annual consideration, depending on fish stocks, etc. It will be brought to me as minister for consideration.

Dr CLOSE: When does that decision get made? When are you able to tell? January is not far away.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: We will check and confirm the timing of that.

Dr CLOSE: I go back to page 63. The third dot point for the targets at the top of that page—so we are back in Fisheries and Aquaculture—is to deliver a recreational fishing strategic plan. I appreciate that the minister touched on that in his earlier answer about MRFAC, but what are the headline details of that strategy likely to be?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: That is something for MRFAC, to develop their strategic plan and present it and bring it forward.

Dr CLOSE: The minister or the department is not saying, 'We need a strategy that addresses these issues,' at all? It is entirely up to MRFAC to generate that from within, and then you make a determination about what you accept and do not accept?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes, it is up to them to present that strategic plan.

Dr CLOSE: Is that the sort of document that needs cabinet approval, or would that be your decision?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Any advice that MRFAC brings to me is advice to me, and I will then have to make a decision as to whether that requires cabinet approval or whether it is something that can be done without taking it to cabinet.

Dr CLOSE: What sort of timing are you expecting? Do you have a deadline or a commitment from MRFAC about when they will be presenting a draft strategy to you?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: At this stage, we do not have that time frame. COVID has certainly thrown a few spanners in the works in relation to these sorts of developments.

Dr CLOSE: And so much else. Is there anywhere in the budget a provision for expenditure on such a strategy once it is delivered and accepted?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: At this point in time, until we receive the strategic plan we have not allocated funds because we do not know what is in it.

The CHAIR: It is a bit of an unusual question, deputy leader, given that we are examining this budget and you have just asked if there is anything in there, which there is not.

Dr CLOSE: If I can just defend myself very briefly, the third dot point says that the target is to deliver a state recreational fishing strategic plan. I wondered if any money had been provisioned to spend on that plan or if it would just be a lovely document. That is the reason I think it is a legitimate question to ask in the budget.

The CHAIR: Excellent. It is good to see everyone is still awake.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: In relation to the anticipated time frame, it is hoped it will be before their election process, which will be late 2021 for half of MRFAC to go the election process.

Dr CLOSE: I will just slip in one more question. I have lost track of all time, but I think we are finishing briefly at 5. The minister has not said what he would like to see in the strategy, any

headlines, any outcomes, and he has not given any indication of what money he might be willing to spend on it. It is going to be a bit of an adventure when it arrives, isn't it?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am not sure I can even give an answer—

Dr CLOSE: It seems unusual to ask for a strategy without any kind of guidelines about what would be acceptable to government, what you might be willing to fund and how much is available.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am leaving it up to MRFAC to determine what they would like to present.

Sitting suspended from 17:00 to 17:15.

Mr ELLIS: Minister, in Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, on page 61 there is reference to ensuring that policy, planning and regulatory frameworks are in place to underpin long-term productivity, profitability and competitiveness. I wonder if you might expand on how the Grain Industry Blueprint has allowed for that work to be done.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for his question. The Marshall Liberal government provided \$140,000 to Grain Producers SA to undertake the development of the South Australian Grain Industry Blueprint for the next 10 years. The initiative is the first of its kind for the South Australian grains sector and has been developed after significant consultation with industry and key stakeholders.

The blueprint outlines a pathway forward for the grains industry to become a \$6 billion industry by 2030. We have announced a \$75,000 grant, leveraged from the blueprint, to provide market diversification workshops to grain farmers. The grain industry contributes at a farmgate value of \$1.7 billion per year, and we have 4,500 farmers growing around four million hectares of grain crop each year. In fact, the latest crop and pasture report estimates this season's grain harvest at almost nine million tonnes.

In the face of adversity, our grains industry has demonstrated resilience and innovation, with production in recent drought years more than double compared with droughts in the mid-2000s. The blueprint is aimed at helping the grains industry to attract greater investment across the entire value chain through public-private partnership, boosting agricultural research and development, and providing jobs and skills training.

This is an industry-led initiative designed to identify opportunities and shape the future of the industry. The blueprint is based on six pillars: value-adding, market demand, on-farm innovation, building industry capacity, infrastructure investment, biosecurity and quality assurance. The grains industry believes the initiatives outlined in the blueprint will be critical in kickstarting South Australia's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The state government is committed to supporting the state's primary industries to invest, expand and grow our Growth State agenda. To drive this, the government has set an objective to lift the sustainable economic growth of 3 per cent per year. The blueprint will also support the National Farmers Federation's vision for Australian agriculture to exceed \$100 billion in farmgate output by 2030. The Marshall Liberal government is investing in the grains sector and we want to make the industry even stronger into the future.

Dr CLOSE: I think I will take this opportunity to read the omnibus questions, which is the third time I have done that this week.

1. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:
 - What is the actual FTE count at 30 June 2020 and the projected actual FTE count for each year of the forward estimates?
 - What is the total employment cost for each year of the forward estimates?
 - What is the notional FTE job reduction target that has been agreed with Treasury for each year of the forward estimates?
 - Does the agency or department expect to meet the target in each year of the forward estimates?

- How many TVSPs are estimated to be required to meet FTE reductions over the forward estimates?
2. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:
- How much is budgeted to be spent on goods and services for 2020-21, and for each of the years of the forward estimates period?
 - The top ten providers of goods and services by value to each agency reporting to the minister for 2019-20; and
 - A description of the goods and/or services provided by each of these top ten providers, and the cost to the agency for these goods and/or services.
 - The value of the goods and services that was supplied to the agency by South Australian suppliers.
3. Between 1 July 2019 and 30 June 2020, will the minister list the job title and total employment cost of each position with a total estimated cost of \$100,000 or more which has either (1) been abolished and (2) which has been created?
4. Will the minister provide a detailed breakdown of expenditure on consultants and contractors above \$10,000 between 1 July 2019 and 30 June 2020 for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, listing:
- the name of the consultant, contractor or service supplier;
 - cost;
 - work undertaken;
 - reason for engaging the contractor; and
 - method of appointment?
5. For each department and agency for which the minister has responsibility:
- How many FTEs were employed to provide communication and promotion activities in 2019-20 and what was their employment expense?
 - How many FTEs are budgeted to provide communication and promotion activities in 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 and what is their estimated employment expense?
 - The total cost of government-paid advertising, including campaigns, across all mediums in 2019-20 and budgeted cost for 2020-21.
6. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, please provide a full itemised breakdown of attraction and retention allowances as well as non-salary benefits paid to public servants and contracts between 1 July 2019 and 30 June 2020.
7. What is the title and total employment cost of each individual staff member in the minister's office as at 30 June 2020, including all departmental employees seconded to ministerial offices?
8. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, could you detail:
- (a) How much was spent on targeted voluntary separation packages in 2019-20?
 - (b) What department funded these TVSPs? (except for DTF estimates)
 - (c) What number of TVSPs were funded?
 - (d) What is the budget for targeted voluntary separation packages for financial years included in the forward estimates (by year), and how are these packages funded?

- (e) What is the breakdown per agency/branch of targeted voluntary separation packages for financial years included in the forward estimates (by year) by FTEs?

9. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many executive terminations have occurred since 1 July 2019 and what is the value of executive termination payments made?

10. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what new executive appointments have been made since 1 July 2019, and what is the annual salary, and total employment cost for each position?

11. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many employees have been declared excess, how long has each employee been declared excess, and what is the salary of each excess employee?

12. In the 2019-20 financial year, for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, what underspending on operating programs (1) was and (2) was not approved by cabinet for carryover expenditure in 2020-21?

13. In the 2019-20 financial year, for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, what underspending on investing or capital projects or programs (1) was and (2) was not approved by cabinet for carryover expenditure in 2020-21? How much was sought and how much was approved?

14. For each grant program or fund the minister is responsible for please provide the following information for 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 financial years:

- (a) Name of the program or fund;
- (b) The purpose of the program or fund;
- (c) Balance of the grant program or fund;
- (d) Budgeted (or actual) expenditure from the program or fund;
- (e) Budgeted (or actual) payments into the program or fund;
- (f) Carryovers into or from the program or fund; and
- (g) Details, including the value and beneficiary, of any commitments already made to be funded from the program or fund.

15. For the period of 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020, provide a breakdown of all grants paid by the department/agency that report to the minister, including when the payment was made to the recipient, and when the grant agreement was signed by both parties.

16. For each year of the forward estimates, please provide the name and budgeted expenditure across the 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 financial years for each individual investing expenditure project administered by or on behalf of all departments and agencies reporting to the minister.

17. For each year of the forward estimates, please provide the name and budget for each individual program administered by or on behalf of all departments and agencies reporting to the minister.

18. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what is the total cost of machinery of government changes since 1 July 2019 and please provide a breakdown of those costs?

19. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what new sections of your department or agency have been established since 1 July 2019 and what is their purpose?

20. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:

- What savings targets have been set for each year of the forward estimates?

- What measures are you implementing to meet your savings target?
- What is the estimated FTE impact of these measures?

The CHAIR: The member for Giles.

Mr HUGHES: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 62, Sub-program 1.2: Fisheries and Aquaculture. My questions will be about the giant Australian cuttlefish, a topic close to my heart. Earlier this year, the government and the previous minister decided to reduce protection for the giant Australian cuttlefish and especially reduce protection in part of the area where the globally unique cuttlefish breeding aggregation occurred. Following on from that, what tonnages or numbers of cuttlefish were taken by the commercial sector in that area during the season that has just gone by?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Before I give an answer, I will quickly update a couple of items from previous questions. In relation to the Berri Regional Growth Fund project, all projects were assessed by the Regional Growth Fund assessment panel. The process adopted by the panel was:

1. Assess all applications for eligibility against the Regional Growth Fund strategic business round guidelines.
2. Undertake preliminary assessment and scoring against the weighted selection criteria.
3. Applications which passed stage 2 proceeded to a technical and financial feasibility assessment.
4. Undertake a risk assessment.
5. The panel then considered the outcomes of these assessments, short-listed them and made recommendations for the project to be funded.

The Berri Hotel was recommended for funding by the panel based on the material in the application. This application leverages a total investment of \$7,092,000 for the \$1.5 million funding provided and proposes 20 jobs in construction, 12 additional full-time equivalents ongoing in the business and 56 full-time equivalent indirect jobs. Also, in terms of the question about abalone wild catch, there are 241 full-time equivalents involved in the abalone industry. In relation to the Murray cod season, the decision is made in December to go for the season from 1 January to 31 July.

In relation to giant cuttlefish, for a limited time each winter the giant cuttlefish migrate to mate in the False Bay area north of Whyalla. The spawning season runs for four to five months and generally peaks around May/June each year. Towards the end of the spawning season in July/August, following the annual mating and spawning event, cuttlefish naturally die off, often quite quickly. Cuttlefish have a life cycle of around 12 months, when eggs grow and young cuttlefish eventually leave the protected False Bay area and migrate across Spencer Gulf, only to return the following winter to mate, spawn and die.

The cephalopod cuttlefish, squid or octopus fish enclosure implemented under the Fisheries Management Act 2007 has protected the giant cuttlefish spawning population at Point Lowly since 1998. In 2013, the giant cuttlefish fell to worrying low levels of about 13½ thousand individual animals. At that time, in response, a further precautionary fishing closure was implemented to temporarily prohibit giant cuttlefish fishing in Upper Spencer Gulf whilst research was undertaken and the population monitored.

The South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) and the University of Adelaide have undertaken \$860,000 worth of research since 2013 to ensure we understand as much as possible about this species. The latest science indicates there are no sustainable concerns for the giant Australian cuttlefish, with populations rebounding from a low of 13½ thousand in 2013 to constantly over 100,000 cuttlefish in each of the past five years. The latest of the annual surveys undertaken in 2020 saw a record high estimated population of approximately 247,000 giant Australian cuttlefish.

Through this regular monitoring, we know the permanent closure in the False Bay area covers all significant spawning aggregation areas of the species and is supported by all stakeholders, including the government. The science indicates the most likely detriment for variation in population

numbers is the temperature of the water during spawning. As such, temporary fishing closures in Upper Spencer Gulf lapsed on 15 February 2020 and it is no longer required to protect the species. About 23 tonnes were taken commercially up to September 2020.

Mr HUGHES: So the logic is that the protection was working, so we will reduce the protection?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The logic is that the life cycle of the cuttlefish is an annual-based life cycle and that the numbers have rebounded well beyond the long-term average to a record high.

Mr HUGHES: Yet we know that in 2013 the population crashed by 90 per cent, depending on what year you use as your baseline, and we still do not know the factors that surround the crash in population and that is why a precautionary principle was adopted in Northern Spencer Gulf. We have no guarantee that there will not be a crash in the future. The exploitation, in this case, of 23 tonnes of cuttlefish, most of which was taken off the Point Lowly peninsula, don't you think it is not a decision that demonstrates some foresight?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am going to hand over to my adviser.

Prof. DOROUDI: Thanks for the question. The cuttlefish is one of the cephalopods. Cephalopods, in terms of population, always go up and down without us being able to exactly or specifically point the finger to a certain type of activity. It could be environment or it could be the temperature of the water. What we know for sure is that when we had the low numbers at that time, we had to bring a more precautionary approach.

The science has been continued in terms of stock assessment and the status of the population on an annual basis. It is suggesting to us that there is no need for further protection beyond the permanent closure at Point Lowly currently in place. The numbers are good. Cuttlefish is a species that is going to die in less than 12 months after they release their eggs and sperm when they get together in that region. There was no evidence in relation to maintaining that closure in that area.

Mr HUGHES: There might well be an argument, given that the closure was roughly a line north of Wallaroo over to Arno Bay. As a fisher in that area, when you are out catching squid, you do not catch many cuttlefish in the broad Northern Spencer Gulf.

A lot of people have considered it very irresponsible, including cephalopod experts from around the world, to open up part of the cuttlefish breeding aggregation. A number of the commercial boats were lining up off the point where the cuttlefish aggregate. On the northern side of the gulf, the cuttlefish aggregation on that side was wiped out by a combination of commercial and recreational fishing.

Given the globally unique nature of this aggregation and given the fact that, pre COVID-19, it attracted tourists and dive tourists from around the world and from around Australia and attracted major documentary makers, why would we treat it just as a straightforward fishery issue? Would we use the same logic, for instance, with dolphins or whales? It might be sustainable now; the numbers have built up. Why not catch them?

The CHAIR: There was a lot of commentary in that, member for Giles, and I understand that. Your question related to dolphins and whales. Do you have a more specific question?

Mr HUGHES: I guess the issue, I would argue, is that there is a qualitative difference here, given the globally unique nature of the aggregation. Let me put it into perspective. If I was to ask you how many commercial fishing operators, not divers, are actually exploiting the cuttlefish and taking those 23 tonnes, how many boats do you think there might be in the Northern Spencer Gulf?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Going back in this process, there is a cuttlefish working group that consists of councils, scientists, the Department for Environment and Water, and Tourism. They all sit on that advisory group. They make assessments based on the science and make recommendations to me as minister to decide whether there is a need to exclude the fishing of giant cuttlefish or not based on the world's best science of this species. I will always follow that science, the recommendations based on that science and how this sector should be considered. Given the

current numbers of the population, my opinion is that there is room for both commercial fishing and the tourism aspect as well.

Mr HUGHES: How many commercial operators have benefitted?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I do not have that detail.

Mr HUGHES: It would be a handful.

The CHAIR: Member for Giles, if I just take you back a bit, your question to the minister asking how many boats do you think might be in the Northern Spencer Gulf was at best rhetorical. I understand you are trying to make—

Mr HUGHES: I would have thought the department might have a handle on the commercial operators in the Upper Spencer Gulf taking cuttlefish. I understand there is no commercial quota on cuttlefish, and you can correct me if I am wrong, but the eyewitness reports—and when I have been out there as well—are that it is only a handful of commercial operators from Port Pirie and Wallaroo who have been exploiting that biomass.

Prof. DOROUDI: In terms of the number of fishermen, we do have that data, but not with us here. We do know how many of each species are caught by which licence. It is a mandatory reporting system that needs to come through. It would not be completely correct to say it is a handful of fishermen, because it is a species that could be listed as part of the 50 or 60 species that we have listed on marine scalefish fishery licences. Therefore, any marine scalefish fishery licence holder could potentially become active on this species as with any other species of those 50 or 60.

In relation to the significance of the species, there is no argument there. That is why all those protections, when they are needed, will go towards it. We are going to continue the monitoring of this stock into the future. As science says, in relation to every species that we manage, we bring the control management measures in place as they are needed and necessary. I hope that has answered the question.

Mr HUGHES: I am a great respecter of science as well, but I guess in this case when you refer to 'science' you are referring to a survey and then a value judgement made in relation to that survey, that this is just a straightforward fisheries issue.

Prof. DOROUDI: If I understood the question correctly, when the status of the stock became better we did not need to do that on an annual basis, but we did that every couple of years to make sure that we monitored the numbers. This year, as the minister said, has been the highest number ever over the past 10 to 15 years that we have done that assessment. On that basis, the decision was made that some of those measures could be stopped or removed, as they were all temporary measures that we brought in to manage this situation.

When stock goes down in a fishery, it is not necessarily always the problem of the fishermen. The problem here is the fishermen and their activity is one of the only things we can go and manage in this process. Therefore, when science says that the status of a stock is right in a sustainable way, there is no need maintain and keep additional pressure on fisheries or fishing activity. That was the basis of the advice that came from that committee.

Mr HUGHES: I guess the alternative argument is that this is globally unique and should be protected fully. Going back to some of the other issues raised about the nature of the committee that makes the decisions based on the survey, what consultation happened with local dive operators and other dive operators throughout the state when it came to the decision to reduce the protection, bearing in mind that the alternative dive site, when you cannot dive on the southern part of the peninsula, was the northern part of the peninsula and the giant Australian cuttlefish on that northern side were wiped out? There were none there this season.

The CHAIR: Bearing in mind, member for Giles, that my understanding is it was a decision made by the previous Minister for Primary Industries. We had this conversation with Minister Tarzia also. It is up to the minister here to answer it how he wishes, but I would not see that he is necessarily responsible for decisions made by a previous minister.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for the question. As I was not minister at the time, I am unaware of that consultation to know the detail.

Mr HUGHES: Well, I could say there was no consultation. Given the role that the Premier plays as the tourism minister, was the Premier consulted when it came to a reduction in protection for the aggregation?

Mr PEDERICK: Point of order, Mr Chair: 'tourism'.

Mr HUGHES: An entirely reasonable question; he is the tourism minister.

Mr PEDERICK: Yes, in the tourism estimates.

The CHAIR: He is the tourism minister. Once again, it was a decision made—I would not expect this minister to know the answer to that question, quite frankly, member for Giles.

Mr HUGHES: Or his department? It is part of the consultation process leading to a decision, and I would have thought that the tourism minister would have had a role to play in that decision.

Mr PEDERICK: You have to ask him.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: My response, I guess, would be to ask the former minister.

Mr HUGHES: And I guess I will get the same answer, but was the environment minister consulted?

The CHAIR: I have already indicated, member for Giles—and I appreciate your line of questioning—that I do not, as committee Chair, expect this minister to be responsible for or have answers for decisions made by the previous minister. We had the same conversation in the previous session.

Mr HUGHES: Given the continuity of the department, and largely the same personnel in place, and also the continuity of the advisers, surely someone would be able to answer whether the Premier and the Minister for Environment were consulted over this decision to reduce protection.

Mr CREGAN: Point of order: 97, argument and opinion.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am also aware, as stated previously, as part of that committee—that working group that looks at the science—that members of that committee are Tourism and DEW.

Mr HUGHES: Yes, but none of them have anything to do with cuttlefish though.

The CHAIR: Can I go back to the point of order raised by the member for Kavel: 97, such questions not to involve argument. I do not uphold the point of order in this case because he was merely putting to the minister a question in relation to the continuity of the department. That was reasonable, but the minister can obviously answer as he sees fit.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: As I pointed out, the working group was consulted, and members of that working group are the South Australian Tourism Commission, DEW and the Conservation Council as well.

Mr HUGHES: Who were the tourism representatives on that working group? What organisations did the tourism representatives represent?

Mr PEDERICK: Point of order, sir.

Mr HUGHES: No, that is a reasonable question.

Mr PEDERICK: No, it is not.

The CHAIR: There is a point of order from the member for Hammond.

Mr PEDERICK: The minister is not responsible for any tourism-related questions, sir.

The CHAIR: No, that is correct—

Mr HUGHES: But it is part of the consultation leading up to the decision.

The CHAIR: —but his question was about the committee, as I recall, so I am going to allow it.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am advised it was the South Australian Tourism Commission.

Mr HUGHES: Thank you; that is worth knowing. When it came to the environment council, who was the representative?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Of the environment council? The Conservation Council?

Mr HUGHES: Sorry, the Conservation Council.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: We do not have with us the name of the representative of the Conservation Council, but we can get you a name, if you would desire.

Mr HUGHES: To the knowledge of the department, did the Conservation Council support the decision to reduce the protection?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am advised it was a unanimous decision of the working group to come up with their recommendation, but we will confirm that. The Conservation Council member's name was Craig Wilkins.

Mr HUGHES: Will the committee be looking at the data again in the near future to make a decision as to whether the protection should be increased and, if so, what is the time line for that?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I have certainly made public statements along the lines that, yes, the working group will be consulted again going forward in these decisions.

Mr HUGHES: Will there be wider consultation this time beyond the committee to those organisations that are directly affected?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: At this point in time, the working group is the committee that is put there to make recommendations, and we will see what that recommendation is before deciding whether we need to go wider. Also, apparently I just need to correct something. I was misinformed: the decision was not unanimous. The next meeting is in December.

Mr HUGHES: When will the decision be either ratified or modified? Will that be in December, or will that be later?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I cannot pre-empt their advice.

Dr CLOSE: Minister, I invite you, if you have the information, to specifically indicate whether it was in fact not Craig Wilkins' position that he supported the majority outcome?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed that is the case, yes.

Dr CLOSE: I think it is just important to be clear, having specifically named him before.

The CHAIR: Excuse me, deputy leader and minister, I am missing some of this. Deputy leader, could you repeat your question, please?

Dr CLOSE: I was just picking up that the minister had said in response to the member for Giles that a particular individual was named as being from the Conservation Council and as having supported the decision to remove the protection of the cuttlefish.

The CHAIR: Initially, the minister said the decision was unanimous, yes.

Dr CLOSE: Yes, and then in saying that it was not unanimous, given that one individual was named, I invited him to take the opportunity, if that person had not supported it, to say that.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Which I confirmed.

Dr CLOSE: And he has confirmed. I think that is important for the reputation of that person that that be allowed to be known.

The CHAIR: Yes, I understand that, but please remember that we need to have this examination through the Chair. It is all very well for you two to chat away, but I missed a bit of it, unfortunately. The member for Hammond has a question.

Mr PEDERICK: Thank you, sir. I am keen to talk about marine scalefish reform, minister. I refer the committee to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 62 and 63, Sub-program 1.2: Fisheries and Aquaculture. Will the minister please advise how the government is progressing with purchasing licences in the reform of the marine scalefish fishery?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The Marshall Liberal government is delivering on a key election commitment to our state fishers by supporting a historic reform of the commercial marine scalefish fishery. We are on track for fishing under the new arrangements on 1 July next year. The \$24.5 million reform aims to increase the profitability of fishing businesses, grow sustainable fishing populations and improve opportunities for recreational fishers. Key elements of the reform are:

- introducing a total allowable catch for priority and second tier species;
- a priority species will be managed by an individual transferable quota system; and
- the fishery will be managed by four regional fishing zones to enable local management of fish stocks.

The removal of up to 150 licences is supported by a \$22 million government funded Voluntary Licence Surrender Program. The program commenced on 25 May this year and closed on 13 November. As of today, we have received 130 applications for voluntary licence surrender, with 35 licence surrender proposals from Gulf St Vincent licence holders, 66 from Spencer Gulf, 25 from the West Coast and four from the South-East. A few more applications may still come, with applications in the mail and postmarked Friday 13 November still able to be submitted.

In relation to quota allocation methodology, an independent allocation advisory panel was set up with expertise in legal fishery economics and fisheries management. The panel was tasked to investigate and provide advice on an appropriate basis for the allocation of catch quota to individual licence holders through the individual transferable quota-based system.

A consultation process commenced with the release of the first package of information in June 2020. Licence holders were invited to respond to an online survey and/or submit their feedback via email or post. The panel provided initial advice which went out to consultation with package 2 and other matters for consultation.

To further assist fishers to understand the proposed reforms, a series of regional meetings was undertaken during August and September, at which 200 licence holders attended. The consultation period ended on 18 September 2020. All of the 177 survey responses and 69 written submissions and summaries of the 17 regional meetings were reviewed by the panel, which then provided me with its final report.

Following careful consideration of all information, I announced the government's final decision in relation to the allocation formula. The information has been provided to all licence holders on the management zones, the total allowed catches for priority species and the government's proposed methods of allocating individual transferrable quota units in the fishery. Individual licence holders have also been provided with indicative individual quotas.

Should a licence holder believe they have exceptional circumstances that have impacted their fishing activity and, if it were not for those circumstances their catch history and consequently their quota allocation would have been higher, they can apply through the exceptional circumstances process. Retired magistrate Dr Andrew Cannon has been appointed to independently assess exceptional circumstances claims and provide advice to me as minister. The exceptional circumstances process opened for applications on 1 November and closes on Monday 30 November.

Dr CLOSE: I would like to turn to the topic of commercial fishing licences. The reference is on page 69 of Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, the table of the statement of comprehensive income for the department. Fifth down in the income list is fees, fines and penalties. How much was raised through commercial fishing licences in the 2019-20 financial year?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The total that was recovered from industry, fisheries and aquaculture, was \$15,012,000. For industries, as per the latest budget, fisheries and aquaculture, a proportion of the R&D spend is \$13,857,000 and going into the aquaculture fund is just over \$1 million.

Dr CLOSE: What is the average cost of a commercial fishing licence in South Australia?

The CHAIR: Deputy leader, just for clarification, are you talking about a marine scale fishing licence?

Dr CLOSE: I am talking about all commercial fishing licences.

The CHAIR: So across different sectors?

Dr CLOSE: That is right.

The CHAIR: So there will be a significant difference, I would guess, between each sector.

Dr CLOSE: I am sure you are right.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: That was the answer I was about to give, that the fees are very different across every sector.

Dr CLOSE: Is it possible to break it down into those sectors for me?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: We will take that on notice.

Dr CLOSE: This was discussed earlier in the context of abalone, so if you tell me that you have answered this I will believe you. There is a question about the waiving of commercial fishing licences due to the COVID situation. I believe you stated that you had deferred some licences but not waived any; is that true?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes.

Dr CLOSE: What have other states and territories done, to your knowledge?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: We are aware that some of the other states have waived fees, but we do not have those details with us.

Dr CLOSE: Have you received representations requesting waiver as opposed to deferral from any commercial fishing sectors?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: We have certainly had conversations with some sectors, yes.

Dr CLOSE: What support is being offered to businesses that are having their exports blocked due to the challenges with the Chinese trade relationship?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I understand there are a number of concerns in regard to South Australia's export trade with China. The government of South Australia is communicating with the commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, which regulates export fishing—in particular, lobsters—as well as the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The department will continue to monitor any developments on this issue.

Dr CLOSE: But at present there is no allocation of resources to support those sectors within your department?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: We are closely working with industry and DIT on this matter.

Dr CLOSE: On the same topic but changing references, on page 63 there is a table that lists the expenses and income for the sub-program of fisheries and aquaculture. I see a substantial increase in expenses between the 2019-20 actual, which is some \$19 million, to the 2020-21 budget, which is some \$40 million.

In the explanation of significant movements there is an acknowledgement that this is primarily due to payments under the Marine Scalefish Fishery Reform program. Can the minister quantify how much of that relates to the Marine Scalefish Fishery Reform program?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: As part of the buyback of the licences, \$22 million in that space.

Dr CLOSE: Are there any other variations that explain the difference between the two? That is \$21 million, but it says 'primarily', so there might be some up and some down.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am advised there is nothing particularly significant to identify.

Dr CLOSE: Continuing on that page reference, with the FTEs listed as 114 being budgeted for, 111 at present, how many of those FTEs are employed dedicated to the commercial sector? How many for the recreational branch of the department?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: There are many officers who cross both the recreational and commercial sector. We do not have with us the detail of each individual split in that regard.

Mr CREGAN: I take the committee to Budget Paper 3, page 109. Can the minister explain how the government is assisting the wine industry to showcase and adopt new technology?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: With a focus on agtech and innovation, the South Australian Wine Industry Development Scheme delivered a number of initiatives to grow the sector. One of the key projects announced was an exciting partnership with Wine Australia to showcase emerging technologies at SARDI's research farms at Nuriootpa and Loxton, as well as private vineyards. The government committed \$200,000 to the \$870,000 project, which is being initiated in South Australia but will be delivered nationally.

The project will strengthen the wine sector by increasing its awareness and confidence to adopt relevant agtech solutions that will optimise grape and wine operations. This scheme's round had 27 applications, requesting over \$3.5 million in funding and with total project values of up to \$8.5 million. There were several exciting projects funded, including a business cluster led by McLaren Vale-based Platform and Consilium Technology to bring together a multistakeholder group made up of growers, industry, government, academia, business, technologists and geospatial experts to work together to digitally map vineyards, including the Langhorne Creek region.

Ferment 2.0 is a program focused on wine and tourism agtech and upskilling and challenging businesses to think outside the square. There is also a rapid assessment project led by Wine Australia, Consilium Technology and the University of Adelaide to develop a new tool to rapidly, objectively and cost effectively map fire damage at a block level using high-resolution satellite imagery.

The Adelaide Hills vine improvement committee clone project was developed as a major consequence of the Cudlee Creek bushfires, which led to the loss of 1,100 hectares of vineyards in the Adelaide Hills wine region, including the loss of six major grapevine source blocks essential to replace the fire-damaged vines and to replant numerous ageing vineyards established in the 1980s and 1990s. The project will develop a world-first genetic test to objectively verify clonal identity in pinot noir.

It is important to note that we also allocated \$235,000 of this fund to support mapping and assessment of grapevines damaged in the summer bushfires and smoke taint vouchers for grapegrowers.

Dr CLOSE: I would like to turn to SARDI, page 63, Sub-program 1.3: South Australian Research and Development Institute. On the next page, there is a list of income, including some \$55 million being budgeted for in the 2020-21 budget. How much of that income is from externally funded projects?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed that all of the \$55 million, being income, is money that has come in. The difference between expenditure and income is the government's allocated funds into that.

Dr CLOSE: I understand. How much of that external income comes from another government and how much from industry?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: For an exact figure, we will take that on notice.

Dr CLOSE: Is it possible to give a sense of proportion? Is most of it industry sourced? Is most of it federal government sourced?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The majority of that funding would come from research and development corporations (RDCs).

Dr CLOSE: Is there also income that goes to SARDI that comes from cost recovery levies imposed on industry? Is that one of the funding streams?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I will refer this answer to my adviser.

Prof. DOROUDI: The commercial fishing industry pays for the science—that is, the statutory science—to set all the TACs on an annual basis. There is a small amount of fee-for-service work for a couple of other divisions of SARDI. Apart from that, the rest of the majority of the fund comes from proposals, competitive rounds to RDCs or CRCs.

The CHAIR: Three minutes to go in this session.

Dr CLOSE: One last question, I suspect.

The CHAIR: Yes, certainly.

Dr CLOSE: I would like to turn to agricultural services and horticulture and refer to Sub-program 1.1: Agricultural Services, page 61. Does the government or does the minister have a strategy for research and development to support the horticultural industry?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed that in the horticultural space, like in most other industries, strategic direction is more commonly set at a national level, and industry bodies and RDC appropriates—horticulture Australia in this case—will set the agenda. SARDI, PIRSA and others would then work toward that agenda that is set at a national level.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 61, Sub-program 1.1: Agricultural Services. Will the minister explain how the dog fence rebuild will support pastoralists and farmers against the impact of wild dogs?

The CHAIR: Minister, I am going to give you just one minute.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Wild dogs have a profound impact on the state's \$4.7 billion livestock industry. The Marshall Liberal government has recognised the need to act quickly to implement our \$1.2 million election commitment to appoint two full-time equivalent wild dog trappers. The trapping program has been highly effective, but we also recognise this was only a small measure in helping to fix the long-term impact of wild dogs. Therefore, working closely with the livestock industry and the commonwealth government, we secured a \$25 million commitment to rebuild 1,600 kilometres of the 100-year-old South Australian dog fence.

Stage 2 of the project has begun. This is supported by the wild dog bounty program, with more than 200 trapped to date. The dog fence is the most important asset protecting the \$1.5 billion sheep industry. About two-thirds of the South Australian dog fence is 100 years old. These sections are brittle and have been damaged by camels, kangaroos, emus, wild dogs and weather events. The rebuild of the dog fence commenced in the autumn of 2020. The first section to be rebuilt was 26 kilometres in the north-east pastoral area. I am pleased to advise this was completed in July.

The second stage has begun, with the section being 115 kilometres long, also in the north-east pastoral land, and the rebuild of stage 2 will end at the New South Wales border. The third and fourth sections to be rebuilt are north of Murray, including about 200 kilometres. The fifth section is a 200-kilometre section north-west of Roxby Downs. The rebuild is supporting South Australian companies and jobs, particularly those that provide fencing material and services.

The CHAIR: Thank you minister; you have done well. There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the proposed payments for the portfolio program of the Department of Primary Industries and Regions complete. We now move to ForestrySA. The minister will need to change advisers. Thank you to those advisers who have been with us.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr J. Speed, Chief Executive, ForestrySA.

Prof. M. Doroudi, Deputy Chief Executive, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

Mr D. Humphrys, Chief Financial Officer, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

Mr R. Robinson, Director, Department of Primary Industries and Regions, Forests.

The CHAIR: The minister appearing is the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development. The estimate of payments is for the Department of Primary Industries and Regions and Administered Items for the Department of Primary Industries and Regions. I advise members that the proposed payments for the Department of Primary Industries and Regions remain open for examination. I call on the minister to make a statement about forestry, if he wishes, and introduce his advisers.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Thank you, Chair. I would also like to thank the department staff for their work in the last session. In my opening statement in this session, I would like to start by saying that the South Australian Forestry Corporation, trading as ForestrySA, is a statutory authority which is a commercial and recreational forest manager. ForestrySA's key commercial activity is the management of the Mount Lofty Ranges forest estate, with an area of over 10½ thousand hectares of commercial pine plantation. Maximising the value of the forest asset is a key strategic priority for ForestrySA.

Here with me today is Julian Speed, Chief Executive of ForestrySA. I also have remaining with me Professor Mehdi Doroudi, Deputy Chief Executive of the Department of Primary Industries and Regions, and Rob Robinson, Director, Forestry, Department of Primary Industries and Regions. We look forward to your questions.

The CHAIR: Deputy leader, do you wish to make a statement?

Dr CLOSE: No, other than to reiterate the thanks to the staff for being here.

The CHAIR: I invite questions.

Dr CLOSE: If I may turn to page 109 in Budget Paper 3, there is a reference to funding through ForestrySA community service obligations going to forestry research and development through the National Institute for Forest Products Innovation centre in Mount Gambier. It says that there is \$2 million from the state government over four years to June 2021. What funding will there be for the institute over the forward estimates? Is there anything that goes beyond June 2021?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I have been informed that any future funding will be based on the assessment of the current projects and the requirement of funding going forward in the lead-up to 30 June and after those projects are complete or in process.

Dr CLOSE: So it is conceivable that there will be no money and it is conceivable that there will continue to be money. You are not able to guarantee anything at this stage?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: There has been no decision made about that either way at this stage.

Dr CLOSE: I appreciate the decision is likely to be reported in the budget, but might the decision be made earlier than next year's budget and known to the community?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: That decision also has to be made with the commonwealth so its reliance is in that space. It will be made in consultation with them.

Dr CLOSE: I go back to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 66, Sub-program 1.6: Forestry Policy. There is a table listing expenses and income for that sub-program. There is a difference of \$4.615 million between 2019-20 budget and actual. There is an explanation that refers to the profile of grant programs. Can the minister give some more detail about the reason for that difference?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I have been informed that that is almost exactly what has been spent in the South East Forestry Partnerships Program. It includes increased expenditure in associated costs with the sale of government-owned land as part of the Mid North Forests Future Strategy of about \$100,000.

Dr CLOSE: If I can turn to the question of forestry roads. In last year's budget, the state government announced a plan to develop a prioritisation list of forestry-specific road transport issues. What roads were identified as priorities as a result of this investigation?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: We do not have that detail with us, but we will try to get it before the end of the session.

Dr CLOSE: You may answer the same to these questions, but is it possible to tell me how much funding has gone into fixing those roads over the past 12 months?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Likewise, we will see if we can get an answer before the end of the session.

Dr CLOSE: And, if possible, what is planned for the next 12 months and how many issues have been fixed thus far since the announcement was made. If you can take all of that on notice, I would appreciate it.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: We will take that on notice and see if we can get an answer.

Dr CLOSE: On page 66, under targets for 2020-21 there is the reference the state government has listed, and I quote:

Work with the forest and wood products industry to pursue recovery pathways following the impacts of bushfires and the pandemic.

There is feedback that we have received from industry that nothing specific has been done to support the forestry industry. Is it possible for the minister to say what specific support is available to the industry?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: In relation to both bushfire and COVID recovery, in the 2019-20 fire season the South Australian forestry plantations were significantly impacted by bushfires on Kangaroo Island, at Cudlee Creek and at Keilira in the Limestone Coast. The Department of Primary Industries and Regions continues to support recovery with a variety of measures. I note farm forestry growers affected by fires have accessed bushfire recovery grants of up to \$75,000, which are administered by the department.

On Kangaroo Island, about 15,000 hectares of plantation were burnt. The department is working with the majority plantation owner, Kangaroo Island Plantation Timbers, and the other small growers on the island. In the Mount Lofty Ranges, a total of 218 hectares of plantation were burnt. The South Australian Forestry Corporation, ForestrySA, is now salvaging its own plantation as well as assisting private woodlots. Caught in these fires were important recreational assets, such as high-class mountain bike tracks, which are being reinstated by ForestrySA.

In the Limestone Coast, 254 hectares were burnt. While the Limestone Coast forestry plantation growers suffered fewer losses from the last fire season, I acknowledge their concerns for the coming fire season, including the maintenance and staffing of fire towers as well as the rapid deployment of fire crews, and today we have made announcements in relation to that. We are spending \$1.1 million in this space to make sure that we have maintenance and staffing of fire towers.

COVID-19 impacted the forestry wood sector in several ways. The South Australian-Victorian border dissects the Green Triangle, Australia's most concentrated plantation and forestry wood processing region. Border controls are requiring the industry to adapt and adjust their workplace practices and operations. A decline in the harvest wood export market due to COVID has placed the hardwood industry in a difficult position.

Forest growers have the ability to delay harvest until the market recovers; however, employment has fallen in other parts of the value chain, particularly the harvest and haulage sector. Recovery of markets may be relatively slow and the harvesting and haulage sector has invested significantly in specialised logging equipment, which is not generating a return on investment. The government is working with stakeholders and the Australian government to support the industry.

I have had several meetings with Forestry over the last few weeks, including as recently as yesterday, particularly to understand the Chinese customs issues in relation to the biosecurity issue of allegedly live bark beetles. The South Australian log exports are almost entirely dependent on the China market, with most logs, along with Victorian logs, going through the port of Portland. It is understood the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment is assessing the implications of the ban, including the status of any consignments mid-passage to China and any issues with

biosecurity protocols. South Australia will assist with the investigations and support industry as necessary.

Dr CLOSE: On the subject of the challenges associated with the pandemic, of course there are trade issues and cross-border issues, both of which you highlighted just then, minister. Have you personally had an opportunity to speak to the Victorian Cross Border Commissioner about border closures?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I have not spoken with the commissioner, but I have spoken with the minister.

Dr CLOSE: What was the nature of the discussions and agreements should such circumstances occur again? Were there any discussions particularly in the context of the lockdown that occurred here in the past few days?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Those discussions with the minister were very fruitful, and we have a very good working relationship in trying to solve any issues that do come up.

Dr CLOSE: Is there a reasonable expectation that there might be a different approach taken should one or both states need to go into a form of restrictions? Is there going to be a different approach from the one experienced with the Victorian restrictions?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: As ministers on both sides of the border responsible for primary industries, we are responsible for primary industries not health or any other sector, so we have influence but not control. It is in that light that we will continue to work together where we need.

Dr CLOSE: On a related matter, on page 66, one of the targets for 2020-21 is:

- Progress recommendations from the [FIAC] to develop the forest and forest products sector.

Recommendation 5 of the Forest Industry Advisory Council of South Australia is:

That the South Australian Government establishes an agreement with the Victorian Government to address harmonisation of cross-border issues in consultation with industry.

Has such an agreement been established, accepting that agreement may not have countenanced a pandemic?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The Forest Industry Advisory Council of South Australia (FIAC) is certainly an important body in this space, particularly in the current environment. It has been working to provide input to me as minister to help me in decisions going forward. That council has a wideranging representation across industry and these members have been chosen because of their varied expertise.

The council represents, knowledge across the value chain, ranging from local experts to international forest managers, ensuring government receives information on a wide range of interests. The council has met five times and in March 2020 provided its advice to government with recommendations aimed at strengthening growing the sector.

The government is now considering ways to supercharge growth of the South Australian \$2.3 billion forest and wood product sector, with advice received on industry promotion, water usage and licensing, cross-border arrangements, fire management, biosecurity, infrastructure and transport, research and training. The state government is currently preparing a response.

I would like to add, particularly in relation to the previous question, that I have been informed the department is also working very well with industry, Health and SAPOL on those cross-border arrangements to make sure that those arrangements are suitable for Forestry to do what they need. They have been able to get exemptions to allow them to do things beyond the normal transition across those borders.

Dr CLOSE: Continuing on the same subject, when does the minister anticipate having an agreement with the Victorian government on harmonisation of cross-border issues, as was recommended?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: We are very much working to try to make sure that the working arrangements across those borders are appropriate, but we will also acknowledge that we have

signed, and likewise endorsed, the Agriculture Workers' Code to allow workers to cross borders on the basis of the Agriculture Workers' Code, which was an initiative out of national cabinet.

Dr CLOSE: On the same budget line in terms of expenditure—although I note that in Budget Paper 3 on page 109 there is also reference to the ForestrySA community service obligations, which are also about fire, but if we can stick to the expenditure within this sub-program in Budget Paper 4, Volume 4—how much has been set aside for the forestry industry to deal with the impacts of the bushfires that damaged the industry during last summer? I appreciate that some answer was given earlier, but could you be specific about the amount of money that will be spent in this budget.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: As I stated previously, there was the announcement today of \$1.1 million for fire prevention going forward. There is also the opportunity for the individual plantations that were affected to seek a grant of up to \$75,000 under the bushfire recovery program I mentioned earlier. That will be open to those individuals and is still available to apply for right up to the end of December.

Dr CLOSE: On the subject of the \$1.1 million announced today, is that in this budget? Is that part of the \$3.483 million?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I have been informed that approximately \$900,000 of the \$1.1 million is new money that is not in the budget.

Dr CLOSE: Can the minister explain why, given that the budget has only just been laid before the people, an extra \$900,000 was suddenly added in?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I have been informed that it has not been added in, as such. It is actually money that comes out of ForestrySA's reserves.

Dr CLOSE: Is the minister able to tell us which of the towers are being replaced and what is the cost for each?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The details of this plan have been worked through with industry to best allocate those funds.

Dr CLOSE: Will all the network of towers in the Limestone Coast that have major compliance issues be fixed?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed that the requirement for whether or not there is a need to fix certain towers will very much be determined by industry's expectations and acceptance or involvement in new technologies going forward.

Dr CLOSE: The \$1.1 million does not necessarily fix all the tower issues in the Limestone Coast?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The \$1.1 million is also available to adopt new technologies if that is the way it is considered by industry to go forward.

Dr CLOSE: I understand, minister, that today you also announced a harvest and haulage contractors study. How much is that study going to cost, and is that in this budget?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed that it is about \$30,000 that is coming out of normal expenditure.

Dr CLOSE: Minister, to return to the issue of Chinese export, of the funds that are on page 66 in the sub-program, how much is being set aside to assist the South-East industry to deal with the China export ban?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: On 11 November 2020, China suspended imports on all Victorian log timbers out of their ports. The majority of South Australian exports of timber to China leave via Portland, just over the border in Victoria. The suspension of trade occurred as 12 shipments from Victoria this year have contained bark beetle.

We take biosecurity very seriously, and an issue has been raised and is being investigated. I have every confidence it will be rectified. The South Australian government is working with the federal government and industry on treatment and inspection that is required to ensure that we meet

biosecurity standards required of any country we sell to. We need to address this issue as quickly as possible. Also, directly in relation to the support to industry, this is very much a federal issue of getting this China market back open, so we will support the federal government and industry in all endeavours.

Dr CLOSE: Minister, are you aware whether bark beetle was found in South Australian timber in Portland?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I have been informed that there is no certainty that there is not bark beetle here in South Australia. The ban is out of ports of Victoria, and it is unable to determine particularly which shipments necessarily identified bark beetle or not.

Dr CLOSE: Has the state government considered subsidising the freight so that the forestry industry is able to use the Port Adelaide or other South Australian ports to continue to supply China?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I have been informed that both Queensland and Victoria have bans out of their ports placed on them, but the exporters from other states are too nervous to actually send shipments to China at this point in time.

Dr CLOSE: Has the department estimated the job losses associated with this plan should it continue?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The fact is that this issue has only occurred just over two weeks ago and there is uncertainty about how long this will be in place. At this point in time, we do not necessarily have that data. We have been speaking to industry as recently as yesterday and, likewise, they were not indicating a particular number, but they were indicating it could be up to hundreds.

Dr CLOSE: Has any money been set aside to help those companies caught up in this trade ban?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: As I stated, this is very much an issue the federal government is currently dealing with, in relation to trying to get this trade reopened. It happened only two weeks ago—

Dr CLOSE: So none yet?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Because the process has not got to the point—there have been no requests at this point from industry for direct support in any shape or form.

Dr CLOSE: Have you had the opportunity to talk to the federal minister about this and what expectation there is for this to be resolved hastily?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Certainly at a department level there have been some discussions at AGSOC. I have also had a very brief conversation with the Minister for Trade.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Statements, page 109. Will the minister please provide details on ForestrySA's involvement in the recent feral animal program around Cudlee Creek?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the honourable member for this important question and his particular interest in feral animal management—even if it is not the right feral animals, in his eyes. I am pleased to report that ForestrySA contributes to cross-agency pest animal control programs. During the 2019-20 year, ForestrySA played an active role in a significant and successful feral goats control exercise.

This was a three-month operation across 750 hectares within the Cudlee Creek Forest Reserve, Montacute Conservation Park and the Kangaroo Creek Reservoir reserve. The operation involved ForestrySA, SA Water and the Department for Environment and Water. Almost a thousand feral goats were removed, dramatically reducing the impact on native vegetation following the bushfire. The removal of these pests is also of benefit to the valuable horticulture crops in this region.

A helicopter and trail bikes were used to muster the goats off the steep and rugged terrain into yards. The goats were sold to a commercial processor, with the proceeds going back into land and weed management programs. Following two successful musters, a follow-up aerial culling operation will remove other goats from terrain inaccessible to mustering areas.

ForestrySA provided accommodation at Cudlee Creek Forest Reserve for contractors involved in the operation, and ForestrySA staff assisted with patrolling during the operations. Some goats do remain in the area and, as the number can double in less than two years, a second control operation is planned for 2021.

Dr CLOSE: Back on page 66, I would like to talk about FIAC. In the targets, the first is to progress the recommendations. How many times has the Forest Industry Advisory Council met in total and in the 2019-20 year?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: My understanding is they have met five times and three times in the 2019-20 year. I have attended two meetings since being minister.

Dr CLOSE: Therefore it is reasonable to assume that it will continue to meet; it continues to operate?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: It does, yes.

Dr CLOSE: What were the KPIs for the council in the 2019-20 year?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Their primary purpose in their first year was to come up with recommendations. It came up with 16 recommendations, and their purpose ongoing now is to help the department and the minister to deliver these recommendations.

Dr CLOSE: I will ask a couple more questions, if I may. In the lead-up to the 2018 state election, I understand that there was an election commitment to doubling the economic value of the forestry industry. In fact, in Budget Paper 3, page 106, there is a figure that indicates a decline by 9.24 per cent of the value of forestry commodities and that that had occurred before we started to see the impact of COVID. What is the reason for the decline in the value of the commodity?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed there may be many reasons behind why that could be the case, including bushfires, etc., leading to different amounts of timber coming into the market. As that timber recovered, there was a significant drop prior to COVID in relation to hardwood woodchip, which also may be in response to fires as other timber comes into play.

Dr CLOSE: One of the recommendations from the advisory council was that the government investigate ways to avoid water waste for the benefit of all water users. What progress is being made in acting on that recommendation?

Mr ROBINSON: The National Institute for Forest Products Innovation has a project that is focusing on water. When those results are available, that will help provide evidence to feed into the process which is led by Department for Environment and Water.

Dr CLOSE: There are other recommendations made by the advisory council such as recommendation 8, which 'commits to funding and progressing a staged industry plan for preferred infrastructure works', and recommendation 9, which 'establishes ways to reduce licensing and regulatory costs'. Has any money in this budget been set aside to deliver on those recommendations?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I have been informed that at this point in time FIAC have not gone into the detail, so we are working through the detail with them.

Dr CLOSE: Would it be fair to say that at present the budget expenses of \$3.483 million for this program do not include any money set aside to act on the recommendations of that council as yet?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes.

Dr CLOSE: I would like to ask a couple of questions about Kangaroo Island, and I appreciate there will be also be some government questions that people want to ask. The fourth dot point relates to working with the forestry and wood products industry to deal with the impacts of bushfire and the pandemic of course. You have briefly talked about the impact on Kangaroo Island, which was obviously substantial. What discussions have you had with Kangaroo Island Plantation Timbers relating to their situation as a result of those fires?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I have had several discussions with them directly and certainly the department has also had discussions. Some of those discussions are about KIPT seeking to build a wharf at Smith Bay on the north coast of Kangaroo Island to implement the ongoing commercial forests on the island. The wharf is a major development, with a defined development process. Before government makes a decision, the Department for Infrastructure and Transport must complete further analysis, which is currently underway. Any more specifics in this space need to be directed to the Minister for Planning.

Dr CLOSE: On the very subject of the wharf, do you support that wharf application?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: That wharf application will be a decision for cabinet.

Dr CLOSE: Will it be a decision for cabinet?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: It will be a decision for the planning minister to give approval to go forward.

Dr CLOSE: Appreciating that the Smith Bay wharf development is very important to KI Plantation Timbers, have you had any discussions specifically about the impact of the bushfires and any support they may need as a result of losing timber and having so much standing dry timber there?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: As part of the meetings I have had with KIPT directly, they have also had discussions around options for transporting the timber using the Kingscote jetty, or alongside it, using a slipway to bring in a barge to offload timber. I have certainly had discussions with them in that space.

Dr CLOSE: I have a couple more questions, but I am happy for government questions. I have very few left.

The CHAIR: Given that it is after seven, we are drawing to a close.

Mr CREGAN: Can I take the committee to Budget Paper 3, Budget Measures Statement, page 121. Is the minister able to update us on what steps ForestrySA is taking to examine bushfire risk in view of the circumstances that developed during the Cudlee Creek fire?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the honourable member for this important question. Fire management is critical to ForestrySA's operations and responsibilities for both asset protection and broader community protection. The Cudlee Creek fire in December 2019 was devastating. ForestrySA's firefighting personnel attended the fireground for 12 days. ForestrySA firefighters attend both private and public land while maintaining ongoing fire coverage across Kuitpo and Mount Crawford forests.

More than 102 hectares of ForestrySA plantation and 350 hectares of native forest reserves were affected, resulting in approximately \$1 million in damage to plantation forest assets and infrastructure. ForestrySA has an active role in fire planning and management, alongside other government agencies, and participates in several forest industry fire initiatives. ForestrySA's fuel management and risk reduction approach addresses native vegetation in fuel reduction and fuel reduction throughout the life of the commercial plantations.

In the 2020-21 year, an expanded fuel reduction program focuses on a more flexible and integrated approach to both harvest residue and prescribed burning together, where possible, in the Mount Lofty Ranges. Operational preparedness for the 2020-21 fire season included the recruitment of seasonal fire crews to bolster the corporation's firefighting capability fleet and equipment maintenance and training.

As a professional firefighting brigade, ForestrySA has specialist forest fighting appliances, including the military-grade Fire King fire tanker appliances, bulk water carriers and quick response vehicles. During 2020-21, ForestrySA has budgeted \$740,000 for a refurbishment program to enhance the performance, safety and longevity of the Fire King appliances.

In preparation for the 2020-21 fire season, ForestrySA has actively contributed to and noted observations and insights from the independent review of the 2019-20 South Australian bushfire season and the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements. As a CFS brigade,

ForestrySA's fleet is part of the government's announcement of investment in enhanced technology, including automatic vehicle location technology for real-time vehicle tracking during emergencies, with field trials to commence during this bushfire season.

Dr CLOSE: Still on page 66, with the FTEs that are listed in that table: 5, 4.6, 5 and then 5.6 for this financial year's budget, does that comprise all the staff responsible for ForestrySA or is ForestrySA listed separately somewhere?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: That figure is PIRSA's position. ForestrySA is separate.

Dr CLOSE: How many are in ForestrySA?

Mr SPEED: Around 32 FTEs at the moment. We expanded for the fire season.

Dr CLOSE: What is the responsibility undertaken by the PIRSA staff?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: That is listed on the budget paper. They lead the development of improved productivity, growth and employment opportunities in South Australia in the forestry industry, while growing regional development, building partnerships and protecting the government's interest in forestry.

Dr CLOSE: I have one more question, if I may, which again pops back to the Forestry Industry Advisory Council. There is a recommendation there that the South Australian government work with all levels of government to implement a bipartisan strategy that stabilises policy settings over the long term. Has any bipartisan work commenced in South Australia to date on forestry industry policy?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: In relation to the recommendations, it is very early days in this space. My last meeting with them was about three weeks ago, when they were still presenting the recommendations to me, so I certainly have not had the opportunity at this point in time to have conversations in that space.

Dr CLOSE: We look forward to a bipartisan approach; thank you.

The CHAIR: Are there any further questions from the opposition benches? I do not believe there are any further questions from the opposition, but the member for Hammond has a question.

Mr PEDERICK: I have a very serious question. I am into feral weeds and animals, and I refer the committee to the Budget Statement, page 109. Will the minister elaborate on ForestrySA's control of proclaimed weed species on public land?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for this important question about weed control. ForestrySA undertakes annual weed control programs within its plantation estates and native vegetation reserves. This work takes place in the Mount Lofty Ranges and also in the native vegetation reserves in the South-East region.

On average, weed control programs are undertaken across more than 3,000 hectares of forest every year. As the member would appreciate, appropriate methods of control are selected for each situation, whether it be for native vegetation, habitat restoration, threatened species management or the removal of weeds for commercial plantations. The weed control work in native forest reserves is funded under the community service obligation program. The weed control work in plantation areas is funded by the commercial operation arm of ForestrySA.

ForestrySA regularly collaborates with other public land managers, including SA Water and the Department for Environment and Water, along common boundaries to implement cooperative weed control programs. A good example of this can be seen along the South Para River riparian corridor in the Mount Crawford Forest Reserve. Weeds of national significance are a high priority for control and information resources are regularly shared with Landscape SA authorised officers.

Mr ELLIS: I would like to take the committee to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 66, particularly where it references employment opportunities in South Australia's forest industry. Minister, I wonder if you might detail ForestrySA's involvement in the recent Warner Bros production of the blockbuster picture *Mortal Kombat* and perhaps articulate if you sought out a starring role and what the audition process was like, if so.

The CHAIR: That is an excellent question to finish the estimates week, member for Narungga.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for his questions. Three separate ForestrySA locations were used during the filming of *Mortal Kombat*. The production crew also purchased ForestrySA timber to build their film sets.

ForestrySA's forest reserves are popular, film-friendly locations providing a diverse range of landscapes. ForestrySA has maintained a positive relationship with the South Australian Film Corporation for many years, supporting numerous feature films, television and advertisement productions that showcase our amazing state. The picturesque Mount Crawford Forest Reserve was a key location for the filming of the Warner Bros *Mortal Kombat* production in late 2019.

Three separate locations were used for filming, including the Rocky Paddock Campground and the Mount Crawford airstrip. The Rocky Paddock Campground was transformed into a 14th century Japanese village for the duration of filming. ForestrySA assisted the production team during set construction and deconstruction for the duration of filming and provided fire suppression support for days of filming during the fire ban season.

I am excited to advise that the film is scheduled for worldwide release in April 2021. ForestrySA is exploring opportunities to host a COVID-safe outdoor screening upon the film's release. I would also just note that, no, I was not an extra. The last time I was an extra in a movie was in the original *Storm Boy* as a child in the playground.

The CHAIR: That is where you get those film star good looks, minister. In fact, the original *Storm Boy* was on television around a week ago.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Unfortunately, I did not get the same close-up my brother had—a full screen shot of him in the classroom.

The CHAIR: Which leads me to my closing remarks. What do they say about politics? That it is show business for ugly people? That is to take nothing away from the film star good looks of the member for Narungga, who asked the question.

There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the proposed payments for the Department of Primary Industries and Regions and Administered Items for the Department of Primary Industries and Regions complete. I thank the minister and his advisers, I thank the shadow minister and I also thank the members of the committee, who have remained stoic since 9 o'clock this morning. I am also going to thank the Clerks for the assistance they have given me throughout this week. I lay before the committee a draft report for committee A.

Mr ELLIS: I move:

That the draft report be the report of the committee.

Motion carried.

At 19:16 the committee concluded.