

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**Thursday, 29 July 2021****ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A****Chair:**

Mr P.A. Treloar

Members:

Hon. L.W.K. Bignell

Ms K.A. Hildyard

Mr E.J. Hughes

Mr P.N. McBride

Mr A.S. Pederick

*The committee met at 09:30**Estimates Vote***DEPARTMENT FOR CHILD PROTECTION, \$648,072,000****Minister:**

Hon. R. Sanderson, Minister for Child Protection.

Departmental Advisers:

Ms C. Taylor, Chief Executive, Department for Child Protection.

Ms F. Ward, Deputy Chief Executive, Department for Child Protection.

Ms J. Male, Acting Chief Financial Officer, Department for Child Protection.

Mr M. Burton, Chief Human Resources Officer, Department for Child Protection.

Mr T. Rich, Parliament and Cabinet Coordinator.

The CHAIR: Good morning, everybody, and welcome back to committee A. This morning, we are examining the Department for Child Protection, and the minister appearing is the Minister for Child Protection. I declare the proposed payments open for examination and I call on the minister to make a statement, if you wish, minister, and please introduce your advisers.

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: I would like to introduce Cathy Taylor, the chief executive; Fiona Ward, my deputy chief executive; Joanne Male, the acting chief financial officer; Michael Burton, the chief human resources officer; and Tom Rich, the Parliament and Cabinet Coordinator.

This budget for a stronger South Australia is delivering better services in my portfolio of child protection right across South Australia—in the regions and in metropolitan Adelaide. We are delivering better services for families, children and young people and also creating jobs.

Since coming into government in 2018, the Marshall Liberal government has had a whole-of-government approach to child protection. We have regular meetings as a social affairs cabinet committee where ministers for health, human services, education and child protection meet to discuss our whole-of-government response to child protection.

Child protection is extremely complex, and we need to work on the causes of why children come into care, such as mental health, domestic and family violence and substance abuse. That is

why in this current budget we have really focused right across government on the causes of why children come into the child protection system.

For example, we have a commitment of \$21 million of new money in domestic violence measures and have provided record spending of \$163.5 million for mental health and focused efforts on the major causes of why children are removed from families. It is also why we are heavily investing in intensive family support services to strengthen families to give them capacity where possible for children to remain safely in their homes.

Following the success of our family group conferencing pilot, we have secured both future and recurrent funding and expanded the program. Family group conferencing will now include unborn child concerns, as well as an Aboriginal-specific program to be delivered by Aboriginal Family Support Services. We have guaranteed future funding for the family group conferencing of \$3.7 million over the forward estimates, which I am really pleased about, as we have had wonderful outcomes so far through the two-year pilot.

In addition, \$11.3 million has been committed for the Resilient Families social impact bond for intensive home-based family support intervention program which will be delivered by the Benevolent Society. We have also heavily invested in reunification for children who are removed so that we can work with their families.

The Marshall Liberal government is investing a record \$57.4 million over nine years on recommissioning improved family reunification services and additional specialised support throughout South Australia, including in remote and regional communities. In order to successfully reunify families when it is safe to do so, we recently announced our Newpin family reunification program, which is also a social impact bond. That is just about to start with Uniting Communities.

This \$18.2 million program will help an anticipated 200 families over the next seven years to work in a centre-based intensive therapeutic service to teach parents how to parent safely so that their children can be returned safely to them. For those children who are unable to return to their family, we have done a great deal of work on expanding our family-based care.

Along with our family scoping of relatives and family members, we have also recruited and retained many more foster care families. I am pleased to say we have a net 66 new foster carers to the end of May this year. We have also set up a foster care recruitment and retention task force. This task force has done a lot of work on how we can better support, recruit and retain our foster carers. Last year, we released our statement of commitment in conjunction with Connecting Foster and Kinship Carers, the peak body for carers. We continue to work closely with them.

I am proud to say that this financial year we have negotiated priority access for a number of services through our Investing in their Future initiative. These include:

- Catholic Education scholarships for 200 children in care;
- dental services to age 25;
- ambulance cover extension to the age of 21;
- therapeutic services, for example through the NDIS supports and mental health services; and
- an online carers portal.

We continue to look for ways we can better support both kinship carers and foster carers who are doing such a wonderful job looking after our children.

When we have been unable to find family-based care for children and young people, we have our individualised placement and support packages. The 90-day care model has been very successful in putting intensive supports around a young person when they first come into care with the hope of settling them down so that they can go into a family-based placement or, if not, into a residential care home. We continue to roll out the Sanctuary therapeutic model of residential care and training continues for all our staff.

We are well underway with a two-year pilot using three Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to deliver kinship care services. These include:

- Aboriginal Family Support Services;
- KWY in partnership with Lutheran Community Care; and
- InComPro in partnership with UnitingCare Wesley.

All signs are very positive with this new pilot.

Our department has ensured that children and young people in care with a disability have a current NDIS plan and are receiving the necessary support. As at 31 May this year, 1,096 children had an NDIS plan in place.

I recently announced \$3.8 million over 2.5 years to fund our Treatment Foster Care Oregon pilot program. This is an exciting pilot program, which will provide specialist care for children and young people with complex needs, which has an international track record of success. It is an evidence-based and internationally acclaimed program that supports children and young people aged 12 to 17 with complex behaviours with the aim of these children being able to then go into family-based care placements.

We continue to move away from large bed facilities, having closed several already, capping the numbers in others and ensuring that further purchases or rentals are home-style houses that have three or four bedrooms.

For those leaving care, we commenced our Stability in Family Based Care program where supports are now being expanded to include children in non-family based care. This budget provides \$2.7 million over four years for a pilot program, the Stability Post Care program, to provide increased support to young people leaving care in non-family care placements up to the age of 21 and those with complex needs who are at risk of homelessness and housing instability.

In addition to what I have mentioned, over the last 12 months we have progressed a number of policies programs and services. I recently launched the department's Child and Youth Engagement Strategy. We have redesigned our supported independent living services. We have convened the inaugural missing persons round table, which also met recently for a second time.

This budget also provides \$1.2 million over two years to establish the Significant Incident Reporting Unit in the Department for Child Protection in line with the Rice review recommendations. Our broadening of qualifications policy introduced in March 2018 has ensured that the department now has an additional 64 case managers and 238 social workers as at 30 June. We are delivering more frontline workers in child protection than ever before. The Marshall Liberal government has provided growth funding of \$9.9 million in the 2021-22 year, increasing to \$12.2 million in the 2024-25 year, to deliver 25 additional FTEs across service delivery areas.

Finally, I would like to recognise all the staff across government, non-government organisations, carers, service providers and volunteers across the child protection system and the whole community who have been working together to help us realise the many achievements I have outlined. I continue to look at research and best practice internationally and interstate for ways that we can continue to improve outcomes for children and young people. I will continue to strive in conjunction with my department to further improve practices that safeguard children from harm, keep families together where it is safe to do so and help vulnerable children in their healing.

The CHAIR: Before I call on questions, in my flurry to find a mask this morning I omitted to make my opening remarks; one of them actually relates to masks. I am going to encourage people to wear masks today unless they are either asking or answering a question.

I have a short statement to make as Chair. The estimates committees are a relatively informal practice and 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 on an approximate time for the consideration of proposed payments, which will facilitate a change of departmental advisers. Can the minister and lead speaker for the opposition confirm that the timetable for today's proceedings previously distributed is accurate?

Ms HILDYARD: Yes.

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: Yes.

The CHAIR: Changes to the committee membership will be notified as they occur. I have already done that for this morning's meeting. 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 24 September 2021.

There will be a flexible approach to giving the call for asking questions. A member who is not on the committee may ask a question at the discretion of the Chair. All questions are to be directed to the minister, not the minister's advisers. The minister may refer questions to advisers for a response. 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*. I remind members that the rules of the debate in the house apply in committee are consistent with the rules of the house. Photography by members from the chamber floor is not permitted.

Ministers and members may not table documents before the committee; however, documents can be supplied to the Chair for distribution. The incorporation of material in *Hansard* is permitted on the same basis as applies in the house, that is, that it is purely statistical and limited to one page in length.

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 declare the proposed payments for the Department of Child Protection open for examination.

Ms HILDYARD: Thank you, Mr Chair. Thank you, minister, for your opening statement and thank you to all the departmental staff here. My first set of questions refers to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 84, and relates specifically to the minister's and Department for Child Protection's objectives at the start of the agency statement on page 84, very specifically the second sentence of paragraph 2 where it says 'the department is responsible for the provision (either directly or indirectly) of quality care and case management'. Minister, how would you assess the role that you have played in the provision of quality care and case management over the past 12 months?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: As to quality of care, and being the minister, it is really looking at all the different policies that we have been bringing in and all the different announcements that we have been making—so looking to international research and programs that are provided interstate that are successful. An example would be the Sanctuary model of therapeutic residential care we researched for several years. That was announced about a year ago. It is a three-year rollout of training. It is whole-of-department training, in particular for residential care staff who may have a different practice approach towards young people.

We have recently announced Treatment Foster Care Oregon, which is another program that better supports children aged 12 to 17 who have been in residential care. That is being used interstate. Again, that is a program I have been researching since I was in opposition—so for many, many years. In my role, one of our first trips when we were allowed to travel was to Leeds to investigate the child-friendly city policy, family group conferencing and family led decision-making. As a result, that has now been rolled out throughout our department and is very successful.

You will see in this budget family group conferencing. The pilot has been completed very successfully. The funding has now been secured for the future, and it has been expanded to include unborn child concerns as well as an Aboriginal-specific program. So there are a lot of things that we are doing in terms of programs that we are rolling out to ensure better care for our children and young people.

Ms HILDYARD: Thank you, minister. In the two terribly shocking cases looked at in the Rice review, one teenage girl in care lived with a paedophile for two months and another teenage girl in care was pregnant and abused by a paedophile. How would you rate the provision of quality care and case management in those two tragic cases?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: The Rice review did not condemn any of the practice of our staff. In fact, wraparound services were provided immediately as soon as staff were aware. They were the ones who actually reported the incident and did everything possible. There was no criticism of my department's response to the young people as far as their care goes; however, it was a reporting issue. As a government, we have accepted all the Rice review recommendations. We have expanded on those recommendations, and the team (the Significant Incident Reporting Unit) will be starting by the end of September.

Ms HILDYARD: What do you believe that you personally did wrong in those two shocking cases in terms of your responsibility for oversight of—

The CHAIR: Member for Reynell, you are making an assertion there and providing argument. Remember, of course, that the rules of debate in the standing orders apply today. Perhaps you would like to rephrase that question.

Ms HILDYARD: Minister, how do you believe you fulfilled your responsibility for the oversight of systems and reporting mechanisms with reference to those two shocking cases?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: I will read for you the recommendations that Rice actually made as a result of investigating fully the circumstances. Recommendations 1 to 3 in the Rice review related to improving guidance for staff regarding reporting significant incidents to the chief executive and the minister. The DCP was assisted in this task by an outposted senior solicitor from the Crown Solicitor's Office, Joseph Maniscalco, who worked with DCP executives from 22 February to the end of May. This phase of work was completed with Mr Maniscalco, delivering his final report to the government at the end of May. This is now under consideration.

The government's response to recommendations includes the development of a dedicated client incident management system, improved reporting guidance and a commitment to a new permanent significant incident reporting unit. The Significant Incident Reporting Unit, which will commence operation by the end of September, will be staffed by a manager and three full-time staff.

Rice recommendation 4 required the Chief Executive of the DCP to establish a comprehensive staff education program to ensure clear staff understanding of significant incident reporting requirements. DCP was supported in this work by the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment.

An online training module, called Reporting Obligations and Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector, was made available to all DCP employees in May this year. This is a compulsory training module and participation is being tracked through the HR Directorate. As at 31 May, 23 per cent, or 610 employees, had completed the training since it was released on 24 May.

Rice recommendations 5 and 6 were the responsibility of the Attorney-General's office. The Attorney-General introduced legislation amendments into parliament on 16 March 2021 to increase the penalty for a breach of written directions, to three years for the first breach and four years subsequently, and to make bail less available in these instances by making a person arrested for breach of a written direction a prescribed applicant.

Along with my own amendments to the Children and Young People (Safety) Act that seek to broaden the application of written directions, which were introduced on 12 November last year, the Attorney's amendments will undoubtedly significantly strengthen the protections afforded to vulnerable children under written directives. The Attorney's bill was assented to on 25 May.

The department's incident reporting procedures are in the process of being updated and the Significant Incident Reporting Unit established. The client incident management system project is responsible for building a client incident management system to support centralised reporting, management and documentation of client incidents via customised workflows with the department, thereby promoting a culture of safeguarding and continuous quality improvement.

Procurement for the original system was finalised in March 2020 and an additional module was recently purchased to support the work of the Significant Incident Reporting Unit, which is the Significant Incident Management Register for the long-term monitoring and reporting of significant issues. The implementation of a client incident management system aligns with the department's

strategic direction, along with the state and national strategies and recommendations of the Rice review. As I mentioned, it will commence by the end of September.

Ms HILDYARD: Minister, do you take any responsibility for what the Rice review labelled as your 'serious failure' in relation to the two tragic cases?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: As I have already mentioned, the Rice review was not damning of the response to the children by my department at all. This is a reporting issue; it was a failure for the incidents to actually be reported up, so I was not made aware of the incidents. That was a failing of the procedure. We have had a full education process, we are rewriting the procedure, and there will be a Significant Incident Reporting Unit that will be up and running by the end of September.

Ms HILDYARD: How many children currently reside in care not directly managed by the department—just a number?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: I would have to take that on notice.

Ms HILDYARD: Exactly how many children are currently reunified with their parents after going into care?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: As at what date? From when they went in? You need to give more specifics to know—

Ms HILDYARD: In the budgetary period, in the last financial year.

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: So for the last financial year 2020-21 you would like to know how many?

Ms HILDYARD: Yes.

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: As at May—because we do not have the final figures for the end of the financial year—there were 200 children who were reunified in the last financial year.

Ms HILDYARD: From residential care?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: No, that is reunified.

Ms HILDYARD: That is my question: after going into residential care. Do you need to take that one on notice?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: Yes.

Ms HILDYARD: Other than the two tragic cases that are known of paedophiles accessing children in care, have there been any other similar cases during the last financial year?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: I meet regularly with my department, my CE and my deputy CE every week, when I am briefed on significant incidents; however, I can pass to Cathy Taylor, my CE, for further information.

Ms TAYLOR: Thank you very much for the question. As the minister indicated, we meet on a regular basis and brief the minister on significant incidents. In terms of children and young people and online exploitation, it has been a matter of significant commentary by the eSafety Commissioner nationally. She recently released a report together with the Australian Federal Police Commissioner, identifying that during the period of COVID more children and young people have been contacted via means such as social media.

We have worked hand in glove as part of agencies around the country with the eSafety Commissioner on how we strengthen, if required, our current policies and procedures, not just in residential care but in out-of-home care. We have also been really well supported by the work that has been done nationally with all the education departments.

At this point in time, I can say to you that, while I am not aware of another child or young person, it is an ongoing issue that we continue to manage and monitor because we are really aware of the advice from the eSafety Commissioner. They have seen a significant increase—something close to 50 per cent—in children being contacted via social media inappropriately, particularly during the last 12 months.

Ms HILDYARD: Are any children in care currently pregnant?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: As I have already said, I am briefed weekly. I will not be discussing individual children. I think it increases the stigma that is already around children in care that we do not need to make worse.

Ms HILDYARD: Are children and young people in care subject to a curfew?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: Currently, around 86 per cent of children in care are in family-based care, so that is with either foster carers or kinship carers. Of course, they would have their own rules.

Ms HILDYARD: Residential care, just to be clear.

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: As to residential care, there are DCP homes and there are non-government organisation homes. I have met with many of them and discussed this very issue. Generally, the times—sorry, it is very distracting having someone wander through the chamber.

The CHAIR: Residential care, minister.

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: Yes. Of those in residential care, the majority would have social workers. In general, it is the social workers who would determine their curfew and conditions. Some of them have part-time jobs; some of them might have a girlfriend or a boyfriend, friends, sports, or things they do outside the home. From my experience of meeting and talking to a lot of the children, it is individualised to the specific child and their age group. They do have times that they are expected to be home by.

Ms HILDYARD: How many reports has the department received of children in care—

The CHAIR: There is a point of order.

Mr PEDERICK: Do you have a budget line?

Ms HILDYARD: I indicated specifically a point at the beginning of these questions.

Mr PEDERICK: That is fine, but it probably should be updated all the time.

Ms HILDYARD: I can repeat it if you like.

The CHAIR: Can I just respond to that, member for Reynell. The member for Reynell identified at the outset that her first set of questions at least would be related to the objectives, paragraph 2 on page 84, where it states:

...the department is responsible for the provision (either directly or indirectly) of quality care and case management...

I have been listening to the questions carefully and thus far they have all related to that, in my view.

Ms HILDYARD: Thank you. How many reports has the department received of children in care being out unsupervised, uncared for and unsafe at night?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: If you are actually discussing missing persons reports—is that what you are getting at?

Ms HILDYARD: No.

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: I do not know how there would be a register of that. However, every child who goes missing from a placement should receive the same system response and support as the community would expect in South Australia. The government recognises that children and young people may be at an increased risk when they are missing from their placements. DCP is committed to a timely response when this happens. This response has an interagency focus, with SAPOL being one of DCP's key partners.

Before discussing the department's response in detail, it should be noted that DCP is required to report a young person as missing—

Membership:

Mr Malinauskas substituted for Mr Hughes.

The CHAIR: There is a point of order.

Mr MALINAUSKAS: The point of order is standing order 98, debate. The question was incredibly specific, the question being, 'How many reports has the department received of children in care being out unsupervised and unsafe at night?' I note that in the minister's remarks she said, 'I'm not sure if we have a register of that.' Obviously that would be very newsworthy if the department and the minister do not even know if children are out.

Either the minister does not know that children are out, in which case we obviously have a monumental scandal, or the minister does know if children are out unsafe at night, in which case we would invite her to answer the question rather than just read pre-prepared statements that other people prepared for her. She is the minister and she is responsible for these children. She likes to tell us that she is responsible for these children. She should answer the question.

The CHAIR: There is a point of order. Member for Schubert.

Mr KNOLL: Standing order 98: this is time for asking questions inside the standing orders rather than commentary.

The CHAIR: Leader, your point of order related to debate. You went on to make quite a speech about that point of order and what your view of the minister's answer was. The question was around reports of children being out and unsafe of an evening. Being out and being unsafe are, in my mind, probably two different things, but the reality is we ask questions of a minister in this committee and the minister is actually at liberty to answer that question in the way she sees fit.

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: Thank you, and I am answering that question. DCP is required to report a young person as missing if they do not return home at the expected time or if they leave home without permission, which is exactly what you asked about. Reports are made even if the whereabouts of the young person are known. Multiple reports can occur for one child even on the same day.

Various data issues impact the reliability of our statistics, including variability in approaches of data entry between DCP and NGOs and an overstatement of missing persons reports, given system limitations that preclude the reclassification once submitted, e.g. a child's location might become known. DCP is working to improve system capability to produce a more accurate picture.

In terms of a coordinated response, on 18 May 2021 DCP convened a round table of key stakeholders and experts, including SAPOL, the Guardian for Children and Young People, SA Health and NGO representation, to discuss ways to keep vulnerable children and young people safe when they go missing, often running home to their families.

This is a national issue. There is a national report that has just been released, as well as a full inquiry in Victoria. The first roundtable discussion considered a variety of options for improving the government's response to the challenge of children and young people missing from care from their placements, such as having a dedicated focus of specialists from across government on delivering more tailored responses and support for individual young people, streamlining the way information and data are shared across agencies to support better understanding of patterns and behaviours, continuing the rollout of the Sanctuary therapeutic supports, and involving young people through the CREATE initiative in discussions to ensure that any steps taken are responsive to the needs of children and young people in care.

As I mentioned, there has also been a second round table. There is a lot more I can say, but I can see that you might have other questions.

Mr MALINAUSKAS: I thank the minister for her articulation of the criteria and messages around round tables. That is useful, but the question we are seeking to get some answers to are some figures, so let me go back a step: does the minister have at her disposal or collect any figures in regard to reports of being missing?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: As I have already said—

Mr MALINAUSKAS: Okay, so what are those figures?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: —DCP is required to report a young person missing if they do not return home at the expected time or if they leave their home without permission.

Mr MALINAUSKAS: How many times has that occurred?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: So you are asking for the missing persons' reports, which was what I asked originally and you said no.

Mr MALINAUSKAS: Well, no—

The CHAIR: Somebody is going to clarify the question.

Ms HILDYARD: There are missing person report numbers, which are under—

Members interjecting:

The CHAIR: Order! Member for Reynell, just a moment, please. I cannot hear the question that is being clarified while there is argy-bargy going on.

Members interjecting:

The CHAIR: Leader, you are called to order. Member for Hammond, you are called to order.

Ms HILDYARD: Minister, I appreciate the 10,166 missing person reports that were made last year, up from 8,968 the previous year. What I want to understand is the number of reports in total that are made in relation to children being out unsupervised late at night. There are missing person reports but, as I understand it, there are also reports of particular behaviours, etc., that are noted when children are out unsafe at night.

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: It is 10,166.

Ms HILDYARD: Can you confirm that there are no other reports, other than those shocking 10,166 missing person reports, made about children in care being out unsupervised at night? Is it just that terrible missing person's report number, or are there other reports?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: I thank the member for her question. To be clear, last financial year, the 2019-20 year to which you are referring, the 10,166 refers to 387 children, which represents 8.9 per cent of the children in care. This is a decrease from 2014, when 10.2 per cent of children went missing from care in missing persons' reports. In the 2015-16 year, it was 9.7. In the 2016-17 year, it was 9.5. In the 2017-18 year, it was nine. So this figure is consistent or lower, as you might say, as a representative of the percentage of children who go missing.

Any child who goes missing is of course very disturbing for their carers. Of course we want to know where they are and there is a formal process, which I have said twice already. DCP is required to report a young person or child missing if they do not return home at the expected time or if they leave home without permission. All those reports, to the best of my knowledge, would be reflected in that 10,166. There is no other separate reporting system. There is the one, it is centralised and it all goes into these figures.

Ms HILDYARD: That would include figures from members of the public who make reports, etc. Has the minister or the department received and/or viewed any CCTV footage of children in care being out unsupervised and unsafe at night?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: I have not personally, and not to the best of our knowledge is that done.

Ms HILDYARD: Has anyone from your department seen that footage?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: I do not know what footage you are referring to.

Ms HILDYARD: The CCTV footage of children in care being out unsafe at night?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: If you mean when police make an arrest and they go back and collect CCTV footage, that would be a police investigation. That is not something I would do. I have never done it and I am not aware of that happening.

Ms HILDYARD: Are you saying that no-one from your department has ever viewed that footage?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: We can take it on notice, but of course I do not know what 2,000 staff might have done separately. It is not standard practice. It would be a police investigation. If they needed to identify somebody, they might get a particular staff member involved, but we will take that on notice.

Ms HILDYARD: Given the number you have just confirmed of missing person reports, and given the earlier comments by the CE about the increase in children in care being contacted via social media by potential paedophiles during the COVID crisis, why have you not funded the community visitor scheme that the Guardian for Children and Young People has repeatedly called for?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: That is a very interesting link.

Ms HILDYARD: Well, she has repeatedly said, to quote from her report, 'Children in care—

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: Could we have a budget line?

Ms HILDYARD: —are at ongoing risk of abuse by paedophiles.' That is in her latest report, which has been tabled by you in this parliament. Why have you not responded to her call to fund a community visitor scheme for children in care?

The CHAIR: Member for Reynell, we—

Ms HILDYARD: We are on the same budget line.

The CHAIR: Yes, but this is tenuous because you are asking a minister—

Ms HILDYARD: I think—

The CHAIR: Don't argue: just listen to me. You are asking why a minister has or has not done a particular thing that has been recommended. Now—

Mr MALINAUSKAS: That is perfectly acceptable.

Ms HILDYARD: It is. It is in relation to the objective to provide quality care to children—

The CHAIR: Member for Reynell, my view is that it is a tenuous question. I will give the minister the opportunity to answer this, and then I know that the member for MacKillop has a question he would like to ask.

Ms HILDYARD: Of course he does. I can assume the answer will be about five pages long.

The CHAIR: Member for Reynell, I am going to remind you—and you have been in this place long enough now to know this—that during any estimates any member of the committee has the opportunity to ask a question of the minister—

Ms HILDYARD: Yes. I understand.

The CHAIR: —not just the lead speaker—

Ms HILDYARD: Yes.

The CHAIR: —for the opposition. That is the reality of it.

Mr MALINAUSKAS: Absolutely, and we know, of course, sir—

The CHAIR: Leader!

Mr MALINAUSKAS: —that only happens as a cover for ministers out of their depth.

The CHAIR: The leader is called to order again, and if I need to call him to order again he will be warned.

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: Firstly, this is not part of my budget. The Guardian for Children and Young People is in the budget for the Minister for Education.

Ms HILDYARD: She has called on you.

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: He has the control over the budget and what funding is given to the guardian's office. It is not my budget line.

Ms HILDYARD: Have you advocated to him directly for funding that scheme, given that the Guardian for Children and Young People in a report about children in care, for whom you and your department are responsible, has called for that scheme to be funded because, quote, 'Children in care are at ongoing risk of abuse by adults.'

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: There are a few different points there. Firstly, my CE was discussing all children being at risk, not just children under guardianship. We know that e-safety is a particularly important area for all children. Just like in the Carly Ryan case, this can happen to any family and more things need to be put in place.

Secondly, I do not see the point when we are in lockdown. Nobody could visit anyway because we were in lockdown, so having visits would be of no use. Thirdly, the guardian already is able to, and does, visit residential care facilities as part of her actual job, as all the former guardians have been doing for decades, visiting residential care facilities.

Ms HILDYARD: So why has she repeatedly called for a funded scheme?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: And fourthly, this is for the—

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: —Minister for Education to answer. Direct your question to the correct person.

The CHAIR: The member for MacKillop has a question.

Mr McBRIDE: My question refers to Budget Paper 5, pages 12 and 13. Can the minister update the committee on how the Marshall Liberal government will deliver better services and support families through family group conferencing?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: I thank the member for MacKillop for his question. Our budget for a stronger South Australia is delivering better services and supporting families, children and young people through successful programs such as family group conferencing. Family group conferences provide an opportunity for children and young people and their family and community members to make informed and timely decisions about their care arrangements where a risk of harm and/or neglect has been identified.

Through a family group conference, family and the extended network of an at-risk child or young person will work together with the guidance of a facilitator in a positive environment to build capacity and support a plan that will keep children safe. The family group conferencing program has enabled DCP staff to refer children, young people and their families to Relationships South Australia when a child is at risk of harm and their parents and broader family are willing to work to implement change, ultimately preventing the child or young person from needing to enter care. As at 31 May 2021, a total of 186 families had been referred to participate in the family group conference, many of whom were Aboriginal families.

South Australia's Aboriginal-specific Ngartuitya Family Group Conference Service is located at Hindmarsh and was launched in 2020. Feedback from participants has been very positive, with 90 per cent of families and professionals agreeing that the conferences went well. We are on track with our goal of supporting up to 200 families by the end of the year. It has been so successful that the Marshall Liberal government is investing a further \$3.7 million over four years and has committed ongoing funding to secure and expand family group conferences following the enormous success of the two-year pilot.

Family group conferencing has been further expanded this year to also include services to unborn children. For the first time, we are referring parents much earlier and working to build family

structures and support to prevent family separation. Relationships SA commenced the trial for a new family group conference for unborn child concerns on 1 April this year.

The Aboriginal Family Support Services are also engaged to trial an Aboriginal-specific family group conference program. Their service model is currently being designed and referrals are expected to begin soon. This successful program prevents children and young people from entering the child protection system and is another example of how the Marshall Liberal government is committed to supporting families and ensuring the safety of children and young people.

The CHAIR: Have you finished your answer, minister?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: Yes. I have just received an answer to an earlier question.

The CHAIR: Do you want to furnish us with that now?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: Yes. Twenty-nine children from residential care were reunified in the 2020-21 year to 31 May.

Ms HILDYARD: I refer to the same reference. When will the government implement Nyland recommendation 150 and ensure that there are always two staff members in residential care homes?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: The Nyland report provided two recommendations to abandon single-handed shifts. Recommendation 132, in commercial care, was accepted by the former government for implementation in phase 3, which would have been January 2019 to January 2022. DCP has now ceased the use of commercial care contracts as at October 2020.

Recommendation 150, part C, was a recommendation regarding residential care workers. This recommendation was not supported by the former government. DCP is aware that the PSA continues to campaign for the removal of single-handed shifts in residential care facilities. The department's position remains that single-handed shifts are appropriate unless otherwise clinically indicated. Care teams regularly monitor the needs of children and young people and adjust staffing where appropriate. There are also a number of initiatives in place to support youth workers including the mobile response teams called the mobile night team.

Ms HILDYARD: Just as a clarification in relation to that statement, in an earlier answer you spoke about non-government organisations also providing support to children in care. Is there a commercial arrangement between the government and those non-government organisations to provide that care?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: I will hand that to my CE to explain better.

Ms TAYLOR: Thank you very much for the question. Yes is the answer. Since 2016 when we first commenced the delivery of residential care by non-government services, we originally did 100 children and young people in 2016 and we have continued to work with the non-government sector, particularly in terms of the delivery of specialist areas.

Two of the areas in residential care where they have particularly assisted us is in relation to Aboriginal and young people residential care. We obviously rely heavily on the Aboriginal Family Support Services, for example. The second area is specialist disability residential services. Again, we have worked with a number of the specialist disability providers in South Australia to provide residential care. We recognise that it is important that the government continues to deliver residential care and also that there is the ability in the non-government sector to deliver residential care. We will continue to support that.

Ms HILDYARD: It is commercial care, thank you. What is the current ratio of staff to—

The CHAIR: Just before you go on, member for Reynell, had the minister completed her answer to the previous question?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: I would like to comment. There still are commercial arrangements; however, this is not what was previously referred to as commercial care. Under the former government, commercial care consisted of children being placed in hotels, motels and caravan parks. We have stopped the use of hotels, motels and caravan parks. Children are now in residential care. We discontinued the use of commercial care—and we used homes, not caravan parks and hotels—in October 2020, as mentioned. Placement and support packages were instigated,

which is a 90-day intensive support that is wrapped around the young person with the hope of either being able to scope family members or a family-based placement and, if not, they would then go into residential care.

Ms HILDYARD: I refer now to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, program 1, page 84, particularly the workforce summary on that page and specifically staffing in residential care homes. What is the current ratio of staff to children in residential care? What will be the ratio should any of your new staffing targets be fulfilled this year?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: The total residential care FTE figure for June 2020-21 was 607.15 FTEs, excluding overtime, compared with 585.1 FTEs for June 2020. To go back to the 2017-18 year, there were 571.9. So there has been a dramatic increase—

Ms HILDYARD: There are more children in care.

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: —in the number of residential care workers.

Ms HILDYARD: The ratio is what I am after because there are more children in care—not the number but the ratio.

The CHAIR: I think we have that clear now, but I would ask the member for Reynell not to interject. You can seek clarification at the appropriate time.

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: I will just finish regarding this.

Ms HILDYARD: The numbers are not what I want; it is the ratio.

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: Back in the 2017-18 year, under the former government there were 42.5 vacancies in residential care. We have reduced that to 9.6 at the end of June, and we have 24 more in our July training. It is important because the ratios and the numbers are reflective of the staff, and I have been asked many questions on the numbers of staff in residential care. This government has worked extraordinarily hard with the department to recruit and retain residential care workers to ensure the best care for our children and young people, and we have made significant inroads. I will pass over to my CE for any further clarification.

Ms TAYLOR: Thank you, minister. The only thing I would add is that ratios are heavily factored around the individual clinical needs of children and young people. For example, I have previously flagged that some children and young people will have significant disabilities, and they will have often quite a different ratio, for example, to other children and young people. As the minister has flagged, it is individualised: we work on the premise of what are the clinical needs of children and young people.

Ms HILDYARD: Minister, how do you think staff feel about current staffing ratios and your repeated insistence that staffing issues have been resolved by you?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: We will never stop recruiting until we have full recruitment. I have never indicated that it was finished and done and we are resting. We have a rolling recruitment and, as I just mentioned, we just had another intake for residential care workers. We have an agreement with TAFE to do our training. It is specialised training that targets the needs of our department and our residential care facilities. There will also be another bulk intake of new staff in October this year in terms of residential care. So we are doing our very best to recruit, to train and to get more people in residential care, and it is certainly not over.

The CHAIR: The member for Hammond has a question.

Mr PEDERICK: My question relates to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 87, Program 1: Care and Protection, highlights and targets. The topic is about reunification services, including Newpin. Can the minister update the committee on how the Marshall Liberal government is investing in programs to support families and return children and young people to their parents?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: I thank the member for Hammond for his question and I can say that wherever possible our first preference for a child's long-term care is with their birth family. This is because it is widely acknowledged that, where it is safe to do so, supporting children to return

home to their family gives better outcomes to their health and wellbeing and longer term outcomes, such as education, mental health and employment.

We are investing a record \$57.4 million on recommissioned family reunification services and additional specialised support. The service providers will deliver services to a high standard across metropolitan and regional South Australia. In 2020, we undertook an extensive review and public tender process to ensure we secured high-quality services for 2021-22. This process resulted in nine agencies being contracted to provide services throughout South Australia, including in remote and regional communities such as Port Augusta, Ceduna and Mount Gambier.

Consistent with our new contracting arrangements, these new services are on a fee-for-service basis model to ensure we get the best possible value for taxpayer funding. I am pleased that these new services have a strong focus on supporting parents to address underlying issues that affect their ability to provide safe care and a safe environment for children, including practical issues such as the physical condition of their home.

We are now referring families as early as possible, and services offer infant-specific support. Bookyana Cultural and Community Services, an Aboriginal community controlled organisation, has also been included. This builds on our priorities of both supporting and addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in care and supporting ACCOs.

Family reunification services are only offered where reunification is identified as both safe and possible. Many of the families these services work with are dealing with multiple and complex issues, including domestic and family violence, drug and alcohol misuse, and mental health issues. The parent or parents must acknowledge the child protection concerns and be prepared to address them through intensive support to improve their wellbeing and parenting capacity.

I recently announced the Newpin family reunification program for South Australia. This program is a centre-based, evidenced-based, intensive therapeutic family reunification program that works with families to return children to their parents. When the Marshall Liberal government was elected in 2018, I was determined to invest in evidence-based programs that would deliver real outcomes. The Newpin program has been established and operating in New South Wales, the ACT and Queensland for many years and is based on successful models first developed in the United Kingdom.

We have funded Newpin through an innovative social impact bond which builds partnerships between the non-government sector and investors to achieve social outcomes. This is a wonderful way to involve the community to be part of the solution. Newpin will be supported by state and commonwealth governments, with the South Australian government committing \$15.05 million over seven years of the program. It is expected to support more than 200 families, with the initial centre based at Smithfield and other centres being established gradually in the southern and north-western suburbs.

We know that putting money up-front to support families to prevent children and young people from entering care is incredibly important for children and young people, but for the children and young people already in care, particularly those on short-term orders, I want to do everything we can to make it safe for them to return to their families.

Membership:

Mr Hughes substituted for Mr Malinauskas.

Ms HILDYARD: I refer now to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, program 1, page 85. Minister, why did you not achieve your target, in terms of the number of Aboriginal children placed, in line with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Placement Principle?

The CHAIR: I will just ask for some clarification there, member for Reynell. I understand the question, but where in the budget papers did you get the target?

Ms HILDYARD: There is a 4.1 per cent decrease on page 89. The broad subject is 85 and then that specifically.

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: I will refer this question to my CE, Cathy Taylor.

Ms TAYLOR: Thank you for the question. In relation to the Aboriginal child placement principle, this is obviously a critical commitment that the department has signed up to. It is one where we recognise that the better we do the greater the outcomes and quality of care for Aboriginal children and young people.

As part and parcel of our commitment to the national Family Matters report each year, in addition to our reporting as part of this process we also report. I am delighted to say that over the past few years we have set ourselves a target that we think is both appropriate and aspirational because we believe we can do better. We want to continue to increase the target beyond 65 per cent.

I am really delighted to be able to say this is why we are investing, for example, in the three Aboriginal kinship care programs—because the evidence tells us that we want to support Aboriginal children and young people with Aboriginal staff and Aboriginal community agencies. Interestingly, the target for this year was 1,100, and I think it is really important to flag that as at 31 May we were at 1,077 in terms of the number of Aboriginal children and young people who were placed in accordance with the principle.

I absolutely agree that we have more to do. We remain committed, we want to be nation leading and we know this is going to help us, but we will continue to focus on building our level of commitment and delivery with the principle.

Ms HILDYARD: Thank you. Minister, has every departmental staff member who is involved in applying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle received training in doing so?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: I will refer that to my CE.

Ms TAYLOR: I thank the member very much. The department has implemented a number of different initiatives. The first is our work that we have done jointly with SNAICC, who are the national Aboriginal and Islander childcare agency, to assist us and support us with understanding the Aboriginal child placement principle.

At the moment, only the placement hierarchy is located in the legislation. Certainly, the amendments the minister has introduced in the house seek to introduce all five domains of the Aboriginal child placement principle. What we have done is taken the opportunity through our Aboriginal practice directorate with our principal Aboriginal consultants and all our staff to do a number of mandatory training sessions to support them to understand the importance, firstly, of the placement hierarchy and, more importantly, to actually embed all those elements of the Aboriginal child placement principle.

What you would also be aware of is that we are continuing to roll out because from time to time we will see turnover in staff. We recognise that we need to have an ongoing program of support and training for our staff because it is not a static approach and it cannot be a static figure. We need to continue to invest, deliver and train.

Ms HILDYARD: Thank you. Minister, how many Aboriginal babies were taken into care over the past year?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: We will need to take that on notice. Just as a comment, approximately 30 per cent of all children who are removed are of Aboriginal background.

Ms HILDYARD: Minister, can you guarantee that before every Aboriginal child was removed attempts were made to contact grandparents and/or other kin?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: That is operational, so I will hand that to my CE.

Ms TAYLOR: I thank the member for the question. We are certainly committed to ensuring that families, grandparents, aunts and uncles are contacted and involved in the process in terms of removal of children and young people. It is certainly the case that the investment in family group conferencing in particular and in family-led decision-making assists us to really deliver on this outcome. What I can commit to is that we continue to remind our staff of the critical importance of

engaging with family as we seek to think about what are the best outcomes and options and how do we keep children safe.

Ms HILDYARD: Minister, can you guarantee that before every Aboriginal child was removed family conferencing occurred and that translation services were offered where required?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: As I have mentioned in my previous answers, family group conferencing only began under this government. We funded it and we have just completed a two-year family group conferencing pilot that was highly successful. We have now provided and committed to recurrent funding. We have also expanded that service, as I mentioned, to include unborn children so that we can work with building the safety structures in the family rather than removing the child. We have also expanded the service to have an Aboriginal-specific service through Aboriginal Family Support Services.

Into the future, it is our goal to provide more and more family group conferences for more and more people. Because this was never provided by the former government, even with money there was not the actual staff or the capacity in the marketplace for people who could actually facilitate these family group conferences. So we are growing that ability and we are especially targeting our Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to provide that service.

Ms HILDYARD: And the translation services?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: I will need to refer that to my CE.

Ms HILDYARD: The question was: can you guarantee that before every Aboriginal child was removed translation services were offered where required?

Ms TAYLOR: What I can commit to is that our staff work alongside communities and Aboriginal children and families and, where translation services are required, they will access those translation services.

The CHAIR: Member for Reynell, even though we still have 20 minutes to go, I assume you have omnibus questions for this session.

Ms HILDYARD: No.

Mr KNOLL: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, page 87, Program 1: Care and Protection. Can the minister update the committee on the Marshall Liberal government's trial of a new model of specialist family-based care.

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: The Marshall Liberal government is piloting a new model of specialist family-based care. The Treatment Foster Care Oregon pilot will be provided with \$3.8 million over 2.5 years. This includes the time for establishing the program. Treatment Foster Care Oregon is a specialised foster care program that supports children and young people aged 12 to 17 with complex behaviours.

We know that stability and permanency are vital for good outcomes for children, and this new state-first trial will give our most complex and vulnerable children and young people an opportunity to live in a loving, supportive and safe home. Children and young people in care often experience significant trauma, abuse and neglect, and finding the right foster care placement for them can be challenging. The ultimate aim of the program is for the child or young person to return to their family or stable long-term foster carer.

The Treatment Foster Care Oregon model builds a team of workers to provide intensive and directed support to the carer and to the young people placed in the program. For example, the worker will have daily contact with carers; weekly foster care meetings that focus on supervision, training and parenting practice; and the establishment of a behaviour management plan. Importantly, the program teaches children and young people interpersonal skills, coping strategies and problem-solving skills, and encourages participation in sports and hobbies.

The pilot will be delivered by OzChild, which has a 30-year track record of delivering this model both internationally and nationally. The model is backed by evidence-based international research and is proven to improve behaviours in children and young people via a family-based model of care and therapy.

The program will provide placement stability and care that meets the unique developmental needs, with a focus of increasing wellbeing and reducing the escalation of behaviours. It will also support the formation of positive peer relationships, including individual skills training and increased school attendance. The Marshall Liberal government is committed to growing family-based care, and this is another major commitment by which we are working to achieve this.

Ms HILDYARD: I will read in some omnibus questions right at the conclusion of the session.

The CHAIR: Give yourself a couple of minutes at the end.

Ms HILDYARD: For my next set of questions, I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 1, program 1, page 86, in relation to the residential care facilities project, but they will also go to the workforce summary on page 84. How many homes will be built as part of the project and how many children are expected to be housed at the properties?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: The residential care facilities program provides for new homes for children placed under the guardianship of the chief executive. To date, this project has seen a number of older and less suitable DCP facilities decommissioned, such as the Queenstown residential unit, and replaced with more appropriate home-like accommodation. Included in this program is the Davoren Park housing project.

Significant sector consultation advised that a single high-needs intensive placement option with a revised model of care was required. Construction of a new property commenced in February 2021, with completion expected very soon. Theft of construction materials late in May, compounded by national construction material shortages, meant that completion of the construction is now set for September. Most recently, there were also issues around getting the electricity connected.

Ms HILDYARD: Will these homes include improved security and monitoring measures, given the persistent reports by the Guardian for Children and Young People and others that adults outside of the child protection system are preying on children in residential care homes?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: I will refer that to my CE.

Ms TAYLOR: I thank the member for the question. I can confirm that the most recent development, which is the Davoren Park project, which the minister just referred to, was consulted on extensively with the guardian, the Commissioner for Children and Young People, and children and young people themselves. It was designed so that we get the balance right between safety and security but also having a home-like environment because children and young people had, quite rightly, talked to us about not wanting it to feel like a correctional environment but much more a home-like environment.

In addition to that, we are also making significant improvements to the Sturt property, which previously had a very old-fashioned environment, and this will have a mix of both rooms and independent living. So, yes, I can confirm that they really do strike that balance between safety, security and also home-like environments and that we have consulted extensively with the various commissioners and the guardian.

Ms HILDYARD: Minister, what measures have been put in place specifically in Port Lincoln to better protect children in care in that region in the wake of the tragedy there?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: I will pass that to my CE.

Ms TAYLOR: I thank the member for the question. Obviously, the incident that occurred in Port Lincoln in May was a tragedy—a tragedy for the community and a tragedy for the family. What we have done is to continue to work with the community, and that includes not just our own office but those services that are funded, including whole-of-government services. Ongoing support is being provided to the family of the deceased and that is being provided by a range of non-government organisations.

At the time, I know that we were in the process of recruiting a new manager for the Port Lincoln office. That manager has now been recruited and has commenced and we have a full complement of staff in the Port Lincoln office. What I think we would reflect upon is that it is so critical

that we continue to work with all our partners to support this family and this community as we go forward.

Ms HILDYARD: Thank you. Have there been any missing person reports in relation to children in care in Port Lincoln since the tragedy?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: I will have to take that on notice.

Ms HILDYARD: How long has the Principal Aboriginal Consultant position in Port Lincoln and surrounding areas been vacant?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: That is operational. I will hand that to my CE. I do not even know whether your question is correct—your allegation.

Ms HILDYARD: It is on your website.

Ms TAYLOR: I thank the member for the question. The Principal Aboriginal Consultant for that part of the world is to the Far North-Far West region. I am aware that the Principal Aboriginal Consultant has been supporting the Port Lincoln office during both the time of the tragedy and since, so I am not quite sure what the question refers to, because we have continued to have a Principal Aboriginal Consultant working in the region supporting Port Lincoln.

Ms HILDYARD: Has the department been able to meet the terms of its MOU with SAPOL to help look for missing children in care over the past 12 months?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: Our department works very closely with SAPOL. As I mentioned earlier, we have already held two round tables with our department, SAPOL, Health and many others in order to look at better ways to support and reduce the numbers of missing children.

I also referred earlier to several reports. This is a nationwide issue. It is on the top of everybody's mind at the moment. There is a national report that just came out that I have just finished reading. There has also been an inquiry in Victoria due to the high numbers there. We are taking the learnings from other states and other jurisdictions, and really, as a nation, we have to address why this is happening and how we can reduce the numbers of children.

Ms HILDYARD: I now go to page 89 and specifically in relation to performance indicators. Why did the department not meet its target of 83 per cent of investigations commencing within seven days from notification?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: Obviously, with respect to the performance indicators we always set a target. Unfortunately, we have not. It is consistent with previous years. I note from reading many, many years' worth of RoGS that, as a jurisdiction, South Australia has repeatedly been pretty high—in the top two, generally—around Australia in terms of getting to reports and starting them within seven days. As a state, we are actually performing quite well compared to all the other states. Unfortunately, we have set the target again for 83 per cent for the next financial year.

Ms HILDYARD: How many children were at risk as a result of this failure to meet the target number of investigations within seven days from notification?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: I will just add something to the last question. South Australia commenced 76.9 per cent of investigations within seven days. This figure is 17.3 percentage points higher than the national figure, which is 59.6 per cent. I will pass to my CE for any further clarification.

Ms TAYLOR: I thank the member for the question. As you will be aware, we pay particular attention to those who require a response both within 24 hours and then 10 days. Actually, alongside our CARL and all our offices, we seek to prioritise and triage those 24 hours so they can be responded to. We certainly work then very hard, alongside all our agencies and those that we refer to, to be able to respond to the 10-day matters.

Ms HILDYARD: Exactly how many children were at risk as a result of the failure to meet the target number of investigations within seven days from notification?

The CHAIR: I do note, member for Reynell, that even in my mind that may be a very difficult question to answer, but I will let the minister have a go at it.

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: Just to add some clarification and then I will pass over to my CE, if there is a child in imminent danger you would call the police. For reporting, the next category is a report that needs to be made or an investigation within 24 hours and then 10 days. So this actually reports on seven days, whereas under our requirements I believe that we have 10 days, but I will pass to my CE to clarify.

Ms TAYLOR: I can confirm that children are not at risk. At the time we receive those notifications, we assess the nature of the response that is required. We prioritise those that require an immediate response. That deals with the issue of immediate safety.

Ms HILDYARD: Can you confirm whether there have been any additional resources allocated to further investigate initial substantiations and to reduce the number of repeat substantiations?

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: Yes, we have invested more money. The main thing we have done is we have 295 more workers who are on the frontline to be able to do these investigations and work with children.

Ms HILDYARD: How many calls to the Child Abuse Report Line went unanswered in the last financial year?

The CHAIR: While we are seeking an answer to this, I might suggest that after this answer the member for Reynell go to the omnibus questions.

Ms HILDYARD: Yes, thank you.

The Hon. R. SANDERSON: Call centre contact trends have changed in recent years so that an increasing proportion of reports are now being submitted online with the eCARL system. Calls to the call centre as at 31 May had increased by 2.9 per cent on the previous year and eCARLs had also increased by 10.9 per cent. As at 31 May, the call centre had received 61,307 phone calls across all phone lines. Of the calls received, 49,076, or 80 per cent, were answered, which is a 2.3 per cent increase on the 2019-20 year.

The call centre's telephone system provides information during the time callers are waiting on their call to be answered, including a suggestion to use the electronic notification system for non-urgent matters and this message is provided at the beginning of the call. A message explaining the information the caller needs to have ready to provide to the call centre is also detailed throughout the time they are on hold. We now have other referral systems. I might hand over to my CE because she will clarify further.

Ms TAYLOR: Specifically, I can say to you that at any point, as the minister outlined, a caller may decide to discontinue the call, to pursue the electronic notification option, to call back later, or on the option of leaving a message.

In an effort to better understand why callers were abandoning their calls, in May 2021 we undertook a survey in relation to callers whose calls were not answered and where a call back had not been requested because we wanted to understand what was their thinking and all of that. What the survey showed us was that 50 per cent actually abandoned their call because they were going to elect to call again later or to use the eCARL option, so they were very comfortable with actually using the alternatives. Only 15 callers stated that they abandoned their calls in relation to the wait time. There was no indication that any notifications were missed at this time. It was really helpful for us to understand why callers were abandoning their calls.

Ms HILDYARD: I will now move to the omnibus questions:

1. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:
 - What is the actual FTE count at 30 June 2021 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; and
 - 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 2021-22, and for each of the years of the forward estimates period;
 - The top 10 providers of goods and services by value to each agency reporting to the minister for 2020-21;
 - A description of the goods and/or services provided by each of these top 10 providers, and the cost to the agency for these goods and/or services; and
 - The value of the goods and services that was supplied to the agency by South Australian suppliers?
3. Between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021, 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 (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 2020 and 30 June 2021 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 2020-21 and what was their employment expense;
 - How many FTEs are budgeted to provide communication and promotion activities in 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24, 2024-25 and what is their estimated employment expense;
 - The total cost of government-paid advertising, including campaigns, across all mediums in 2020-21 and budgeted cost for 2021-22?
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 contractors between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021.
7. What is the title and total employment cost of each individual staff member in the minister's office as at 30 June 2021, including all departmental employees seconded to ministerial offices?
8. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, could you detail:
- How much was spent on targeted voluntary separation packages in 2020-21;
 - What department funded these TVSPs (except for DTF estimates);
 - What number of TVSPs were funded;

- 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; and
- 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 2020 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 2020, 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 2020-21 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 2021-22?

13. In the 2020-21 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 2021-22? 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 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 financial years:

- Name of the program or fund;
- The purpose of the program or fund;
- Balance of the grant program or fund;
- Budgeted (or actual) expenditure from the program or fund;
- Budgeted (or actual) payments into the program or fund;
- Carryovers into or from the program or fund; and
- 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 2020 to 30 June 2021, 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 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 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 2020 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 2020 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; and
 - What is the estimated FTE impact of these measures?

The CHAIR: Having reached the allotted time, I declare the examination of the proposed payments for the Department for Child Protection complete.

Sitting suspended from 11:05 to 11:20.

DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONS, \$124,636,00
ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONS,
\$4,788,000

Membership:

Hon. S.C. Mullighan substituted for Ms Hildyard.

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.

Mr W. Kent, Chief Financial Officer, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

Prof. M. Doroudi, Deputy Chief Executive, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

The CHAIR: Welcome back, everybody, to the sitting of Estimates Committee A. I must apologise for the slight delay. I do not like being behind; we went over time in the previous session, but I will make appropriate adjustments as we go through.

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 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 is accurate?

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: Chair, if I could have a moment to move an amendment to the agreed timetable, I move:

To insert a break from 12 until 12:15 for a 15-minute break and then to reduce the lunch break so that the lunch break goes from 13:15 until 14:00.

The CHAIR: It should be ample for lunch.

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: We have a very good reason to interrupt the sitting of estimates, Chair, and that is one of your former constituents Kyle Chalmers is racing for gold at 12:07, so if we can break between 12 and 12:15—

Mr KNOLL: Stubblety-Cook just won the 200 metres breaststroke.

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: Bruce McAvaney has just walked into the chamber to share with us that we have won a gold in the breaststroke.

The CHAIR: The member for Schubert is not speaking from his place. Back to the motion.

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: Yes. To allow everyone to cheer on Kyle Chalmers, just as Makybe Diva from Port Lincoln stopped the nation a few years ago in the Melbourne Cup three times, if we could just have a recess of the parliament without losing any time because we will make it up in the lunch break so that we can all cheer on Kyle as he goes for gold in Tokyo.

The CHAIR: The member has moved a motion. Is that seconded?

Mr PEDERICK: Seconded.

The CHAIR: It has been seconded by the member for Hammond.

Motion carried.

The CHAIR: We will make that adjustment to the timetable. While we are speaking of such things, my youngest son, Max, who turned 23 yesterday, was in a foot race against Kyle Chalmers in year 7. Max actually won that foot race. The next year, they met again in the same foot race and Kyle had grown to about six foot three by that stage and blitzed the field even on the athletics side of things.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Who were they running from, sir?

Mr PEDERICK: Meanwhile, back at estimates.

The CHAIR: Yes—meanwhile, back at estimates, we have carried that. Changes to committee membership will be notified. I have already notified the chamber of the most recent changes. 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 24 September 2021.

I propose to allow both the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition to make opening statements of about 10 minutes each, should they wish. There will be a flexible approach to giving the call for asking questions. A member who is not on the committee may ask a question at the discretion of the Chair.

All questions are to be directed to the minister, not the minister's advisers. The minister may refer questions to advisers for a response. 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*.

I remind members that the rules of debate in the house apply in committee. Consistent with the rules of the house, photography by members from the chamber floor is not permitted. Ministers and members may not table documents before the committee; however, documents can be supplied to the Chair for distribution. The incorporation of material in *Hansard* is permitted on the same basis as it applies in the house, that is, that it is purely statistical and limited to one page in length.

The committee's examination will be broadcast in the same manner sittings of the house are broadcast through the IPTV system within Parliament House and via the webstream link to the internet and the Parliament of South Australia video-on-demand broadcast system. One further remark that I will add is that I encourage members taking part in this committee to wear masks unless they are either asking or answering a question.

I now proceed to open the following lines for examination. The portfolio is the Department of Primary Industries and Regions. The minister appearing is the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development. I declare the proposed payments open for examination and call on the minister to introduce his advisers and make a statement if he wishes.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Thank you, Chair. It is my pleasure to provide information about the programs and work conducted by the Department of Primary Industries and Regions in relation to the 2021-22 state budget. I would like to introduce the members of the department who accompany me today. At my side is chief executive, Michelle Edge; behind me is deputy chief executive, Mehdi Doroudi; and chief financial officer, Will Kent. Before answering questions, I would like to provide an opening statement.

The state budget for 2021-22 is building what matters, backing business and creating jobs in regional South Australia. The government has successfully delivered the key priorities of our industries:

- for grains, lifting the GM moratorium;
- for livestock, securing \$25 million towards the rebuild of the South Australian dog fence;
- for fisheries, the \$24½ million reform to the Marine Scalefish Fishery;
- for dairy, the cattle underpass scheme; and
- for wine, the department of innovation and trade has opened trade offices.

The state budget supports \$56 million for a range of initiatives in agriculture to drive economic recovery and growth. This includes:

- Primary Producers SA support of \$1 million over two years;
- agtech adoption measures of \$5.2 million;
- funding for the fruit fly eradication response; and
- the Rural Financial Counselling Service and Family and Business Support mentors, an additional \$2.2 million over three years.

The government has released a Regional Development Strategy and established the Our Regions Matter website. I am pleased to report that industry has spoken very positively about the work that the department has done this year, offering support to businesses impacted by COVID restrictions and facilitating the seasonal workforce, particularly the Paringa regional quarantine station.

Finally, I would like to thank the staff of the department for the work they have done over the 2020-21 year to support our regional communities and primary producers.

The CHAIR: Does the lead speaker wish to make a statement?

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I do not, sir, but could I just clarify this with the minister. With regard to forestry policy, is he happy to discuss the forestry and timber matters in the ForestrySA section like last year?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Terrific. My first question is in regard to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 52, and the department's net cost of services. What was the department's savings requirement for the 2020-21 financial year and was it delivered?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am advised that the target was approximately \$9½ million and it was delivered.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: As a preamble to my next question, and again referring to the same budget reference and net cost of services with respect to the 2020-21 financial year, as I mentioned in my previous question, in the government's first budget in 2018-19 there was an operating savings requirement of \$6.5 million for the 2020-21 financial year. In the next budget, the 2019-20 budget, for that same financial year there was a further savings target of an additional \$5 million. In the government's third budget, delivered in 2020-21, for that same financial year there was an additional operating savings requirement of \$1.7 million.

So over those first three budgets there was a cumulative savings requirement in that one financial year of approximately \$13 million, according to those budget measures. Is your advice to the committee that only \$9 million of savings was delivered, or have some of those savings measures been reversed?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am advised there was an adjustment of about \$5 million made over that cumulative time frame.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Like a reversal, was there?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I draw the minister's attention to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 64, which is the department's statement of comprehensive income. In the first line of the table there you will see the amount of money received from Treasury, the appropriation received by the department as income.

You will see from the 2019-20 financial year that the actual result was \$144.7 million and then for the next year, 2020-21, the budget was just over \$200 million and the estimated result a similar amount of just over \$200 million. However, you will see the amount of money to be appropriated from Treasury to the department in the current financial year, 2021-22, is only \$123.6 million.

Fair enough—with COVID, additional measures and additional funding for PIRSA as well as the other agencies, I can understand the temporary bump in the previous financial year up to \$200 million. My interest, though, is why there is a drop from \$144 million in the 2019-20 financial year to only \$123 million in the current financial year.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: My understanding is that the reason for this, particularly in the Regional Growth Fund space, is that those projects that are being funded are paid in arrears, so there will be significant lumpiness as some of these projects are delivered over a couple of years' delivery time. That money will not be paid until the end of the project being completed, so the outgoings are not there until that project is complete.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: If it is to do with the Regional Growth Fund and the projects that are funded out of the Regional Growth Fund, can I ask then how much was funded from the Regional Growth Fund in that 2019-20 year, which recorded appropriation of \$144.7 million, and how much is budgeted to be funded from the Regional Growth Fund in the current year, where appropriation is only \$123.6 million?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed that about \$10 million—just under, actually—was spent and there is a carryover of about \$48 million into the 2021-22 year.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: So for 2021-22 there is a carryover of \$48 million for the Regional Growth Fund?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: How much in total is being spent in the Regional Growth Fund in the 2021-22 financial year?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am told it is the combination of the \$10 million and the \$48 million.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: So \$58 million?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: If there is a \$48 million carryover, was it envisaged that that \$48 million was to be spent originally in the previous financial year, or was it more than one previous financial year? Was it meant to be spent in 2020-21, or was there also funding that had not been spent from 2019-20 and 2018-19, etc.?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Going back in the history of the space, in the previous year's funding in 2018-19, \$4.16 million was committed to nine projects. In 2019-20, \$4.39 million was committed to 10 projects. In 2020-21, \$2.7 million was committed to three projects under the Regional Growth Fund competitive round. In the same year, under the strategic round, \$24.63 million was committed to 21 projects. To date until 30 June, \$30 million had been committed to 16 projects under the strategic projects component of the RGF.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: And that is in the 2020-21 financial year?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I understand that is over the lifetime of the strategic projects themselves.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: If \$4.1 million was committed in 2018-19; \$4.3 million committed in 2019-20; \$2.7 million in 2020-21, as well as \$24.6 million in that year, how much was originally budgeted to be spent in 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21—in those three financial years?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The base of the funding is \$15 million budgeted per year in that space. There has been some delay in delivery of projects due to COVID in particular that have shifted the time frames out of some projects in the last 12 months. There is also the additional money from the strategic business round in the 2020-21 year.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: How much was that extra money for the strategic round?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: That was a \$25 million budget.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: That is on top of the regular \$15 million?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: On top of the \$15 million, yes.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: So you had \$15 million a year to spend in 2018-19, but only \$4.1 million was committed; another \$15 million to spend in 2019-20, but only \$4.3 million was committed; another \$15 million to spend in 2020-21, but only \$2.7 million was committed; but you had an extra \$25 million for the strategic fund and \$24.6 million of that was committed. Why were the allocations for 2018-19 and 2019-20 not more fully committed? I accept what you might say about 2020-21 being COVID-impacted or even the tail end of 2019-20, but that does not justify 2018-19 or the first three quarters of 2019-20.

The CHAIR: Member for Lee, we are dealing with the budget papers as they are before us. My budget papers go back to 2019-20, not 2018-19.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Yes, and the explanation was that these funds are part of a carryover which are represented in the statement of comprehensive income in the current budget papers, sir.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Firstly, I have a minor correction. Sorry, that was meant to be a top-up of \$10 million not a total, so the \$25 million was \$10 million extra.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I see; sorry. That is understood. Just jumping back to the savings, if \$9 million of savings were delivered in the most recent financial year that finished at 30 June, in the last few weeks, how were those savings delivered and what impact was there on regional offices of PIRSA?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The department took a number of steps to strengthen its budget position in 2020-21, including:

- incremental increases associated with a continuation of existing budget initiatives, including improving cost recovery for industry research of \$1.2 million and the finalisation of the Food Innovation program of \$0.2 million;
- accommodation efficiencies in PIRSA's CBD and metro sites of \$400,000, through consolidation of 70 fisheries and aquaculture staff from leased premises in Grenfell Street and Largs North to a PIRSA-owned property at West Beach;
- the sale of some excess land with a one-off revenue of \$0.5 million;
- Regions SA head office efficiencies of \$400,000;
- further efficiencies within the corporate services back office space of \$0.5 million;
- revenue from a dividend on the department's investment in Australian Grain Technologies Pty Ltd of \$300,000; and
- departmental efficiencies through the analytical review of operating activities of \$1.1 million.

There were no effects on regional offices.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: You mentioned that an extra \$1.2 million was generated through cost recovery. Who paid the additional revenue to the department?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The cost recovery was in relation to industry research of \$1.2 million. It was from extra income into that space of research itself.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Who actually paid it? Was it SARDI or other research organisations?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: There are a number of bodies that would compile that. We will have to take that out of session.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Yes, if you could come back to us, that would be good. Could I turn your attention then to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, Sub-program 1.4: Biosecurity, and fruit fly. The highlights in the budget papers on page 59 state:

- Introduced a successful community fruit fly awareness and education campaign for the Adelaide Metropolitan and Riverland outbreaks.

How was the success of this campaign measured?

The CHAIR: I note the member for Lee's interest in fruit fly, which you have shown before in fact.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: More so not having fruit fly, to be more precise.

The CHAIR: Yes, and it is everybody's favourite subject.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: To give some context around fruit fly, there are currently 12 outbreaks in the metro area, 11 of which are Mediterranean fruit fly and one of which is Queensland fruit fly. Five of the 12 outbreaks were declared during 2020-21, and four of those related to Medfly and one related to Qfly. All the others were from the previous financial year. We were also responding to five Queensland fruit fly outbreaks in the Riverland and one outbreak of Medfly in Port Augusta, all of which were declared in the current financial year.

There has been a combined response led by PIRSA in relation to the eradication of fruit fly, and currently over 470 staff are employed to implement the response. There has been over 700,000 litres of organic fruit fly bait and over 400,000 kilograms of fruit collected. Over 400 million sterile fruit flies have been released to interrupt the breeding cycles of the wild flies, and that sterile fruit fly program will continue until at least December this year.

A public campaign was launched in February this year to educate South Australians, particularly those in outbreak areas, on the important restrictions in place around the movement of fruit. The campaign has been running across various advertising mediums, such as press, television, radio, digital and social media channels, as well as through outdoor signage on bus shelters and in shopping centres, in particular in impact areas, and it will run through until December this year. The communications prominently feature South Australian personality Poh. The campaign promotes that South Australian fruit fly outbreaks not only affect some of our everyday lives but threaten jobs and local businesses involved in fruit production.

In the second half of this year, we will also see a further need to promote people to manage their own gardens to prevent fruit fly. The campaign is not simply about awareness raising but also about providing important education, highlighting what we all need to do to protect our \$1.3 billion horticulture industry. Letter drops have been occurring in households in outbreak areas, with correspondence going through to the education department to share with their cohorts, and there has been engagement with local councils, multicultural communities and various groups.

Engagement from July through to December through a partnership with KESAB environmental solutions, including a strong presence at the Royal Show, will further educate schools and communities in preventing fruit fly. Planning continues with the Department for Education on engagement with education sites in semester 2. The Marshall Liberal government is committed to eradicating fruit fly from South Australia and is putting strong protocols on the importation of fruit into South Australia.

We continue the zero tolerance policy at Yamba station and random roadblocks to stop fresh fruit produce being brought into the Riverland. In relation to the monitoring of the campaign, we certainly monitor online platforms and posts and our hotline itself to manage the change in attitudes over time and to examine the campaign and whether it is reaching its target in relation to the messaging.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Further to the member for Lee's question, minister, you indicated that there are 470 staff employed in eradicating fruit fly. Can you tell us how many of those staff are located in regional South Australia and the locations?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed that there are approximately 140 based in the Riverland. The outbreak at Port Augusta is being managed by the metropolitan cohort being rotated into the region to do the work out of Adelaide.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I have a further question. Port Augusta has people coming from the Northern Territory and Queensland and also from Western Australia. You are saying that Port Augusta is only managed by metro people on a rotational basis. What are the operating hours and what signage and facilities, etc., do you have at that location to reduce the potential of fruit fly coming any further south?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: There is certainly significant presence there. We have signage and pamphlets around the outbreak zone in particular informing those in Port Augusta of the issues. The main area of risk of Mediterranean fruit fly coming in is certainly from Western Australia, and that is being managed through the checking station in Ceduna, as it has traditionally been done. We are continuing to make sure that work is being done in relation to minimising any future work coming in through that point.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I have a further question, Mr Chairman. Minister, you said that it is being managed at Ceduna. Are any bins located at Port Augusta for people coming down from the Northern Territory and also coming in through that area from Queensland and New South Wales? Also, if you can, what are the operating hours of those locations?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: In relation to Ceduna, yes, there are bins there to dispose of fruit as people come through. However, as far as I am aware and informed, there are no bins from the Northern Territory, but that is not where the risk is: the risk is very much from WA. My understanding is that Mediterranean fruit fly do not survive in the tropics, so there is certainly not a risk of Mediterranean fruit fly coming down that path.

Mr PEDERICK: My question is in regard to on-farm water grants and the drought hub. I refer the committee to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 55, Agricultural Services. Will the minister outline how the Marshall Liberal government is helping build business resilience for farmers against adverse weather events, such as drought, in South Australia?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for his question. Over the past 12 months, our farmers have faced significant challenges in responding to and recovering from adverse weather events, such as bushfires and droughts. Recognising the importance of building farm business resilience, the Marshall Liberal government has worked closely with industry to establish a range of support programs.

The 2021-22 state budget matches funding allocated in the federal budget for South Australia's drought-affected farmers with an additional \$50 million nationwide to the On-farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme. The initial \$5 million scheme in South Australia was inundated with applications. As a result, the \$25,000 contributions from both the commonwealth and state governments were exhausted.

After listening to our farming communities, I announced an additional \$3.5 million to the scheme, which again was exhausted. This budget allocates a further \$2.6 million to a \$5.2 million new round of the on-farm water infrastructure scheme. Furthermore, Kangaroo Island farmers are also able to apply specifically for the \$600,000 round of on-farm water infrastructure rebate, recognising the impact of the recent bushfires. Almost 40 applications have been received since the Kangaroo Island round opened.

The scheme helps drought-affected livestock and horticultural producers to install on-farm water infrastructure such as water storage, pumps, pipes, distilling dams and associated power supplies. The scheme to install water infrastructure on farm in drought-affected regions is seen by industry as critical. Overall, the scheme has helped just under a thousand farmers install on-farm water infrastructure for a total of almost \$13 million.

The budget has also allocated \$4.4 million over four years for the \$11½ million Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub headquartered at the Roseworthy Adelaide University Campus. Five nodes will also be located throughout regional South Australia in variable rainfall areas: Minnipa on Eyre Peninsula, Port Augusta in the Far North, Orroroo in the Upper North, Loxton in the Riverland and Struan in the South-East. The hub will drive extension, adoption and commercialisation of drought resilience practices.

Sitting suspended from 12:01 to 12:15.

The CHAIR: Welcome back to Estimates Committee A. Let's continue our questioning of the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I refer the minister's attention to Budget Paper 5, page 76, regarding the fruit fly and national eradication responses. How much in total has been spent on fruit fly eradication efforts?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: To date, the response costs on the current outbreaks have been approximately \$40 million.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: How much financial assistance has the government offered to growers to deal with this issue?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The industry does not contribute to that \$40 million, so the response to this eradication program is that the government is funding the eradication program.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: My question was more that there has obviously been an impact on growers because of the fruit fly outbreak and their capacity to grow, transport and deliver their food as they normally would, so there has been an industry impact. How much money has the government provided to the industry to help mitigate that impact on them?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The approach that we have taken as a government is operating within the protocols of the fruit fly response in relation to the national program of getting access to that fruit into other markets where there has been an effect. As a government, we have assisted in making sure that those producers are able to get market access where required. There have been no direct grants to growers in this space. We have supported them through the \$40 million worth of eradication as well as getting access into these markets where there are not any other new barriers in front of these producers.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Has the department provided you with any advice as to what the financial and/or economic impact on the industry has been from the outbreak of fruit fly?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am advised that very much the cost impact varies depending on the supply chain and the likes of which fruit, etc., are affected. At the moment, it has assessed the impact at a national level but not at a state level at this point in time.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Given that any federal assistance to the industry would need to be paid through the state government, what level of financial assistance has the federal government paid to the industry?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The federal government likewise have supported the eradication process by the national agreed protocols around eradication. There has been support from some other jurisdictions as well in relation to their support of SIT-fly facilities, etc., in relation to those operations, so it is very much following the protocols that have existed at a national level, but no direct assistance to producers.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Does the minister think that South Australian members of the industry need financial assistance from either state or commonwealth governments?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I think the most important thing is that we eradicate the fruit fly and get them back the total market access that they have had previously. We are continuing to invest in that space to make sure we get on top of this as quickly as we can. To get those markets back is the best thing we can do for them.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Have you sought for the federal government or, indeed, for the state government to provide financial assistance to those affected in the industry?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: No, I have not because we are supporting them generally through the eradication program by funding that fully.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Referring to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 52, can I ask how much funding has been provided to RDAs in the last financial year and how much is budgeted to be spent in this financial year? I might also ask: how much is budgeted to be funded to the RDAs over the forward estimates?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: We do not have that detail with us at the moment. We will seek to try to get it before the end of the session, if possible.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Thank you. Can I ask about the budget measure in Budget Paper 5, page 77, the mobilisation of the seasonal and regional workforce, where I think just over \$7.6 million was budgeted to be spent in the financial year just finished and a further \$631,000 is budgeted to be spent in this financial year. How many workers were mobilised under this initiative in regional South Australia?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly provided challenges for agricultural industries in South Australia, particularly when it comes to labour. The Marshall Liberal government, through the Department of Primary Industries and Regions, has secured the necessary seasonal workforce and assisted South Australia's regional and agricultural communities to adapt and operate in a COVID-safe manner.

Due to international borders closing resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been significant labour shortages in regional and agricultural communities. In September 2020, South Australia opted into the relaunch of the commonwealth's Seasonal Worker Programme and the Pacific Islanders scheme, allowing Pacific Islanders to undertake agricultural and other work in areas of need where a local workforce is not available.

In December 2020, the government of South Australia invested \$4.45 million to assist the urgent mobilisation of the seasonal and regional workforce in South Australia. Key elements of the program included incentives of up to \$2,000 to assist students taking up regional tourism and hospitality jobs, a promotion and awareness campaign, and in-region assistance to support workers through regions in finding jobs. The promotional campaign has been successful, with over 280,000 views on the seasonal jobs website and over 700 jobseekers having registered their interest through the website.

Despite providing support for locals to take up seasonal jobs, there have been only 44 approved applications for the state relocation assistance and 82 applications approved by the commonwealth for relocation assistance for agricultural workers. Further to that, on 14 March this year the government announced the regional quarantine facility at Paringa for Pacific Island workers to try to facilitate workers for the industry in particular.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: So 44 applications, 82 approvals—

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: That was 82 commonwealth, so 44 state applications and 82 for the commonwealth.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Thank you; I had got that wrong. How much has been spent to date?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: There were reallocations made in relation to that; there was money moved out of that program with the lack of take-up that was reallocated to the Paringa program. It is my understanding that approximately \$2 million was moved across from the program to incentivise people to relocate across to that Paringa project.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Just so that I am clear, of that \$7.6 million budgeted for the 2020-21 financial year, \$2 million has been spent or \$2 million has been taken out of that and allocated elsewhere.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: It has been allocated across to the Paringa facility itself, that establishment, rather than actually trying to relocate local workers.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Does that mean that \$5.4 million has been spent, or \$5.6 million has been spent?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: There was about \$5.8 million spent to set up Paringa itself. There was certainly money spent in the original part of the program, but I would have to get the full detail of that.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I think I understand. The money has been spent—obviously, because we have that line describing an estimate of how much is being spent—and to date there have been 44 state workers and 82 federal workers.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: In addition to the \$7.6-odd million that has been spent, who pays the workers' wages?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The workers' wages are paid by the industry itself.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: So the industry has made a \$2 million contribution towards the scheme and the state government has made the balance of the contribution. In addition to that, when the work is done the actual wages are paid by whoever is employing them.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: As is traditional.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: So the total cost of the program, without the wages, appears to be about \$63,000 per worker. Would that be a reasonable estimate, dividing the amount that has been spent across those 126 workers, 44 from state and 82 from the commonwealth?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I guess we also need to understand that there were also 800 workers from the Pacific Islands who came in through this program and who are funded out of the total funds, so it is not a simple division in that regard.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Roughly how long were those Pacific Islander workers located in South Australia and how long did they work?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The federal government certainly has under the circumstances extended the opportunity for those workers to stay longer than traditionally under those schemes, so it is very hard to put a number on how long they are here for. They are here at the moment.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: All of them are still here?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: To the best of my knowledge, they are, yes.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Can I ask how much money has been budgeted to provide to Primary Producers SA?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: There has been a million dollars over two years.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: The most recent financial year and the current financial year; is that right?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: No, the current financial year and the next financial year.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: How much money has been budgeted to go to Grain Producers SA?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: In relation to the \$1 million, that is directly to Primary Producers SA, which is the overarching body that looks after the primary producers of South Australia. Underneath that, they do have membership organisations, including Grain Producers SA.

Grain Producers SA and some of the other commodity groups receive funding under the Primary Industry Funding Schemes (PIFS), which is a levy-based system in relation to funds being raised.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Is there a grant agreement between the government and Primary Producers SA for this million dollars?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: There will be one established, yes.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Has the money already been received by Primary Producers SA?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: No.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: What will the grant agreement require of Primary Producers SA? What must they do in order to receive this \$500,000 a year?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I will get the chief executive to answer that.

Ms EDGE: To answer your question, the program is being built around a series of agreed services where we have collectively identified industries that require support. These will be complementary to the priorities and objectives of government in terms of extension, outreach and engagement of primary producers across South Australia.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: What specifically in outreach services and engagement services and so on will be required of them?

Ms EDGE: We are just firming up the details of that now, but the broad areas are those that have been identified by industry in their recent strategic planning and blueprints and, equally, by government through the Growth State initiative and our own agency strategic plan, areas including outreach and engagement around risk and recovery—drought, bushfires, emergency management, preparedness and prevention of biosecurity risks, and biosecurity best practice—those sorts of complementary services that assist government in fulfilling its obligations and requirements as well.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Are other industry representative groups, like GPSA for example, free to apply to the government for similar funding arrangements?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: This was certainly much a response in relation to Primary Producers SA not having access to similar funding mechanisms that the other groups do have of the levy-based systems. Being an overarching membership body, they receive their income via others, so this was just recognising the importance and the ability of that group to respond, as the chief executive pointed out, particularly in those times of emergency response. It is certainly a key part of making sure they are able to do what government need them to do at that point in time.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I regret to inform the committee that I skipped over a question previously about the seasonal and regional workforce initiative. How is the government monitoring the progress of this initiative? In particular, how many workers are being mobilised and utilised by the industry, including Pacific Islander workers?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: There are approximately 800 being mobilised under that.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: For example, as of when? When was that information current?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: They came in in tranches of roughly 200 as planeloads of participants, and that was the capacity of the facility itself, just over 200. Most of those came in at that time, but another hundred came back in January as well.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Do you receive information about where it is exactly they are working and for whom they are working?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Two different cohorts have come in, particularly through the Paringa operations: those who have gone directly to approved businesses that are having those workers, approved by the federal government as appropriate businesses to be using this scheme; and there are also some labour hire businesses that are supplying the smaller businesses with those workers under that same authorisation.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Are they all paid award or minimum requirement wages?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: That is a federal matter.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Is it a requirement of employers participating in the scheme to pay appropriate minimum wages, award wages?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I understand that that would very much be the case, but again that is a federal matter.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: And they do not provide any information to the department or to the state government with regard to that?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Not as far as we are aware.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I think the state is putting in \$7.4 million and the federal government is only putting in \$2 million, if I understand the budget papers correctly. Are there reporting requirements to PIRSA or to another area of the state government either from the commonwealth or from the employers about how the scheme is tracking, how many workers they are using, how they are employing them, what they are being paid?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: My understanding is that, no, there is no reporting back and it is very much a federal government responsibility. Once they left the Paringa facility, there was a requirement that they were to work in South Australia when they left, but they could be relocated elsewhere at the employer's discretion once they commenced their work.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Given the state spent so much money, particularly on the Paringa facility and supporting the program, how long are the workers required to work in South Australia? Are they only required to work in South Australia, or are they free to move to another jurisdiction?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: My understanding is that this area of bringing Pacific Islander workers in right around the country has seen workers moving across state borders as they finish the work they were brought in to do, trying to maximise the output in the time frame that they are in the country. As they arrived into South Australia, we have seen them go through Paringa, go out to the workforce, which is where they got approval for them to be at a federal level. Once that work is complete, they can move to other locations to maximise their output.

Mr BELL: I refer to Budget Paper 3, page 101, Mobile Phone Black Spot Fund, a \$10 million fund. With 1,106 identified blackspots in South Australia and 399 in the seat of Barker, has the minister had any discussions with the federal member for Barker regarding round 5A of the federal government's Mobile Black Spot Program due to the fact that no mobile blackspots were funded in the seat of Barker and only two in South Australia generally, compared with New South Wales, which has over 30?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: It is certainly an important part of investment in South Australia in relation to what we are trying to do in actually alleviating the blackspots that are in existence in South Australia. Yes, it is important that we work with the federal government and the telcos to actually achieve this. I personally have not had any conversations with the member for Barker in the last few days in relation to this; I am not sure whether or not my office has in the last 24 hours or so, so I am not able to give any particular details in relation to that.

However, it is certainly something where we have been making sure that we are improving our access from the previous government's response in this area. We have seen 44 mobile blackspots being funded across South Australia since our reintroducing state government support to this program, and we have seen those spread right across the regions. Similar numbers have been invested in the seats of Barker and Grey. Grey might be slightly higher than Barker, but it is a significantly larger region area-wise and probably has significantly larger blackspots too.

Mr BELL: I have a follow-up question. Has the minister or his department had conversations with the telcos about round 5A of the federal government's Mobile Black Spot Program?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: We certainly did have long and extensive conversations with the telcos and we worked with the telcos and country members of this place themselves from all parties to try to identify blackspots of need. We put those to the telcos, along with a group that was

a set of cross agencies managed out of PIRSA to look at other governments' needs, etc., particularly around responding in emergencies, etc., to make sure that blackspots were covered and that key requirements of both government and local members were identified. We put those to the telcos.

Optus chose not to participate at all in round 5A in South Australia. They pulled out at the last minute and did not want to be part of that in relation to 5A. We continue to work with Telstra. They put four projects forward, one of which was resolved by another means before the conclusion of the assessment process, so there were three left on the table, two of which ended up being funded.

Mr BELL: Can the minister detail for the committee the names of the people in Telstra he spoke to or his office spoke to?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I do not necessarily have a full list of those names. I have certainly spoken to Mark Bolton personally, but I am not sure of the names of other people who have been spoken to.

Mr BELL: To clarify, that is in regard to round 5A of the federal government's Mobile Black Spot Program?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes. It is also important to note that it is the telcos that make the submission in relation to the commonwealth guidelines and that our funding on top is effectively part of the telcos' support to meet their 50 per cent funding to try to get them over the line to look at South Australia over other locations.

Mr BELL: With a \$10 million fund allocated by the federal government on the table, can the minister explain why no blackspot areas were funded in Barker, given that there are 399 identified blackspots in the seat of Barker, which obviously takes in the seat of Mount Gambier and the state seat of MacKillop?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: As I just stated, the issue here is that, under the guidelines of the federal scheme, the telcos are the ones that submit. We certainly suggested many other sites that we believe were worthy of their investment. They chose not to submit those locations, so it was the telcos themselves. As I said, Optus chose not to submit any and Telstra chose to submit four, one of which was pulled out due to being funded elsewhere.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I have a further question to the member for Mount Gambier's question. Is the minister aware of the issue on the Stuart Highway, particularly recently, where emergency landline telephones that are strategically located are not working? The other issue is that if, for argument's sake, you do not have a satellite telephone and you have an accident on that highway, you do not have any communication whatsoever.

Whilst telcos may not elect to do it, has the minister had any discussions with the federal government or the federal member for Grey regarding opportunities for state and federal governments to put their own communication facilities in that location, especially for the vast area in the north?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Firstly, in relation to the issues with the roadside emergency phones, I heard a similar story on the ABC yesterday, so I am aware of the media reports in relation to that. Also, my understanding is that they are under the management of the Department for Transport, so I would suggest raising the issue with the relevant minister.

Also, I think that what is important is that we are heading into round 6 of the funding of blackspots. Certainly, there is a focus on the road corridors in particular, which the federal and state government are very interested in. We need to make sure that the telcos are also interested in that space, so we will continue to work with them in terms of investment in these key priorities of governments.

The CHAIR: I am going to go to the member for MacKillop.

Mr McBRIDE: I refer the committee to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 55, headed Agricultural Services. Can the minister explain what support the government is providing to enhance important agricultural representation in South Australia?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for his question. Primary Producers SA is a coalition representing primary producers in South Australia established in April 2013. The body operates through a model of representation for all sectors and has the foundation members of Grain Producers SA, Livestock SA, the Horticulture Coalition of South Australia, the Wine Grape Council of South Australia, the South Australian Dairyfarmers' Association and also the South Australian Forest Products Association.

Primary Producers SA brings together the member commodity groups and provides the state's diverse primary producers the opportunity to share resources and information and engage with government programs and initiatives.

Through the budget, the peak agriculture representative body, Primary Producers SA (PPSA), is receiving \$1 million in funding over two years. The funding will help PPSA in delivering a range of cross-sectorial projects to help achieve the growth target of \$23 billion from the primary industries sector by 2030.

Currently, industry members of PPSA make financial and in-kind contributions in order for the organisation to operate. However, under the current funding model PPSA does not have the resources to adequately represent the agriculture industry in South Australia. For many years the organisation has relied on the skills and wide contacts of former Premier Rob Kerin, who I must say has done an outstanding job. This core funding will assist PPSA to provide effective and strong advice to the state government on matters within the primary industries sector.

There is an existing agreement in place between the Department of Primary Industries and Regions and PPSA to support industry-wide engagement for identifying and communicating on primary industry issues, priorities and opportunities. Core funding to PPSA will be built on that. PPSA also has statutory responsibilities providing consultation services to the government under the Landscapes South Australia Act, the Native Vegetation Act and the Animal Welfare Act.

PPSA is also a key industry partner in the government's Growth State agenda, with the chair being a member of the Growth State Food, Wine and Agribusiness Steering Committee. PPSA also provides an important communication and engagement role for government to the state's primary producers on a range of other government programs and initiatives, including response and recovery measures following the recent droughts and bushfire events. PPSA's role of representing their diverse sectors and communicating was particularly relevant during the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I draw the minister's attention to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 56 and 57 regarding fisheries. How much has been spent on licence buybacks in the Marine Scalefish Fishery?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The Marine Scalefish Fishery reform was certainly an important piece of work that needed to be done to make the sector more profitable and sustainable into the future. It was budgeted that up to 150 licences would be bought back and \$22 million was budgeted to remove those 150 licences. Just under 100 licences have been surrendered, so approximately \$15 million was spent in that regard.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Am I right in thinking that licence holders had to demonstrate exceptional circumstances in order to have their licence purchased, for want of a better term, under the program?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: No, they did not need to demonstrate exceptional circumstances. The approximately 300 fishing licence holders out there were invited to participate and they were able to voluntarily surrender their licences. The opportunity to surrender was based on whether they held a line or a net licence. There was \$140,000 available per line licence or \$180,000 per net licence. These values were based on an independent economic analysis of the licence market done by BDO EconSearch in 2019.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: How many applicants were unsuccessful in having their licences surrendered or purchased by the government?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: All those who voluntarily surrendered within the time frame were accepted.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I am not quite sure how best to describe this, but were they all active licences, or were some of them licences that were held but not being used for fishing?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed there was a wide range, but being a third of the fishery there was significant activity within those licences.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I take it that yes is the answer to that; some had not been actively used in recent times before they were surrendered?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Can I draw your attention to the targets on page 57, the complete reviews of the Gulf St Vincent prawn fishery management plan. When will the review be completed and who is conducting it?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The management plans prepared under the Fisheries Management Act 2007 describe the management arrangements for the restricted fisheries. The management plans for the South Australian Gulf St Vincent prawn fishery and the sardine fishery are currently in review.

The management plan for the South Australian commercial Gulf St Vincent prawn fishery expires on 30 June 2022. I have approved a review of the plan and requested the Gulf St Vincent Prawn Fishery Management Advisory Committee to provide feedback on whether the plans should be amended, replaced or reinstated without amendment. Pending the outcome of this review, I may request the development of a new management plan in consultation with industry.

The management plan for the sardine fishery has passed its fifth anniversary since commencement. In accordance with the Fisheries Management Act 2007, I have approved a review of this plan. I am seeking feedback on the review of the sardine fishery management plan from an established industry committee and will consider this feedback in finalising the review. Pending the outcome of this review, I may request the development of a new management plan.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: My question was with regard to the Gulf St Vincent prawn fishery, as much as I enjoy sardines from time to time. Is the minister aware of any calls to close the fishery temporarily as has occurred on a number of occasions in the past?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: No, not to the best of my knowledge.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Should it be recommended by the reviewer of the management plan, would the minister consider closing the prawn fishery in Gulf St Vincent?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for the question, and certainly in relation to fisheries we will always listen to the science. If they believe there is a sustainability issue in relation to the prawn fishery and there is a reason to close it to make sure that that sector is sustainable going into the future, we will certainly consider it.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: With regard to my previous question, which scientist is conducting the review of the management plan?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: There is an advisory committee that sits over this space that has a wide cross-section of people on it from within this industry and this space, but also the work is being done by the SARDI scientists themselves in relation to this.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: So it is being done by SARDI.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: If the review recommends a partial buyback of the fisheries—for example, the paid surrender of licences—

Mr KNOLL: Point of order, Chair. This is the second question on this line of questioning where the member is asking hypothetical questions in relation to a review that has not been undertaken and I would like you to rule them out of order.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I thought his interest was pork products, sir, not fish.

Mr KNOLL: Well, actually, it is now pork and fish.

The CHAIR: As the member for Schubert—

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Was there a conflict of interest? Do you have a financial interest in a prawn fishery?

The CHAIR: No, enough. I am sure everybody in this place enjoys both prawns and pork—and sardines for that matter. I will listen carefully, member for Lee, and the minister can answer or not.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Would the minister consider a partial buyback of the fishery if licences were recommended to be surrendered under the appropriate payment from government?

Mr KNOLL: Chairman?

The CHAIR: I understand, member for Schubert, you have raised the point that the member for Lee is posing a hypothetical question.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: We are in the committee stage of a bill, sir. This is not question time and standing orders do not apply.

The CHAIR: Member for Lee, I will deal with this, and I believe I already have; that is, it is a hypothetical but the minister can choose to answer it or not.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Thank you, Chair, for your guidance here but again, yes, I do think it is a very hypothetical situation, and it is very hard to consider outside. It is very different from the previous question, which was based on, if the science tells us something, how might we react. This is a much bigger hypothetical than that certainly was.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Who are the licence holders for the Gulf St Vincent prawn fishery? There are only six, I think, aren't there?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed there are about 10 licences in the fisheries. They may be owned by fewer than 10 people, but I do not have those details.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Can you bring them back to the committee at a later stage?

The CHAIR: Member for Lee, why do you need to know who holds the licences?

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Because I think it is material not only to the fishery itself but potentially also to the member for Schubert's interests.

Members interjecting:

The CHAIR: Yes, that's right. So you believe that knowing who holds the licences is material?

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: As far as I am aware, there are only six owners of 10 licences and, with so few owners, I think it is of interest to the parliament who holds those licences.

The CHAIR: Well, I will leave that one with the minister as well.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I am not asking for it now; he can come back at a later point.

The CHAIR: But he may choose to do that or not.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I will seek some guidance on the confidentiality of those names and whether it is appropriate.

The CHAIR: Yes.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Can I draw the minister's attention to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 55. In the highlights, it states:

Drafted and consulted on a new Pastoral Lands Bill to replace the current Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act 1989.

During the drafting and the consultation of the bill, did the minister meet with the Conservation Council?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: When was that meeting?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: We would have to get that date for you.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Was it during the drafting and the consultation, or was it after the bill was introduced into parliament?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The bill has not been introduced into parliament.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Has it not? Well, there you go. Can I perhaps draw the minister's attention back to a line that we were previously looking at: Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 55, targets 2021-22. What is the current capacity of the Northern Adelaide Irrigation Scheme?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for the question. Before I start, I will just recap back on a previous question around the RDAs. The seven RDAs received \$3 million per year to provide funding secured over four years.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: That is \$3 million per year for each of the four years?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Thanks.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: In relation to the Northern Adelaide Irrigation Scheme, the original business case was proposed as a 20-gigalitre scheme. Work was to be done in stages: the first stage of 12 gigalitres was to meet the horticultural industry's demand in the Northern Adelaide Plains and the second stage was to be put towards the Barossa.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: I go back to the member for Lee's question regarding the pastoral act review. The proponents have asked for a delay for more consultation and information. When will that function be complete and, when it is complete, do you intend to bring a bill before the parliament during this sitting of the parliament?

The CHAIR: Can I just get some clarification, member for Frome. You said the proponents have asked for a delay.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: In late 2019, the discussion paper was released. The pastoral lands bill was established in 2020, and stakeholders sought further clarity and intent of alternative land use. What I want to know is how this function is going, when it will be complete and whether the minister intends to bring a bill back during this parliament.

The CHAIR: So stakeholders rather than proponents?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Yes, stakeholders; sorry, Mr Chairman.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for Frome for his question. It is an important piece of work just to provide some reassurance, in particular about the alternate land uses in relation to pastoral properties, and that consultation is in process. Stakeholder views are being considered at the moment as to how we can best pull together those alternate land uses and give security to those who want to take up those activities in relation to a new pastoral act allowing them to do so. Yes, it is my intent to bring a bill back before the house, time permitting.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: On the same line, and back to the pastoral lands management bill, there has been consultation. So far, which stakeholders have indicated their support and which have indicated opposition to the proposed bill?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: To put it in context, this is an act that has not been amended for over 30 years. There have been significant changes in the world in those 30 years, including to technologies and other things that may facilitate changes in this space that could deliver much better outcomes for all.

More than 250 submissions have been received over the period of consultation in relation to the pastoral lands bill, and we are working through those submissions. To say who supports it and who does not is very hard because some support bits and others support the entirety, while others do not support bits but support some of it. It is very hard to actually say how that lands.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I understand that in December, with some encouragement from you and your office, a range of stakeholders, including the Conservation Council, met and together provided 17 detailed recommendations for improvements to the proposed legislation, and that has been presented to you.

Mr Craig Wilkins from the Conservation Council told ABC radio yesterday morning that you and your office have so far refused to meet with the Conservation Council and are yet to respond to their correspondence from December last year; is that correct?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: In relation to the correspondence, I do not believe that is correct. My understanding is that we have responded. In relation to not meeting, we have been working through the submissions, and working on how to best achieve the desired outcomes of the parties who have made their submissions, to see whether we can achieve a suitable landing for all. We have been working on that.

We are still not settled on where we are landing, so I am very happy to meet with members of the conservation sector, as well as others who are involved in this space—pastoral operators themselves, etc.—but we are still going through that and looking for the right landing point.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I refer the minister's attention to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 59, just back to fruit fly. I have a copy of an advertisement that was placed on a Facebook group, Adelaide Fruit Vegetable and Gardens. The advertisement says, 'I have heaps of navel oranges to give away. Located Modbury North.' This was posted on 16 July this year. What action is the department taking to discourage this sort of movement of fruit from areas that are currently within restricted fruit fly zones?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for the question. Certainly it is not acceptable for fruit to be moving in relation to the outbreak zones in Adelaide. In relation to social media, there is some monitoring that goes on to try to see posts like that, which may appear at times. If the department becomes aware of a post like that, it will respond and make sure that those people cease doing what they are suggesting they are planning to do.

We are also very much continuing the letterbox dropping within the region, providing education and also encouraging community members themselves if they are aware of activities like this to bring them to the attention of either the person who is looking to move the fruit or the authorities to actually encourage that to cease.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I am advised that a resident within that restricted area around Modbury contacted the hotline, which I think has been established by the fruit fly eradication program, but was encouraged to call back at another time when another operator would be present and no details were taken or given. How confident is the minister that the eradication program, and the hotline that exists under it, is taking all steps to ensure that this sort of behaviour is minimised on Facebook pages?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed that, in relation to the case you are talking about, there is no understanding or knowledge of that and we would very much appreciate the details so that we can follow up the particular person concerned and see where the system broke down.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Are PIRSA and the program proactively reaching out to these Facebook groups, which are in effect encouraging breaches of the requirements around the management of fruit in restricted zones, to discourage this behaviour?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed that, yes, PIRSA are reaching out to these groups when they become aware. They are effectively seeking them out by monitoring the social media sites to actually seek out when posts like that are occurring.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I draw your attention to Budget Paper, Volume 4, page 56, which speaks about the Recreational Fishing Strategy you released nearly two weeks ago. Despite

some fanfare and publicity about the development of that strategy and whether it would countenance a recreational fishing licence, I understand a recreational fishing licence is not part of that strategy; is that correct?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I certainly thank the member for the question and I very much understand the member's question. I guess what is really important about this is that it is very much a strategy that is owned by the recreational fishing community themselves; it is not a government strategy. My understanding of that strategy is that, no, they are not looking for a fishing licence to be in operation in South Australia. They are looking at alternate ways, whether it be through government funding or other means, to fund improvements within the sector. Certainly my understanding is that under their strategy they are not looking for a licence to be put in place.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: As the minister responsible for taking this strategy out for consultation and development, I understand you indicated that a recreational fishing licence would be considered—not necessarily adopted but considered. Do you have a view about the introduction of a recreational fishing licence?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Again, that consultation process was driven by the industry's committee, to go out and seek that comment, and I am pleased that they chose to actually go and seek the sector's requirements in that space. But certainly I think it is important that we listen to the rec fishers that there is no need for a fishing licence in South Australia. We will look to fund that through other means, whether it be through private sector investment, etc., to deliver the outcomes they are looking for.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I am grateful for the answer. I appreciate you have taken their view and ensured that it has gone through into the actual strategy itself, that there should not be a licence, but you do not hold a view about whether or not there should be a licence? This is something that should be left up to the consultation process and you do not hold a view at all?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I do not think there is a need to hold a view in this space. Personally, I think that fishing licences are not necessary in this space. I think that the rec fishers are very encouraged by the fact that they believe they can fund themselves by other means.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer the committee to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 58 and 59, under biosecurity. Would the minister outline progress on the rebuild of the South Australian dog fence and other programs aimed at reducing the severe impact on the sheep industry by wild dogs?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for the question. The dog fence rebuild is one of the most important regional infrastructure projects in decades, and it is pleasing to be able to update the committee on its progress. The \$25 million, 1,600-kilometre South Australian dog fence rebuild is a joint state, commonwealth and industry partnership. The first stage and the 115-kilometre second stage of the rebuild have been completed, and work has begun on stages 3 and 4.

South Australian businesses, livestock producers and the economy are benefiting significantly from this important project. We are also utilising equipment owned by Australian Wool Innovation Limited, used to build wild dog exclusion fencing in central Queensland, to assist the project. The project will reduce wild dog management costs for pastoralists by up to \$97 million and it is estimated to increase the income from sheep sales by up to just short of \$70 million over a 20-year period. The fence rebuild is estimated to deliver benefits of between \$56 million and \$113 million in total over the 20 years.

To keep the project on schedule, the department has worked ahead with the procurement process with advice from the Dog Fence Rebuild Committee for stages 3, 4 and 5, which is more than 200 kilometres in length. Contracts are now in place for the next five stages of materials. That is a total of 743 kilometres and six stages of fencing work, which is 547 kilometres. The third and fourth stages of the fence rebuild project are underway, and the fifth stage will commence in August. Additionally, more than 60,000 treated wooden posts are being delivered to the western end of the fence ready to be used in the seventh stage.

This is all part of our integrated approach to tackling issues of wild dogs, which includes wild dog trapping and bounty schemes plus aerial and ground baiting programs. We undertook an additional baiting program, which pastoralists requested be undertaken at the start of summer to

increase the bait rate and utilise muscle meat for baits. Land managers were provided with muzzles for their working dogs, courtesy of the National Wild Dog Action Plan, so that they could undertake the baiting. We also worked with property owners to follow up with trapping after baiting.

Once the work to upgrade the fence is completed, it will reduce the number of sheep killed by wild dogs in the pastoral areas of South Australia. We are working together to stop the attacks by wild dogs on the livestock industry.

The CHAIR: A very important project.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: It is, sir. Is the fence to be named? Is it going to be called Tim's Fence?

The CHAIR: It's 'the dog fence'.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Just 'the dog fence'?

The CHAIR: The dog fence, yes.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Is there a graffiti removal program that is funded under the department? Maybe that is just the metropolitan area. I draw the minister's attention back to fruit fly. Can the minister detail what communications are being made with householders in areas where restrictions apply?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: There are key letterbox drops that have occurred in household areas in the outbreak areas, and correspondence has also gone through to the education department to share with their cohorts. There has been engagement with local councils, multicultural communities and various industry groups.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: With regard to the communication materials to households, what specifically has been sent out to the households? How many communications, when were they sent and in what form?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: There are an enormous number of ways that we engage with householders; firstly, through inspection, so doorknocking and talking directly to the householder concerned. There are notices that are left on what actions need to be taken in relation to fruit on their property. There are also pamphlets left in relation to the general procedures around fruit management and fruit fly outbreaks within the regions. There are letters directly to different households, depending on circumstances. As I said, there is also the correspondence to schools and councils.

There are certainly an exorbitant number of ways communication has gone out there. There are also various advertising mediums, such as the press, radio, television, digital, social media channels, as well as outdoor signage on bus shelters and in shopping centres that are particularly targeting those impacted areas.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: In the materials that go to households, what languages are they provided in?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I have been informed that it is based on the understanding of the cultural basis of a community and the information is supplied in the languages of the top six or seven diverse cultures within a region.

Sitting suspended from 13:30 to 14:15.

The CHAIR: Welcome back to Estimates Committee A. We are looking at the budget relating to Primary Industries and Regional Development. I invite questions.

Mr McBRIDE: I refer the committee to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 56 and 57, headed Fisheries and Aquaculture. Can the minister please explain how the Marshall Liberal government has implemented reform of the Marine Scalefish Fishery to strengthen future opportunities for commercial fishers?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for the question. The Marshall government is very proud of its record of delivering the key priorities identified. We have talked about the red

meat sector and getting rid of the GM moratorium in grains, but one of the key things in the Marine Scalefish Fishery space was the reform that was needed. The government is supporting our commercial marine scalefish fishers with a \$24½ million reform package.

Before the 2018 election, we were approached by the Marine Fishers Association with a request to reform the industry, in particular to buy out fishers who wanted to exit, and to introduce quotas. Fishers were concerned that under the former government the industry had reached an unviable position, with too few fish for too many fishers. Indeed, independent economic analysis showed that three-quarters of marine scalefish licence holders do not make a profit.

Fishers had seen fish populations decline—for example, snapper stocks—and were concerned for the future of the fishery unless action was taken. The Marine Fishers Association, on behalf of commercial fishers, asked the government to support a voluntary buyback and to support other reforms to reduce unnecessary red tape and protect the sustainability of fish stocks.

This government is proud to stand by our fishers and is supporting the sector with a \$24.5 million reform package. The reform we are implementing has seen the fishery transition to a quota-based fishery, which will enhance the financial and ecological sustainability of the industry. Priority fish species of snapper, King George whiting, southern garfish and calamari now have total allowable commercial catches applied each year. This will protect populations of the species at sustainable levels, improving the ability of fishing businesses to plan for the future.

Fishers have been allocated individual quotas, which they can trade, to manage catch levels in the fisheries. These quotas have been allocated on the basis of historical catch levels, representing 80 per cent of the total allowable commercial catch; 20 per cent of the catch has been allocated equally across all licence holders.

Under the government's support package, 132 fishers applied for voluntary surrender of their licences. Line fishers were eligible to seek \$140,000 and net fishers \$180,000 to surrender their licences. At the end of the voluntary surrender process, about 100 fishers accepted the surrender package.

At every stage in the process, the government has consulted with fishers and, where necessary, engaged with external experts to provide advice on those areas of reform that were most challenging. The allocation of quota was undertaken following advice of an independent allocation advisory panel. This advice was released for consultation and feedback by all licence holders before a final decision on the allocation formula was determined.

Fishers who felt they had exceptional circumstances that affected their catch history and quota were able to apply for consideration of those exceptional circumstances. I appointed respected former magistrate Dr Andrew Cannon to hear and consider exceptional circumstances applications. Ninety fishers applied for the exceptional circumstances, and Dr Cannon afforded all applicants the opportunity to meet with him over December 2020 and February 2021.

Having considered Dr Cannon's report, I have approved 56 licence holder applications for exceptional circumstances. Of these, 26 licence holders were offered additional allocation of quota as a remedy and 30 licence holders were offered a second chance at a voluntary licence surrender. Every fisher's personal circumstances are different and their catch history is different and in many cases has changed over time.

Some fishers are satisfied with the amount of quota they have been allocated and some fishers want more, and it is understandable. It was always estimated that, for the fishery to be at peak financial profitability, around 150 to 192 licences would need to exit the fishery. Both the industry and government were clear that if fewer licences are voluntarily surrendered that means more reform on the open market as fishers buy and sell quota and licences amongst themselves.

Anecdotally, we understand there may be fishers who have chosen not to participate in the voluntary surrender because they believed they would get more on the market for their licensing quota than the government was offering, so in time it is expected that the number of licence holders will reduce further. The most challenging aspect for any reform towards setting a total allowable commercial catch limit and allocating quota is determining the formula by which the quota is allocated. In such a diverse fishery, it is impossible to please every one.

The key aspects to recognising this are that, as a result of this reform, our commercial fishers are able to catch the same amount of fish they have caught in recent years. The total amount of quota allocated is equivalent to what has been caught in the average of the past three years. We now have a fishery where there are about 100 fewer fishers with the ability to catch the same number of fish. For those fishers who feel they need more quota to be viable, we are establishing an online trading platform where fishers can advertise offers to buy and sell quota.

As of Monday 26 July, I am advised that there have been 570 trades put on the website since 1 July. These were from 68 different sellers and 52 different buyers. I am advised that there were 63 active ads on the site as of Monday. The department has approved some 300 quota transfers over those first 26 days of the reform. This is a sign that the reform is working. Fishers have confidence in the new fishery to go out and buy quota.

The government has also been working with the sector to reduce unnecessary red tape because, if there is a total catch limit, you do not need to regulate and police how fishers go about fishing to the same extent. Can I recognise the leadership, collaboration and advice provided by the Marine Fishers Association throughout this process.

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: My question refers to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 55, highlights 2020-21 and the dot point:

- Implemented amendments to the Genetically Modified Crops Management Act 2004.

Why did the government ignore the wishes of primary producers in more than 10 councils who wanted their regions to remain GM free?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for Mawson for his question. I need to give some background into this space. A moratorium was in place in South Australia for 16 years based on an act that operated here. That act was put in place by the previous government, with objectors to the act saying that GM crops should be grown on the basis of economic outcomes. The moratorium was put in place in relation to the use of GM crops in the regions right across South Australia.

The act included the establishment of an advisory committee made up of a selected group of people, with their credentials being listed as per the requirements of the act, to sit on this advisory committee. All the members of the advisory committee who were on the committee at the time of the decision to assess the different applications by councils were appointed under the previous government.

That committee provided advice to the minister responsible—me being the minister—in relation to an amendment made by the Labor Party to remove the moratorium across mainland South Australia. Part of the amendment involved giving local government areas the opportunity to make an application to show economic benefit for remaining under a GM moratorium. The act also made it quite clear that as minister I was to take advice from that advisory committee in relation to those applications.

Applications went to that committee from all councils that made representation. Of those applications, I believe there were three that stated there was no economic advantage. They literally stated that without any further examination in their documents—that they just wanted to. The act did not give the opportunity for a decision to be made based on the fact that they just wanted to. The act of this parliament had given me instructions to follow that outcome; hence, I am following the recommendation from the committee that no council applications were suitable for a moratorium to remain and none were put in place.

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: As a follow-up question on the same budget line, given that this committee spent less than one hour looking at the Barossa Valley and McLaren Vale applications through their relevant councils and did not ask for any further information, and given that the buck always stops with the minister, what do you say to the 200-plus wineries in the McLaren Vale wine region who say that the Liberal Party's failure to listen to them will cost them more than \$20 million per year?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: As I stated, and I refer you to my previous answer, it was very much following what the act instructed me as minister to do. I followed the advice of the committee,

the committee that was appointed by previous ministers, including you as a previous minister who appointed those committee members. I followed that advice, and that was the appropriate thing as minister to do.

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: On the same budget line, the act says that you have to listen to the advice; it does not say that you have to act on the advice. Why did you not listen to those people? Many of them are Liberal Party supporters, big donors to the party who are outraged that you did not listen to them and that you are costing them \$20 million a year now.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I refer the member to my previous answer.

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: You should not be taking a minister's salary if you do not want to do the work. On the same budget line, new question—

The CHAIR: Is there a point of order?

Mr PEDERICK: I would just like to ask a question, sir.

The CHAIR: No, the member for the Mawson has the call at the moment. I will come back to you.

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: My question relates to the same budget paper, same line. Given that you have not allowed regions like the Barossa and McLaren Vale to remain GM free and that you are now proposing a GM code of conduct for food producers and wineries, will that not put added costs and extra workload onto those wineries to prove their GM-free status, whereas a GM ban in the Onkaparinga council area would have cost the producers zero dollars but led to a cumulative advantage worth more than \$20 million a year?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I refer the member to my previous answer.

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: That is not an answer, mate. People in McLaren Vale—I will send them all this video because you have let them down. You have cost them \$20 million a year, and I will send this video to every winery in McLaren Vale.

The CHAIR: Member for Mawson, that is a commentary, as you well know.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: The minister, in his previous answer to a question from the member for MacKillop, spoke about the provision of marine scalefish industry reform payments, including the surrender and payment of money for those licences that were surrendered. Can I ask what the formula was that was used for calculating the amount of money that was paid for those who were deemed to have exceptional circumstances? How was the amount of money that was paid to people who were deemed to have exceptional circumstances determined? What formula was used?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: There were no payments made to anyone in relation to exceptional circumstances. There were two categories, effectively: there were increases in quota allocation—that was one measure—to a group of 26; the other group of 30 fishermen were given the opportunity to surrender their licence, if they wished. Again, that was after the surrender process had closed which meant that they would have received \$140,000 if they were a line fisherman or \$180,000 if they were a net fisherman.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: So that was just a flat fee.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: There was no other consideration which might have increased or decreased that payment. There was no consideration—and, again, you might have to understand that I am not as familiar with this area as you are—as to whether that line or net fisherman had particular arrangements around their licence, like whether there was a quota or anything like that.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: No, it was purely based on whether they were line or net fishermen and got the \$140,000 or the \$180,000 option and, if they wanted to consider a voluntary surrender as the voluntary surrender process had actually closed. This was giving them an opportunity, after the exceptional circumstances had been considered, if they wanted to go back to have another opportunity to say, 'No, we do not have any extra quota. We are deciding to leave.'

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Sorry. This probably reflects, until now, my ignorance of the details of the process. So there was a period of time when people could voluntarily surrender their licence and, if they did that, they could get either the \$140,000 or the \$180,000. But if they did not volunteer to surrender their licence in that period, there was a subsequent period when people could then come forward and offer to surrender their licence on a different basis; is that right?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The exceptional circumstances program started prior to the close of that. There were some who had offered to surrender in that original process but wanted to be considered for exceptional circumstances as well. But there were also some who had not thought of surrendering but who put forward their case to Dr Cannon in relation to exceptional circumstances, and those people—a group of 30 or thereabouts, from my memories of the numbers—were given the opportunity.

No, there were no circumstances that we saw where you should get extra quota but we acknowledged that there was a reason that you may have been of the belief that you might have thought you were going to get some, 'So we are giving you the opportunity; if you want to leave the industry, you can and we will honour the opportunity to have a voluntary surrender,' even though it was past that close-off point.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: You might have just demonstrated what I had wrong with my understanding of the scheme. So for those people who came forward for exceptional circumstances, it was not to surrender a licence and receive a payment for that surrender.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: No.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: It was to receive a change in their quota; is that right?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: That was their belief if they had not received what they thought they might have been entitled to; they had that opportunity to try to get extra quota out of it. It was not considered that that was the suitable solution.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: For those people who were considered under the exceptional circumstances regime or process, how was the calculation made as to how the quota would be adjusted for them? Was there a formula, or was there a pool of unallocated global quota that was split up between the licences, etc?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Giving some context around the whole quota allocation from the start is probably important here. The original quota that was given to all fishers as an indicative quota going forward was based on the South Australian fishery, from east to west, that 20 per cent of the total allowable catch would be shared across everyone, so everyone got a piece of the pie right across the spectrum. The remaining 80 per cent of quota was then divided up and given to fishermen based on their catch history. In general terms, it was based on the best five years of catch in a period from 2010 through to 2016. That is how the quota was arrived at, on that catch history.

That is where there is the opportunity for exceptional circumstances. If the fisher believed they had a particular reason that their catch history in that period of time was affected, for example, by the fact that they had a family transfer during that time—a father might have died and transferred it to the son—the catch history remained with the fisher themselves. So there were those sorts of circumstances that needed to be considered and many other different scenarios. There were 90 applications and there were 90 different stories in relation to them.

For the people who were awarded extra quota, it was certainly considered that there was an impact outside their control. The quota that was allocated to them was based on the same method of allocation, but the only quota that was available to be allocated to them, because we could not increase the total allowable catch, was quota that was surrendered by others from November through to the allocations being issued in June, and so they got a pro rata share of what was surrendered in relation to that.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Regarding those people who were accepted as having exceptional circumstances, why have the calculations not been provided to them to explain how their quota has been arrived at?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed that we are actually in the process of communicating that directly to those 90 people who are in that space at the moment. This whole process came right through to the time frame of quotas being issued, effectively active from 1 July. Because of the transition from a previous structure and people still surrendering, etc., there was a very short window and, to get the actual calculations 100 per cent accurate, that process is still continuing at this point to inform those people.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: For those licence holders under the exceptional circumstances arrangements, when were they told what their quota would be?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed 29 June is the date they were informed.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Has PIRSA, or the fisheries part of PIRSA, received any complaints about the quotas that were announced for licence holders?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes, we have. Under the Marine Scalefish Fishery reform review and appeals process, which is covered under section 111 of the Fisheries Management Act, licence holders have the right to appeal for an internal review of my decision in relation to quotas on their licence. A review can be sought on the grounds that the fisher's quota entitlement has not been properly calculated in line with the formula to allocate quotas or that exceptional circumstances exist. There have been some applications made on that.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Is there a time limit to when people can seek a review?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Under the act there is. I am informed it is believed to be 28 days after they are informed of the reasons. So when they receive their next letter, there is a 28-day time line that starts from that letter.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Not 28 days from when they are advised of the quota?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: No.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: When will all those pieces of advice go out to the affected licence holders?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Within the next days.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: You advised that \$22 million had been budgeted for the licence surrender/buyback process, but that \$15 million had been spent. What is happening with the balance of those funds?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: In relation to the \$24½ million, there is \$2 million to \$3 million worth of offsets in licence fees during this transition that comes out of that as well. That is part of that whole reform process. On the remaining funds, it has not been determined as yet, as we are still in the process of finalising what that is.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Just to be clear, going back to the previous question about the advice that is going out to those who have applied under exceptional circumstances, that advice will contain details of that formula and the calculation so they can consider that in formulating whether they appeal or not.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed that the calculation of quota has already been given to them. The next piece of advice is very much about the reasons why they did or did not receive an exceptional circumstances arrangement.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Can I go back to Budget Paper 4—

The CHAIR: Member for Lee, I might just throw to the member for Hammond. He has been waiting patiently.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: He is a patient man.

The CHAIR: I am the patient one here, member for Lee.

Mr PEDERICK: Thank you, Mr Chairman, for your authority. I refer the committee to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 62 and 63, regional development. Will the minister please advise how the state government is backing our regions to grow and prosper?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for his question. Our regions do matter and the Marshall Liberal government strongly supports our regional communities. The Regional Development Strategy aims to shape the long-term direction of our regions. It outlines how the government will work with communities to support regional development across the whole state. I have been advised that this is the first time the South Australian government has developed a comprehensive regional development strategy to work positively and strategically with communities to grow our regions.

The Regional Development Strategy was developed following extensive consultation with local communities and provides a whole-of-government approach to support regional South Australia to grow and thrive. This consultation was led by a community advisory panel that met with more than a hundred stakeholders and over 280 people attending community forums across the regions. The panel identified concerns that over past years regional communities felt ignored and left out of decision-making processes that directly affected them.

From day one, this government has engaged strongly with regional communities. We have taken steps to empower communities by establishing decentralised local health networks and creating regional Landscape South Australia boards. We have listened to the communities about their priorities and we have taken action.

Our regions are economic powerhouses that drive the prosperity of the whole state. They contribute around \$29 billion per year to the South Australian economy across a range of industries, including fishing, farming, mining, manufacturing and tourism. The government is working to create jobs and investing in our regions to help them thrive. We are fixing regional roads, building and upgrading schools, supporting local sports clubs and providing better health care.

Each region is unique, with specific opportunities and needs. The Regional Development Strategy recognises the importance of our regions and identifies key areas to focus on to help deliver key projects and create local jobs. The strategy is supported by the launch of the Our Regions Matter website. This website—www.regionsmatter.sa.gov.au—showcases the many investments being made into regional South Australia to improve health care, education and sporting facilities. Businesses will be able to go to the website to look at infrastructure investments and make decisions on where to establish to create jobs. This website will be a welcome resource for regional communities.

Some of the priorities included on this website are the sealing of the Strzelecki Track; upgrading regional roads, including the Eyre, Stuart, Sturt, Horrocks and Barrier highways; new schools at Whyalla and Goolwa; a \$25 million rebuild of the wild dog fence; hospital upgrades, such as at Ardrossan and Yorketown; building a new Mount Gambier community rec centre; and planning works to deliver climate-independent recycled water to the Barossa. These are all examples of how the government is listening to communities and acting on their priorities. The government will work closely with communities, especially through Regional Development Australia organisations and local government.

On 31 May this year, the first biannual Regional Development Strategy Steering Committee was held, with members from government agencies with a regional service remit; South Australian Regional Development Australia representatives; Mayor Erika Vickery, who is the chair of the South Australian Regional Organisation of Councils (SAROC); and other key stakeholders. The government will continue to work to grow opportunities across all regions, capitalising on the Regional Growth Fund, Mobile Black Spot Program and the extensive program of infrastructure projects being delivered across the regions.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I draw the minister's attention back to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 59, with regard to fruit fly. Of the 12 declared fruit fly outbreak areas in metropolitan Adelaide, most have restrictions attached to them which are due to expire on 22 December. What is the department's view about whether the restrictions are likely to lift at this time or continue beyond this time?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for his question. The Marshall Liberal government will continue to throw all available resources at eradicating these outbreaks, including extra on-ground staff to undertake the baiting and hygiene programs as well as the latest technologies, such as sterile fruit flies.

As you said, 22 December is the relevant date for the majority of the release dates for the current outbreaks. It is very much based on the protocols that are in place at a national level in relation to fruit fly detections, and it is based on the last detection of fruit fly within the zones. The last detection in the Adelaide area was back on 27 June, which sets the date for the whole of the metropolitan area in relation to Medfly. The last detection of Qfly was in the Ridleyton area back on 27 April, which sets its date at 1 December for eradication in that space.

The time lines at the moment do not move significantly with any new detections because we are in the wintering period of fruit fly and the exit time is determined based on the life cycle of the fly. The life cycle of the fly slows down over the winter period, so the proposed outer date does not move by much at this time of the year. As we head into summer, those dates can move out more so.

There is a huge range in dates across those different outbreak zones within Adelaide, but the way the commonwealth requires them treated is to effectively treat them as one. To get them all out, we have to get them all out.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: At this point in time, given the most recent detection dates across the different zones, what is the latest date? Is it still 22 December, or has it gone past that?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: It is still 22 December.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: What would be the date by which, if a detection occurred, you might need to extend that December date?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: That date will change. There is a formula that exists to calculate those dates. If there were a detection today, it would move out a few days, probably to just past Christmas if it was today from my memory of that time line, but the closer you get to summer the more it moves.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: So it is roughly six months, or is the formula more complicated than that?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: As I said before, the timing of these is based on the life cycle, and the life cycle of the fly changes over the year. During the summertime, a life cycle is about 28 days. Effectively, if you get a detection on 1 January, you push yourself right out to the end of February, whereas at the moment the life cycle is much more than 28 days and it barely moves. It is very dependent on season.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: If I wanted to understand whether, for example, the school year and the lunch boxes that might be taken to school sites at the beginning of next year's school year might be impacted, it would be relevant to that 28-day summer life cycle period?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Roughly, a detection in early December would mean a late January release.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: So we could still have detections in September or October, for example, that would not necessarily push out that 22 December date?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: It will push the 22 date out towards January, but it will not push it past January until you hit December.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: What arrangements or protocols have been put in place about how PIRSA communicates any changes in advice to the community? In particular, I am thinking of schools, both government and non-government schools.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: There are many things in this space, and I touched on some of them before. There is a website that people can go to with an interactive map where they can put their address in and see where they sit. It certainly gives the opportunity for people to identify where they are in relation to this. Likewise, there is the communication. As areas change, if there is a

detection that moves the boundaries of an outbreak zone, other people will then receive information in relation to that space.

Acknowledging that as we move out of the winter period we need to make sure people are aware of what is going on in this space, we are moving towards another round of the campaign with Poh in relation to communicating and educating people in the community on what is going on. So there is a second larger commitment going forward in relation to advertising in the lead-up into that spring/summer period that will be part of engagement with the community.

We are also working through a partnership with KESAB environmental solutions, which includes a presence at the Royal Show, which will further educate the schools and the community groups on preventing fruit fly, etc.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Earlier this year, the chief executive of the education department, Rick Perse, told the Budget and Finance Committee that getting fruit fly related information across to schools was not 'the most smooth process'. So we have the website, fruitfly.sa.gov.au, and there are Poh and the Royal Show, on the basis that it happens of course, but what has the department actually arranged with the education department so information is given to parents about what can and cannot occur with packing their children's lunch and the transport of fruit?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: In relation to the distribution of information within schools, there was information distributed by the education department via emails to leaders at all public sites and to Catholic and independent sector representatives. Individual sites were encouraged to share these with their communities. This is an established procedure for reaching teachers, students and parents. There were two communications that were issued in term 1.

Communication of restrictions to residents and the general community has been widespread, with restrictions on movements of some fruit and fruiting vegetables applying to all who live, work, shop or attend a school in fruit fly affected areas. This has been communicated across various advertising channels, such as television, outdoor press, radio, digital and social media.

The campaign has been supplemented through letterbox drops in the outbreak zones, and targeted information has been shared with a range of stakeholders, including local councils, multicultural community organisations and industry bodies and representatives across the horticulture and retail sectors. Schools are just one source of fruit movement and, rather than focusing our efforts on this particular source, we have focused on raising awareness across the community about the restrictions that are in place.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: How much has Poh been paid?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The contract in relation to Poh is commercial-in-confidence, but the marketing campaign in relation to total spend in the campaign is \$600,000 to date.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: So all those mechanisms—the website, letterbox drops, Poh, and the Adelaide Show, should it happen—together is \$600,000?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: It is to date. There is also \$910,000 committed for the remainder of the year.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: And another \$910,000?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Is there a contract with Poh that has a confidentiality clause in it?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes, there is a 12-month contract with Poh.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: And that contract has a confidentiality clause in it?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed that it was agreed to be commercial-in-confidence.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Who requested that it was commercial-in-confidence?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: It is our understanding that it was her firm that requested that.

The CHAIR: Minister, could you repeat your answer to the previous question for me, please?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: It was her firm, her agent who requested that.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Is she able to declare it to anyone?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: We will have to take that on notice.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: For example, could she declare it to the tax office?

Mr KNOLL: Point of order: I fail to see how this question relates to a budget line.

The CHAIR: I am going to uphold that point of order. That is not a question you should ask.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: This is the committee stage of a bill, Chair, so perhaps let me explain. We have been told that there is a confidentiality provision around this contract that prevents the revelation of what has been paid to Poh, yet it is quite feasible that this amount may well be revealed to another party—of course, to the tax office—so clearly there must be exemptions to this.

Perhaps for those of us a bit more experienced at this, these contracts do have exemptions, for example, for the purposes of parliamentary scrutiny, so my next question is: is there an exemption for parliamentary scrutiny for the confidentiality provision of this clause, which is standard across all government contracts?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am unaware. We will have to check the provisions.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I am most grateful to the minister. I want to turn the minister's attention to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, to the net cost of services for primary industries and regions, which is on page 52, as I mentioned at the beginning. When the minister was explaining why there are such significant fluctuations in the net cost of services, part of that explanation was the change in grant profiling. With regard to the grant for the Mount Gambier recreation hub, what conditions were placed on the grant?

The CHAIR: While the minister is seeking advice on this answer, I just remind the opposition that if they have omnibus questions they will need to read them in at least before the end of the day. It is up to you when you do that.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: We do not have those details with us. We will take that on notice.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Is the minister aware that the cost of the Mount Gambier recreation hub has increased from \$39.1 million, when the state government's contribution towards that project was initially announced, out to \$64 million?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I had heard media reports to that effect, yes.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: But the council has not advised you or the department?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Not to our knowledge, but we will check.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Have any further requests been made of the state government for additional funding given the blowout in the cost of the project?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Again, not to our knowledge.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Is the minister aware of what the current completion date is for this project?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Again, we do not have those details with us.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Who is responsible in the department for monitoring this grant?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: These grants are monitored by the regions team within PIRSA, but also monitored by SAFA under the Treasurer in relation to payment schedules and time frames, etc.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Given that the project for which this grant was intended has blown out, and several grants under the Regional Growth Fund, for example, have had to be carried over into subsequent financial years, what is the reporting mechanism to you, minister, for how these grants are being managed?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: As minister, I receive monthly reports on where projects are at, particularly in relation to time lines and meeting milestones, and whether there are any particular delays due to things like COVID, so that we are able to be aware of what is going on in these cases. I am also informed that the Mount Gambier project also reports quarterly to the Public Works Committee.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: So there is a monthly report to you and there is a quarterly report to the Public Works Committee, yet you learnt about the increase in cost in the media, I think was your advice to the committee.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: So it has not been included in any of the monthly reports?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: As we stated, we will check, but we do not believe there has been any variation that has been made in relation to the reporting to us.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Are there time lines in the grant agreement for this Mount Gambier project that are required to be delivered or any other, I guess, trigger points that might cause the government's grant to be repaid?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Just clarifying—the monthly reports to me are from the department, not from the projects themselves. Can you ask the question again? I have lost my train of thought.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I said there were monthly reports that went to you but obviously this was not included because you said you had learnt about it in the media. Are there any conditions within the grant agreement for this project that might require this grant to be repaid if performance is not delivered?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Under the funding arrangements with our grant program it is paid in arrears once the milestones are met. If they have not met their milestones, they have not received any money and therefore they do not have to repay anything because they have not received it yet.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: So they have not received the grant yet?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: No, they certainly have not got it all yet.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: How much has been paid to them to date?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: We would have to confirm if any has.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Were those milestones for the completion of a certain level of construction or for the delivery of a project by a certain date?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: As I said, we do not have those details with us on the individual projects.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Can I go back to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 55, getting back to water infrastructure. Under the highlights and targets, it talks about the new water infrastructure opportunities, including water to the Barossa and Eden valleys. I take it this is water under the NAIS. How much water has gone from the northern areas to the Barossa and Eden valleys and what has been the price of that water?

The CHAIR: While the minister is seeking advice on this, I indicate to the committee that because we went five minutes over time with the Minister for Child Protection I did then indicate to the committee that we would give an extra five minutes—because we started late—to this minister. So, after the minister has provided an answer, we will go to the member for MacKillop, who I know has a question, and that will take us to 3.20, when I propose to break until 3.35.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for the question. There is the proposed eight gigalitres of water to be made available to the Barossa Valley, but at this point in time that has not been progressed. It is certainly still being investigated, and the price of that water at this point is undeterminable.

Mr McBRIDE: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, pages 62 and 63, regarding regional development. Can the minister advise how the Regional Growth Fund is being invested in to support economic growth and attract investment and job creation in the regions, with an example being the Timberlink project in my electorate?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for his question. The Regional Growth Fund is a key component of the state government's commitment to regional South Australia. The government established the 10-year \$160 million Regional Growth Fund to support projects that unlock new economic activity in our regions, creating jobs and building and strengthening regional communities.

Last year, in 2020-21, the government allocated an additional \$10 million to the growth fund enabling \$25 million to be provided to support projects to stimulate the regional economy. This was an important part of our strategy to help recover from the impacts of COVID-19 disruptions. In total, the \$25 million was invested to support \$170 million worth of projects to boost the economy and create jobs. The projects are expected to deliver 1,500 jobs.

One of those projects, as you mentioned, is the \$59.9 million Timberlink Australia project to establish a cross-laminated timber and glue-laminated timber plant at Tarpeena in the South-East. The government is contributing \$2 million towards this project. This will be the first combined cross-laminated timber and glue-laminated timber plant in Australia and only the second major cross-laminated timber plant.

The capacity of the new plant will be 60,000 cubic metres of South Australian grown certified renewable plantation pine per year. Timberlink is one of the South-East's largest employers, with a workforce of 200. Construction will create 151 contract jobs, of which around two-thirds will be local South-East workers. There will be an additional 56 full-time equivalents created when the plant gets to full capacity in 2028.

It is a testament to the vision of our regional businesses that in the midst of the COVID pandemic we have been able to partner with private business to agree \$170 million of new investments. The government is currently assessing applications under round 4 of the competitive round of the Regional Growth Fund. These applications are being assessed by the independently chaired panel, and I look forward to receiving recommendations on the projects. Grants of between \$50,000 and \$2 million are available from this \$5 million funding round.

Since our election, the government has already committed \$60.1 million from the Regional Growth Fund and we have been able to leverage \$373.9 million in total project investment value.

The CHAIR: Having reached the allotted time, I declare the examination of the Department of Primary Industries and Regions complete. We will return after the break to examine ForestrySA. Minister, you are looking like you need to say something else.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I would like to make one minor correction just on the generation. My advice is it is actually slightly longer. It is another 28 days, so it is the beginning of November that we will push it out to the end of January.

The CHAIR: Thank you for that correction.

Sitting suspended from 15:18 to 15:36.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr J. Speed, Chief Executive, ForestrySA.

Prof. M. Doroudi, Deputy Chief Executive, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

Mr R. Robinson, Director, Forestry, Department of Primary Industries and Regions.

The CHAIR: Welcome back to Estimates Committee A. We are examining the portfolio of ForestrySA. The minister appearing is the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development. I advise members that the proposed payments for the Department of Primary Industries and Regions remain open for examination. Minister, we have had a change of advisers. Would you like to introduce those people and make a statement, if you wish.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Thank you, Chair. The South Australian Forestry Corporation, trading as ForestrySA, is a statutory authority with a commercial and recreational forest manager. ForestrySA's key commercial activity is the management of the Mount Lofty Ranges forest estate, with over 10,500 hectares of commercial pine plantation area. Maximising the value of the forest asset is a key strategic priority of ForestrySA.

Here with me today is Julian Speed, the Chief Executive of ForestrySA. Also, still remaining, is Professor Mehdi Doroudi, Deputy Chief Executive of the Department of Primary Industries and Regions. Also joining me is Rob Robinson, Director of Forestry at the Department of Primary Industries and Regions. I look forward to the questions.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Chair, I might do the omnibus questions now.

The CHAIR: Yes, by all means member for Lee.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Sit back and call your loved ones as this will take a while:

1. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:
 - What is the actual FTE count at 30 June 2021 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; and
 - 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 2021-22, and for each of the years of the forward estimates;
 - The top 10 providers of goods and services by value to each agency reporting to the minister for 2020-21;
 - A description of the goods and/or services provided by each of these top 10 providers, and the cost to the agency for these goods and/or services; and
 - The value of the goods and services that was supplied to the agency by South Australian suppliers?
3. Between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021, 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 (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 engaged between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021 for all departments and agencies reporting to the minister, listing:
 - the name of the consultant, contractor or service supplier;
 - the cost;

- the work undertaken;
- the reason for engaging the contractor; and
- the 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 2020-21, and what was their employment expense;
- How many FTEs are budgeted to provide communication and promotion activities in 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24, 2024-25 and what is their estimated employment expense;
- The total cost of government-paid advertising, including campaigns, across all mediums in 2020-21 and budgeted cost for 2021-22?

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 contractors between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021.

7. What is the title and total employment cost of each individual staff member in the minister's office as at 30 June 2021, including all departmental employees seconded to the ministerial office?

8. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, could you detail:

- How much was spent on targeted voluntary separation packages in 2020-21;
- Which department funded these TVSPs;
- What number of TVSPs were funded;
- 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; and
- 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 2020 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 2020 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 2020-21 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 2021-22?

13. In the 2020-21 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 2021-22? How was much sought and how much was approved?

14. For each grant program or fund the minister is responsible for please provide the following information for 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 financial years:

- Name of the program or fund;

- The purpose of the program or fund;
- The balance of the grant program or fund;
- Budgeted (or actual) expenditure from the program or fund;
- Budgeted (or actual) payments into the program or fund;
- Carryovers into or from the program or fund; and
- 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 2020 to 30 June 2021, provide a detailed 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 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 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 2020 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 2020 and what is their purpose?

20. Can the minister list for each department and agency reporting to him and programs or initiatives that have been funded or budgeted for but not publicly announced or disclosed in the budget papers?

The CHAIR: In order to give the member for Lee a chance to catch his breath after that marathon effort, I am going to go to the member for Waite, who has a question.

Mr DULUK: Thank you, Chair. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 61, targets 2021-22. Why has the South Australian government not signed up to the Forestry Transport Assistance scheme to subsidise the transport of fire-affected timber from Kangaroo Island?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for his question. The premise of the question is not quite right. The federal government did not offer the grant scheme to South Australia; it was only offered to New South Wales and Victoria. On approach from me to the responsible assistant minister, they are seriously considering what they can do in this space. I have been following up with Jonno Duniam, the assistant minister responsible, trying to get an answer in relation to what the federal government is prepared to do in this space.

Mr DULUK: Thank you, minister. As part of that, is there an expression of interest to participate in that federal government round, and has South Australia expressly put itself out there to participate in the national round table for the assistance scheme?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Again, in relation to funding timber off Kangaroo Island, I have made a request to Jonno Duniam as the federal assistant minister responsible. He is considering what ability they have to use unspent funds from their program they were operating in Victoria and New South Wales and in relation to burnt timber. There is no expression of interest into that program apart from my inquiry to the minister.

Mr DULUK: I have one final question, if I can, on the same budget line. Have you had any discussion with OneFortyOne regarding the carbon rights of the plantation estate in the South-East?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed that we have not sold the carbon rights of that timber. They still reside with the government.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 61. Can the minister outline to the committee what his understanding is of why there is currently a timber shortage in South Australia?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for his question. I guess it is a very complicated world market in relation to the shortage of timber. It is not just limited to South Australia; it is a worldwide issue. There have been a significant number of new housing commencements, additions and alterations across Australia, including in our state.

That has been very much driven by some COVID stimulus in relation to that work, so we are very much influenced by that increase in demand, though there is that demand worldwide for timber. We have also seen a significant drop-off in timber imported into Australia and available in this space as well; hence, the Australian demand is also increased by the fact that there is no timber coming in from elsewhere around the world in significant volumes, which had previously been the case.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I appreciate the minister's advice to the committee. Basically, we have a housing boom going on at the moment because of the COVID stimulus, which I think is another way of saying the HomeBuilder scheme, and we also have some restraints on the ability to import timber. In the budget papers, Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 171—admittedly in the Department of Treasury and Finance area—it outlines how much money is being spent on HomeBuilder. There is \$100 million budgeted for the last financial year and \$163 million for the current financial year.

So the federal government is spending \$263 million on stimulating the housing industry, which is causing this timber shortage. The state government is not required to make any contribution at all to the HomeBuilder scheme, except to process the grants. Can the minister explain why no funding has been spent by his agencies on dealing with the timber shortage in South Australia?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for his question. It is certainly something that we as a government are working through. In relation to the member for Waite's questions earlier around the potential to bring log off Kangaroo Island to be processed for structural timber, it is certainly an opportunity that is one part of the national forest that is currently unallocated to anywhere in particular.

With the demand right across Australia, there is very limited opportunity to increase the output of structural timber. We have made inquiries across the sector here in South Australia in relation to their ability to process extra timber, and there is limited opportunity to get structural timber processed. We have gone out to the sector with an expression of interest, with a very short turnaround of putting that out there.

We have had three interested parties come back in relation to that expression of interest for the \$2 million that the South Australian government is prepared to put on the table to assist mills that may wish to upgrade, operate extra shifts, etc., to get more structural timber available onto the market. We are in the process of getting these opportunities into place, and we will continue to process this as quickly as we can to get an outcome here as soon as we can.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: When were you first made aware of the timber shortage? Perhaps, Chair, the minister could take it on notice if it requires such consultation.

The CHAIR: Let's see what the minister is coming back with now.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for leave for his question. I was just getting the context in my head with my advisers. The issue is that late last year Australia lost access to China as a market for timber. At that point in time, there was concern that there were going to be job losses due to a lack of ability to actually process timber. So it was something that happened relatively quickly in relation to turnaround with the loss of those Chinese markets. The stimulus that was put in place with HomeBuilder then led to an overheating of the market.

I certainly had meetings about two months ago with industry players trying to find solutions. That was when we made inquiries, particularly in the larger mills, about whether the opportunity was

there to operate extra shifts. The concern was raised at that point in time that, even if the timber was available off KI, they would not be able to necessarily process that timber with extra shifts because of the lack of workforce. So it has been a conversation that we have been developing over the last couple of months.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: So we have known that there is a problem since late last year with regard to the imports and we have known over the course of this year so far that the pressure that the housing industry is placing on supply is exacerbating the problem, but we still do not have any funding that has been allocated to a solution, even though we have an EOI process open. When were you first made aware of the potential solution of partnering with the federal government in their transport subsidy scheme to get timber off Kangaroo Island?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed that the first meeting where we had conversations with industry in relation to the Kangaroo Island timber in particular was on 17 March.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Since 17 March, what has the minister's understanding been of how much the state would need to provide in order to partner with the federal government in that transport subsidy scheme arrangement?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Those discussions are still ongoing with the federal government. We are very much waiting to hear back from the federal government. As I said, I have made contact with Jonno Duniam again this week trying to get an answer in relation to their expectations. In the case of New South Wales and Victoria, those arrangements would have been dollar for dollar state versus federal.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: You said in your previous response to the member for Waite that to date it was only offered to New South Wales and Victoria by the federal government. You have previously advised that you would travel to Canberra to meet with the relevant assistant minister to discuss this regime, so you have asked for South Australia to be included in that scheme?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Did the federal government give you at that meeting any indication as to whether South Australia would be included in that scheme?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The assistant minister gave every indication that he would very seriously consider it, yes.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: What requirements would be placed on the state government if we were to be included in that scheme? Would it be a co-contribution payment?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: There would be an expectation of a co-contribution; at what level is still to be determined.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Does the minister have any idea or advice from his department or from the federal government about what quantum of money would be required in order to partner with the commonwealth in that scheme?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: There has just been a correction on dates. The March timing was actually May when we were told by KIPT in relation to this. In relation to the federal government, yes, we have had conversations but we still have not reached agreement. We are still waiting to hear from them as to whether they are prepared to put up anything formally. I have had good indications that, yes, they are, but they do expect us to be a contributor in this case.

The circumstances of KI are very different from those in the Eastern States where this program was used. In the Eastern States, it was the case that the forests that were burnt were in areas where timber mills were also burnt, so there was a disconnect in that timber being able to be processed, so there was an incentive to transport that timber.

The subsidy was based on a 300-kilometre maximum rate of \$30 for that travel, so if you went that far you got your \$30 maximum. That was to shift the timber from places where it was burnt, where there were no longer timber mills, to timber mills, whereas in the Kangaroo Island circumstances there are no timber mills on Kangaroo Island to process the timber, so it is about getting it off the island. It is about the first 15 kilometres and not about the next 300 that need to be

worried about. It is about the cost of getting it off the island, so that is the conversation we have had with the federal government.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: But have they given you an indication of what the state government's contribution would need to be should the federal government agree to extend its scheme's application to the South Australian context?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: They have given an indication that at a minimum they would expect us to make a contribution but, as to what level, they have not given any strong indication of what they would like.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: So you have no idea whether it is \$100,000, \$1 million or \$10 million?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: It is more likely to be in the million dollar range.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: We previously heard before the break that you have a \$7 million underspend in marine scalefish licence buybacks. We have substantial carryovers approved for Regional Growth Fund programs and projects. Have you set aside or approved a pool of funding that could be applied to this should the federal government say yes to South Australia?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: At this point in time, where that money is necessarily going to come from has not been identified in particular. The need is recognised. It is very important and we will continue to pursue this on the basis that we will find the money within the budget to make this work.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: So you do not need to go back to Treasury and ask for more money; you have sufficient resources within the department already?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: All conversations and all options are still on the table in relation to this, including going back to the Treasurer.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Is it the advice from the department that, should the commonwealth require something in that million dollar range that you identified before, you would need to go back to Treasury? It is within your ministerial delegation and, as we have already learnt today, we have significant underspends in other programs across the agency.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Again, as I said, all options are on the table in relation to this. It is an important project for the whole of South Australia in relation to economic benefit, and those conversations need to be had.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: What conversations have you had with the Forest Industry Advisory Council of South Australia?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: In relation to that question, are you talking in relation to this?

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Sorry, yes, this particular issue.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I have not had any specifically and directly with them in recent times on this, but I certainly have talked to members of that group and industry generally over the last few weeks.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: When do you expect that successful respondents to the EOI process will be announced?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: My expectation is very soon. In relation to all three applications that have come forward, we are just seeking some further information before any decision is made.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Seeking information from them or from other sources?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: From them—just clarification around their expressions of interest.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Without inadvertently foreshadowing what the decision might be, are you anticipating making an announcement about a single outcome or the sum of money that is available—that \$2 million—that might be available to more than one respondent?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Until we have been able to evaluate all three projects fully, I do not think I can answer that question.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: That is fair enough. I direct the minister's attention to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 61, and Forestry Research Institute funding. How much money was provided to the institute in the most recent financial year, 2020-21, and how much is allocated for the institute this financial year and across the forward estimates?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for the question. Certainly, up until now there has been \$500,000 annually from the ForestrySA budget that has gone into this space. I am happy to announce that the South Australian government is looking to fund directly from PIRSA going forward \$2 million over the next four years at the same rate.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: ForestrySA will not be funding it; it will be the department itself?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Was an agreement reached between ForestrySA and the department over those changed funding arrangements, or has the department had to step in because ForestrySA is no longer providing funding?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The existing agreement that had been in place with ForestrySA expired on 30 June and PIRSA has just taken up the new opportunity going forward.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: ForestrySA was not interested in continuing its funding arrangements?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: It is more about the fact that ForestrySA no longer has any internal research capability in the structure of the business now that it has been downsized, so it makes good sense that it is more with PIRSA.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Has that funding already been committed and provided to the institute? I think that when you were providing your answer it was a bit more noncommittal than that. Has the decision been made and the institute been advised of the new funding arrangement?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes, they have been advised. I spoke to the chair of the committee, Ms Tammy Auld, back on the 26th, only a few days ago.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Of July?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Was that in response to correspondence from her?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: No.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: There was a question I neglected to ask you previously about the timber shortage, the EOI process and the \$2 million that has been made available to fund that. Are there assessment criteria in the consideration of how those respondents' submissions are assessed about making sure that timber will only go to South Australian companies?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes, in the announcement of the tenders it was outlined that timber had to be for the South Australian market, and those guidelines have been published.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: The timber has to be provided to the South Australian market, for example, for South Australian houses but, in terms of processing the timber, are there requirements around who is going to do that?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The applications are very much based on three South Australian mills doing things in their mills here in South Australia.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Even if a South Australian mill operator had an operation elsewhere, interstate, this would only support their local operation?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The three expressions of interest are all based around South Australian mills.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: With regard to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 61, water allocation plans, is ForestrySA or the department allocating any funds for research in readiness for the 2023 review of the water allocation plan?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed that one of the projects that is currently being funded under the NIFPI work is around water, and part of the reason for continuing with the funding is to allow that group to continue in this space to invest in the research that is required.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: NIFPI, is it?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The National Institute for Forest Products Innovation.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Whereabouts are they located?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: They are based at the UniSA campus in Mount Gambier.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Is it only them who will be doing work in preparation for the review of the water allocation plan, or are other people putting together other work as well?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed this project is being funded by many industry players, so there are many hands in this till making sure it is heading in the right direction.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: You mean putting money into the till, not hands in the till. I am not sure if it is NIFPI or somebody else, but do we know yet who will be doing the review in 2023?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: This review will be outside PIRSA's control. This will be done by DEW, as a water project under the Department for Environment and Water.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Given DEW's recent history in securing additional water supplies, how confident can South-East growers be that this review might mean that the water allocation plan is revised so that more water is available if DEW is doing it? They have a slightly different interest in this area, don't they?

Mr KNOLL: Point of order, Chairman. I think the member is now straying again into the territory of hypothetical questions.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Don't tell me you have timber interests as well.

Mr KNOLL: Mogul, conglomerate-type.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Are these the skewers that go through the prawns?

Mr KNOLL: Prawn and chorizo skewers.

The CHAIR: Order! In relation to the point of order, I do not especially like the way the member for Lee couched the question. Perhaps you could have another go at asking the question. Rephrase it perhaps.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Given this is a review of a water allocation plan for the interests of the South-East, and I guess from your perspective or ForestrySA's perspective for the benefit of the industry down there, how confident can the industry in the South-East be in DEW's carriage of the review?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: As Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, I certainly have an interest in water allocation plans and how they affect users. There are many in my portfolio in this space. Irrigators themselves as well as forestry all have an interest, so I think it is very appropriate that DEW has for many years operated in the water allocation space in South Australia and developed the plans. The plans have been developed by environment and water departments historically and they continue to review those, so I still think it is appropriate that that be the place it is done.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer the committee to Budget Paper 3, Chapter 5: Government businesses, pages 73 to 86. Will the minister advise of the activities undertaken by ForestrySA in conservation and native forest management?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for Hammond for the question. Management of native forest reserves is a community service obligation, funded via a memorandum

of administrative arrangement between ForestrySA and the Department of Primary Industries and Regions. Under this agreement, the community forestry program provides for both conservation of native forests and visitor access management for all forest reserves by ForestrySA. The service fees for ForestrySA's community forestry program totals \$2.32 million in the 2021-22 year.

ForestrySA manages gazetted native forest reserves, totalling approximately 16,500 hectares in the Mount Lofty Ranges and Green Triangle regions of South Australia. Native forest management initiatives include the development and implementation of local and landscape-scale measures to protect and enhance biodiversity and heritage values. Management of community use of forest reserves includes facilitating public access and nature-based recreation in the reserves and encouraging community engagement and participation in a broad range of activities.

Native forests are managed under the regional forest management plans, and each gazetted native forest reserve has a management plan. The richly diverse conservation areas within forest reserves are highly valued by South Australians with only 12 per cent of native bushland remaining in the Mount Lofty Ranges and less than 13 per cent in the Green Triangle.

ForestrySA's native forest reserves protect many threatened communities and species listed under the commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 and the South Australian National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972. These include the critically endangered Fleurieu Peninsula swamps, the nationally endangered southern brown bandicoot and the red-tailed black cockatoo, as well as five orchid species and a species of mint that is found nowhere else in the world.

During 2021-22, ForestrySA will continue to work in partnership with other government agencies and community groups to deliver conservation outcomes. These include education, prescribed burning, targeted pest animal management, biodiversity corridors and threatened species recovery programs.

ForestrySA will maintain and build on its long-term partnerships with groups and government agencies, including the Nature Conservation Society, Native Orchid Society of South Australia and several schools in the Green Triangle region. There is also strong cooperation and collaboration with several landscape boards. ForestrySA assists with the Urrbrae TAFE Conservation and Land Management program to deliver on-ground, sustainable education and conservation outcomes.

The CHAIR: Member for Frome, are you looking to ask a question as well?

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: Thank you, Chair. I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 61. One of your targets for 2021-22 is: 'Grow farm forestry in South Australia to expand commercial forestry resources and diversify farm incomes.' Can you please give us an update of where you are with that proposal and how you are going to go ahead with it?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for Frome for his question. The Marshall Liberal government is partnering with the Morrison Liberal government to develop a new two-year project, which aims to grow South Australia's commercial forestry resources through farm forestry. The project is focused on farm-based forestry and will include the provision of forestry advice and support to South Australian landholders.

This project includes funding offers by the Australian government and reflects a commitment to the 2018 National Forest Industries Plan. The Australian government has budgeted \$3½ million over 2021-22 and 2022-23, to be shared among the states and territories. The project reflects recommendations from the Forest Industry Advisory Council of South Australia. The key outcomes of the farm forestry project include:

- an increase in future timber supply to sawmills;
- diversified farm income;
- more support for regional communities; and
- partnerships between landholders and industry companies.

This is an important project and we are working with the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment to actually deliver this project to farmers.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: How will that benefit or sustain the future direction of the Morgan Sawmill at Jamestown?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for his question. The opportunity is there for any particular mill. It is very much about the uptake; I guess in their particular patch is the greatest opportunity for uptake. There is the opportunity for private operators to invest in forestry in that region if they choose to do so, which would make future timber available to the sawmill.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: So that would not be of benefit for the next two or three years is what you are indicating, I would assume—planting new timber, plants, etc. Is that what you are looking at through that process?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Certainly, there is no opportunity to make trees grow super quickly—

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: No, I realise that.

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: —so this is the opportunity to get more country into forestry in the future. Certainly, forestry is one of those industries that has a very long lead time in relation to delivery to mills, so the opportunity for quick fixes is very difficult in this space.

The Hon. G.G. BROCK: To get timber for Morgan's at Jamestown, getting it off KI, that is not part of this process. That is a separate process, trying to get the timber off KI onto the mainland?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: As I have previously said during this section, the opportunity there is very much working with the federal government to get a subsidy in place to get that timber off. We are working with the federal government to deliver an outcome in that space.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 4, page 60. In the highlights it says 'Progressed recommendations from the Forest Industry Advisory Council of South Australia'. Which specific recommendations were progressed?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Thank you for your question. It is important that we have worked with the Forest Industry Advisory Council of South Australia to come up with a list of things they would love to see happen within the industry. Some of the things you have mentioned in questioning today are things we have delivered, and one of them is \$2 million to the ongoing funding that was asked about earlier. That is one of the key outcomes they were delivering.

Likewise, in relation to the investment in the water space to investigate the security of water going forward and the ability to get more trees growing in that region, that is something that has also been raised as one of the key outcomes they want to achieve out of those recommendations.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Which of their recommendations called for additional money to be provided to the institute that we were previously discussing? Sorry, I have it: it is 13a. There are 18 recommendations I can see. There are recommendations 1 through 16, but two of them are broken into two parts: 7a and 7b and 13a and 13b. Of those 18 recommendations, what others have been implemented?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: We are working through the recommendations and who has the responsibility to deliver them. Some of them are government and some of them are not. It is very much working out where they sit and where responsibility lies. We are working with other departments on those projects, but we are continuing to work on delivering the outcomes of the recommendations they would like to see achieved.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Looking at the recommendations, I think all 18 of them start with the words, 'That the South Australian Government', so I think they are all state government requirements. Have you responded formally to the Forest Industry Advisory Council with your position on each of the recommendations?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: No, we have not as yet, but we are not very far away from doing so.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Do you accept all the recommendations?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: As I stated before, not all of these fall under my control in relation to where they sit. Some of them are with other departments, etc., so it is very much still a conversation in relation to whether we can accept all or not.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: When did you receive the recommendations?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: We received these last year. We have seen a significant change in industry and focus in relation to the COVID response that put a halt to this while we deal with other parts of the needs of the industry in relation to demand for timber, etc.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Have you forwarded those recommendations that you say may be the responsibility of other government agencies to those agencies?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed that, yes, we have reached out as part of the consultation to those other agencies.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Have you had a response from those other agencies? Perhaps I can be a bit more specific: have you had a response to recommendations 8 and 9, which perhaps, on my reading, might have been referred to the transport department?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed that discussions are still continuing at a department level.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: How many times has FIAC met and how many of those meetings have you attended?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I am informed that it has met seven times, and I have attended two of those meetings.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Have either of those meetings been since the recommendations were provided to you?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: Yes, the second one was.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: Were you able to provide FIAC any indication about whether some or all of their recommendations might be supported?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: The meetings were very much exploring the recommendations, rather than necessarily seeking my endorsement. At that point in time, they were being presented to me and explained to me, rather than seeking my endorsement.

Mr PEDERICK: I have a question. I am interested in Ghost Mushroom Lane, minister. I refer the committee to Budget Paper 3—

The Hon. L.W.K. Bignell interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: That's it; well, perhaps I will need to ask you. I refer the committee to Budget Paper 3—

The Hon. L.W.K. Bignell interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: We are running out of time, crew.

The CHAIR: You have the call, member for Hammond.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer the committee to Budget Paper 3, Chapter 5: Government businesses, pages 73 to 86. Can the minister advise whether the Ghost Mushroom Lane in the South-East has been available this year?

The Hon. D.K.B. BASHAM: I thank the member for this important question and I am pleased to report that ForestrySA has once again been able to present the Ghost Mushroom Lane in 2021. Ghost Mushroom Lane is a temporary event open to the public between May and June each year. Although it was a slow start to the season, the mushrooms appeared in their thousands by the second week of May. It was one of the best years for fungi in the forest.

The unique event provides family-friendly night walks through a forest to view the luminescent glow of the ghost mushrooms. It is a magical experience for all ages and one that is on my family's bucket list. I would strongly encourage members here to plan a visit. Ghost Mushroom Lane is located on a OneFortyOne lease plantation outside Mount Gambier. ForestrySA, OneFortyOne and other partners including private tour operators, plan and prepare for some four months prior to each season. This includes cutting and marking new trails aligned to fresh growth of the mushrooms to ensure premium viewing.

Ghost Mushroom Lane has a substantial flow-on effect to the economy, with 50 per cent of the visitors coming from outside the region and 10 per cent coming from interstate during the 2021 season. The event is fully endorsed and marketed by the regional and local tourism boards, including Tourism Mount Gambier and the Mount Gambier Visitor Centre. Due to its popularity and uniqueness, there were 1,600 phone and email inquiries, four media interviews and six social media articles regarding the event this year.

Over 1,000 passes were sold and over 10,000 visitors got to experience the magic of Ghost Mushroom Lane. The event also attracted national attention, including a reference in the CSIRO's 2021 publication *Wild Mushrooming: A Guide for Foragers*, as successfully attracting crowds to what is perhaps Australia's first example of myco-tourism. The 2021 event generated revenue of just over \$20,000.

To improve the visitor experience, an upgrade plan was developed for the 2021 event, which catered for greater visitor numbers and for improved public safety, car parking, marketing and information platforms, and a new visitor pass and tour booking system. ForestrySA staff have received overwhelmingly positive feedback from visitors on site.

Participants enjoyed the laneway and had a better experience without the massive crowds and light pollution of previous years. I am excited to advise that ForestrySA also engaged with the private sector to provide tours, further boosting local jobs and the economy.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: What do they taste like?

The CHAIR: You will have to try some. You will have to go down there, member for Lee. I might just add, minister, that when you were talking about the Green Triangle I was a bit misled. I thought you were talking about Eyre Peninsula.

Having reached the allotted time, 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.

At 16:38 the committee adjourned to Friday 30 July 2021 at 09:00.